

*An investigation of the different forms of bullying amongst grade 10 learners  
in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape*

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Educationis in

the Department of Educational Studies

University of the Western Cape

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## DECLARATION

I, Constance Ning Memoh, declare that *An investigation of the different forms of bullying amongst grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for another degree or examination at any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed .....

Constance Ning Memoh

Date .....



## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the following persons:

My uncle, Mr Zachariah M. Memoh, of blessed memory, who encouraged and motivated me to educate myself further; and

My father-in-law, Mr Shey Dairu Wirba, of blessed memory, who cared and showed concern in my success.



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## ABSTRACT

**Key words:** Culture, gender, adolescence, schools, context, bullying, intervention, learning, teachers and learners.

Bullying is rife at South African schools. Previous studies published in 2008 revealed the frequency of bullying amongst high school learners to be 36% in Cape Town and 41% at national level of the total number of high school learners who participated in the investigation. This behaviour amongst learners hampers efforts to raise educational standards and improve schools in our country. Besides, the vicious cycle of bully/victim relationships has a negative influence on individual learners. In South Africa, bullying behaviour in schools has been found to lead to problems such as a low self-esteem, low academic performance, absenteeism, depression, and consequently school dropout.

In this study the frequency and different forms of bullying experienced by learners in South African schools were investigated using questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group interviews with grade 10 learners and their teachers at three selected schools in the Western Cape. Questionnaires were administered to two grade 10 classes in each of the three selected schools. Analysis of the questionnaires was followed by two sets of interviews: individual interviews with one female grade 10 learner and one male grade 10 learner at each of the three selected schools, and focus group interviews with two male grade 10 teachers and two female grade 10 teachers in each school. The findings confirm that bullying is rampant in the three selected schools. A mean of 96% of the respondents reported that bullying happens at their school. In addition, a mean of 38% of the respondents stated that bullying happens every day at their school. Furthermore, all the different types of bullying, that is, physical, verbal, emotional, and cyber-bullying, occur at the three selected schools, and each of them is influenced by individual and contextual factors. However, this investigation discovered that the most flexible and influential cause of peer bullying is the contextual (that is, ‘inside of school’) factors. This study also revealed that learners at the three selected schools experience various consequences of bullying such as lowering of self-esteem, high rates of absenteeism, self-harm, inability to make progress in their studies, insecurity, and isolation of victims. Finally, some recommendations to address the issue of school bullying are made in respect of schools, teachers, parents and learners. Recommendations are also made in respect of future research on bullying.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Bullying is seen as a great challenge that confronts schools both at international and national levels. The phenomenon of bullying is a malicious and damaging form of social behaviour practised at schools. Bullying happens at all schools irrespective of social class, economic level of community members of a school or size of the school (Tattum, 1993:4). Bullying is defined as “when a student is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1993:9). The negative action has to be intended for the action to be considered as a bullying incident (Olweus, 1993:9). Therefore, bullying may affect victims negatively and this may also impact negatively on learners’ ability to make progress in their studies. Sharp and Smith (1994:2) mention that bullying is based on an imbalance of power, which may be a result of physical strength and ability, group status, intelligence and leadership role among learners. Hence, the use of the term bullying in this study denotes an abuse of power in intentional and repeated actions (physical, verbal, emotional, and/or cyber) by a learner or group of learners to hurt another learner or other learners at school.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

Before the 1970s little investigation was done about bullying at school due to various views of school authorities, parents, teachers and learners on bullying (Olweus, 1993:1). Bullying was considered to be an acceptable form of behaviour at school because parents and school authorities thought that there was little that could be done to stop bullying at school (Olweus, 1993:1). Consistent with the latter view, Rigby (1996:48) found that in the past bullying was regarded as a normal and natural human occurrence. As such parents and schools authorities thought that bullying could not be controlled at school. Learners also considered bullying to be a normal school experience and believed that bullying hardens and prepares learners for life after school (Rigby, 1996:48). Therefore, school authorities, parents and learners considered bullying to constitute normal behaviour.

The damaging consequences of bullying on learners changed the latter views and scholars started to investigate the phenomenon of bullying (Olweus, 1993:1). During the 1970s, Olweus investigated bullying actions at some schools based on circumstantial factors of each school (Olweus, 1993:1). Some of the consequences found include low self-esteem, absenteeism from school, fear and insecurity and low academic performance. A consequence of bullying is illustrated in the quotation below:

In Weston-super-mare school, Avon, Sarah (a learner) aged 10 was regularly taunted by two unruly girls because she wouldn't join them in disrupting lessons. They called her names, threatened her with their fists, and persuaded others to make sure she was excluded by the rest of the class. 'I used to love school' says a bewildered Sarah, 'but now I hate it' (Olweus, 1993:7).

The above quotation indicates that the two girls (perpetrators of bullying) were influenced by the power they had as friends to bully Sarah (victim of bullying). The two girls wanted Sarah to join in disrupting lessons but when Sarah refused, she (Sarah) was bullied by the two girls in class. As a result of repeated bullying Sarah developed hatred for schooling.

Based on the causes and consequences of bullying found at each school during his investigation, Olweus developed suitable intervention strategies to control the level of bullying at the schools involved in his investigation (Olweus, 1993:113). Two years later the intervention programmes were evaluated and the results indicated that bullying had reduced by fifty percent at the schools involved (Olweus, 1993:113). Following the success of his intervention programmes, Olweus successfully convinced education authorities of the need to investigate and control bullying at schools (Olweus, 1993:113). Olweus's work was later adapted by some scholars (Sharrif, 2008:12; De Wet, 2005:707; Sullivan, 2000:2; Thompson *et al.*, 2002:1; Rigby, 1996:12; Randall, 1996:3; Smith & Sharp, 1994:3; Byrne, 1994:13; Tattum, 1993:5; Smith & Thompson, 1991:2) and forms the basis of many studies on bullying and understanding bullying within a school context in many countries, including South Africa.

Generally, bullying is most likely to be informed by factors inside and outside of schools (Olweus, 1993:27-48; Roberts, 2006:21-58; Lee, 2004:38-40). Rigby (1996:71-72) has categorized the causes of bullying into three major groups, namely: hereditary factors, family and cultural influences and school based factors. Thus bullying actions are influenced by factors within the school environment, learners' home conditions and the natural characteristics of learners. On the one hand, bullies perpetuate bullying actions in order to

control and dominate other learners and to gain social prestige associated with bullying at school (Lee, 2004:38). On the other hand, Lee (2004:32) states that victims of bullying trigger bullying due to their physical attributes, a lack of capacity to make friends, and have behavioural and learning problems.

In addition, there are various conditions within a family which may cause a child to become a perpetrator of bullying or a victim of bullying at school (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008:19; Lines, 2008:128). A family is an agent of socialization that may mould positive or negative behaviour in a child (Rigby, 1996:73). Parents who are not caring and do not accept their child may cause the child to develop anti-social skills such as inability to make friends which may encourage bullying by peers (Rigby, 1996:75). Also, where parents tolerate and accept bullying, some children may think that bullying is an appropriate and acceptable form of behaviour hence will bully their peers at school (Sharrif, 2008:96). Some children who engage in bullying might have experienced bullying within their family. Thus, the family environment is a principal factor which determines bullying among learners.

Moreover, there has been much investigation about the influence of cultural and community practices on the development and consequent behaviour of a child (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463; Bajaj, 2009:489; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98; Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Some cultural practices which may determine a bullying attitude in a child are: a culture of violence; gender stereotypes; and a culture of male domination. These cultural aspects and related practices are influenced by socially constructed ideologies which are embedded in the history of a community (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463). The practices listed above are influenced by a notion to dominate or control, which are enshrined in unequal power relations (see Section 2.3). Therefore, some cultural practices determine bullying by some learners at school.

Furthermore, Lee (2004:6) found that there is a variation in the levels of bullying among schools. This variation is brought about by how teachers and the entire staff interact with their learners, manage their classes and address bullying problems at school (Lee, 2004:6). The latter finding aligns with a finding by Olweus (1993:46) that the level of bullying at a school depends on the school factors such as the approaches, practices and forms of behaviour of teachers at the school towards the learners. In addition, Suckling and Temple (2002:34) state that long term bullying at school is influenced by the leadership styles, management practices, level of supervision and the preventive strategies the school has in place to control bullying.

In line with the above discussion Olweus (1993:113) emphasises that the extent of bullying at each school should be understood from its particular social context as this would enable a good starting point for preventing and countering bullying. Even though some schools have developed means to curb bullying there are some schools and teachers who are still unable to address the bullying happening at their school (Lee, 2004:6). Therefore bullying continues to occur at an alarming rate at schools where bullying is not contextually investigated and interrupted (Rigby, 1996:106; Olweus, 1993:113). Since bullying is quite problematic at schools, there is therefore a need for more contextual research to be carried out in order to expand the pool of knowledge about bullying at South African schools.

The inability of some schools to control bullying among learners may be a consequence of lack of contextual research evidence on the phenomenon of bullying. In line with this Suckling and Temple (2002:87) have identified the goals of current data on bullying at school as follows:

- Raise awareness about the problem of bullying in the school community;
- Quantify the extent of the problem;
- Locate the places where bullying is occurring frequently within a school community;
- Give learners the message that bullying is taken seriously;
- Enable the school to develop appropriate prevention and intervention strategies;
- Evaluate previous strategies implemented to control bullying; and
- Enable collegial and consistent practices among the staff to control bullying at school.

Roberts (2006:73) asserts that a better approach to address bullying requires schools to be proactive and not reactive to bullying. Sullivan (2006:225) asserts that at schools without a proactive code of conduct, learners seek their social hierarchy and means of revenge through bullying. Sullivan (2006:225) further explains that a school without a preventive code to combat bullying breathes fear and insecurity and learners therefore bully to achieve a status and a means to protect themselves from bullying.

To conclude, the causes of bullying can be classified into ‘inside of school’ and ‘outside of school’ factors. The phenomenon of bullying at school may also be promoted by the personal characteristics of the perpetrator and the victim, the attitude of teachers and the measures taken by a school to address bullying. Since bullying has adverse effects on learners, there is therefore the need for more research on the topic.

### **1.3 Motivation**

In a meta-synthesis of studies conducted in the South African context, by researchers of the University of Johannesburg (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009:445-460), it was found that bullying occurs at schools in South Africa, irrespective of level, size and location (wealthy, middle class or poor areas). These authors also found that bullying affects the mental health of learners, thus hindering their ability to make progress in their studies. Another very serious consequence of bullying reported at South African schools by Townsend *et al.* (2008: 21) is that bullying is one of the contributing factors to high rates of school dropout.

Furthermore, according to Roberts (2006:7), bullying among adolescent learners is more severe than in the early years of schooling due to less supervision by teachers. Learners in the early years of high school are undergoing adolescence and also have to adjust to a change in own development. This leads to physical and emotional disorder which makes it difficult for some learners to adapt. Hence some learners become socially isolated which may cause them to bully one another (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:11). It is at this point where this study derives its source. Grade 10 learners at high schools in South Africa are also at the adolescent stage which may lead to physical and emotional challenges which may result in bullying. This study explores the different forms of bullying experienced by grade 10 learners at three selected schools.

### **1.4 Relevance and significance of this study**

The purpose of this section is twofold. Firstly, the researcher intends to give an overview of the phenomenon of bullying in South African schools. Secondly, the intention is to make readers to understand the effects of bullying in South African schools (see Section 2.2). In order to achieve the aims outlined above a number of studies conducted on school bullying in South Africa have been reviewed.

Bullying is rife in South African schools. A study by Townsend *et al.* (2008:23) revealed the following. At national level 41% of high school learners who participated in an investigation on bullying acknowledged the occurrence of bullying at their various schools. In the Tshwane area the results of an investigation conducted on bullying with the same category of learners as above revealed that 61% of the participants have experienced bullying at school. In Cape

Town 36.3% of the same class of learners as above admitted that they have also experienced school bullying. In addition, in Mpumalanga, 11.8% of the group of learners at rural high schools has been bullied. The statistics indicate that Western Cape schools also battle with behaviour issues particularly bullying which calls for more investigation on the topic. In an investigation on bullying carried out with schools in the Western Cape and Durban where about 5,385 learners participated, about 1938 (36%) of the participants indicated that they had experienced bullying at school (Liang *et al.*, 2006:165). Moreover Blake and Louw (2010:116) found that 40% of the same group of learners as mentioned in the above studies who participated in an investigation on bullying in Cape Town indicated that they had experienced playground bullying.

The phenomenon of school bullying has negative effects on learners in South Africa as well. Bullying is associated with behavioural and emotional challenges with long term consequences on learners (Roberts, 2006:5). In the South African context, in a study on learners' experiences of aggression at secondary schools in South Africa, a learner who was a victim of bullying stated: "They [i.e. other learners] think I am just useless" (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009:452). Another victim of school bullying in the study by Myburgh & Poggenpoel (2009:452), stated that: "Sometimes I felt like I should harm myself ... I felt like doing it". In addition, some findings have identified bullying as the most significant interruptions faced by youths at South African schools leading to problems such as low self-esteem (Nesser *et al.*, 2003:5) and school dropout (Townsend *et al.*, 2008:23). Consistent with the latter, Blake and Louw (2010:116) found that 37% of the participants in their study indicated that they were likely to drop out of school as a consequence of bullying. Consequently bullying affects both school authorities and individual learners. Bearing in mind the consequences of bullying there is an urge for scholars to investigate and suggest appropriate intervention programmes to control bullying at school.

Furthermore, the problem of school bullying in South Africa is not adequately addressed. De Wet (2005:706) found that complaints against school bullying are often ignored by school authorities. Blake and Louw (2010:114) explored high school learners' perceptions of bullying through questionnaires where learners had to indicate the school experiences which are challenging. The results indicated that 60% of learners feel that schools cannot effectively combat bullying. As a result of the latter finding De Wet (2005:707) emphasised the responsibility of school authorities on issues of school bullying by reiterating the legal

responsibility of schools. Schools are required to provide and ensure safety and security for all learners and members of a school community.

The present study is therefore significant because it explored the different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, emotional and cyber-bullying), the factors which influence bullying among learners, the consequences of bullying and school policies in place to address bullying. The availability of the latter information about bullying in a school may lead to the initiation and development of practical intervention programmes. Hence restorative measures at the selected schools which will nurture healthier relationships and promote understanding, awareness and sensitivity to differences among learners may be developed based on the data collected. Teachers are reminded that they are required to provide appropriate learning environments and be sensitive to the learning needs of learners in order to enable learners to maximize their learning.

## **1.5 Research aims**

The main research aim is stated below, followed by the subsidiary research aims.



### **1.5.1 Main research aim**

The main research aim is to explore the different forms of bullying which transpire among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools in the Western Cape.

### **1.5.2 Subsidiary research aims**

The subsidiary research aims were the following:

1. To understand how bullying happens among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools;
2. To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools;

3. To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners at the three selected schools; and
4. To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

## **1.6 Research questions**

In order to achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions were formulated.

### **1.6.1 Main research question**

The main research question is: What are the different forms of bullying experienced by grade 10 learners at the three selected schools in the Western Cape?

### **1.6.2 Subsidiary research questions**

The subsidiary research questions are the following:

1. How does bullying happen among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools?
2. What factors influence the different forms of bullying at the three selected schools?
3. What are the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners at the three selected schools?
4. What policies are in place to address bullying at the three selected schools?

## 1.7 Research methodology

This research combined both a qualitative methodological and a quantitative methodological paradigm with an interpretive theoretical approach. The study has a case study research design. That is, the phenomenon of bullying was investigated at three distinct school environments using the same research tools and processes. The methodological paradigms, theoretical approach and research design are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. As such only brief explanations of the various aspects of the methodology are provided in this section.

A qualitative methodological paradigm seeks to explain a natural development of an action taking into consideration the diverse views of the participants (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3). Also, within a qualitative methodological paradigm the phenomenon under study determines the research methods and research instruments. On the other hand, a quantitative methodological paradigm is based on variables; one of which is the cause and the other the effect or the independent and dependent variables respectively (Babbie, 2006:49; Punch, 2005:62). Henning *et al.* (2004:3) assert that a researcher within a quantitative paradigm uses knowledge of the dependent variable to control the independent variable and consequently predict the effect on the dependent variable using predetermined research instruments.

An interpretive theoretical approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. An interpretive theoretical approach was considered the most suitable for this study since the major tenets focused on understanding, describing and interpreting learners' actions at school. This corresponds with the view of Henning *et al.* (2004:20) that human beings are conscious and self-directing.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:281) describe a case study as an intensive investigation of a single unit. A case study design can be used to investigate individuals, communities or organizational events (Punch, 2005:314). In a case study design, the collection and/or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in more than one case study is conducted concurrently or sequentially and are combined in one or more stages in a research process.

This study was conducted within three school environments where the phenomenon of bullying was investigated using questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were used to obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behavioural intentions of grade 10 learners regarding bullying. The responses elicited by the questionnaires were used to establish baseline data for probing during interviews. Two grade 10 classes at each of the

three selected schools were purposefully chosen to complete the questionnaires. The classes were selected based on the learners' knowledge of the phenomenon of bullying or the occurrence of bullying in each class.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study because the aim was to collect rich and detailed data to develop an in-depth understanding of learners' experiences with bullying at school. Two sets of interviews were conducted: individual interviews with some grade 10 learners and focus group interviews with some grade 10 teachers. A total of six grade 10 learners, two from each school participated in individual interviews and a total of twelve grade 10 teachers, four from each school participated in focus group interviews. The selection of both learners and teachers was done on a gender basis to ensure an equal gender representation in the both the individual and focus group interviews.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify the research sites and participants in this study. The research sites and participants in this study were intentionally selected based on the occurrence of bullying at each school and the participants' knowledge of the phenomenon of bullying respectively. In addition, the existing WCED categorization of Western Cape schools into quintiles (Hall & Giese, 2009:36) influenced the selection of schools in this study. The three selected schools in this study were made up of two schools situated in disadvantaged areas (quintiles 1 and 3) and one school situated in an affluent area (quintile 4). The purpose of this selection was to have a representative sample of South African learners in this study.

The data analysis process in this study took place simultaneously with the data collection process from the beginning to the end of the study. The latter is consistent with the view of Cresswell (2009:184) that data analysis takes place concurrently with the processes of gathering data, making interpretations and writing reports. Firstly the data collected through the questionnaires was captured and analysed to enable the formulation of interview questions as previously indicated. Secondly the tape recordings of all the interview discussions were transcribed and coded alongside the questionnaire data. The 'coding' focused on themes identified and patterns of learners' behaviour in the data collected. The different themes were analysed and interpreted in line with the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework (power relations theory) of this study. The power relations theory (Radte & Stam, 1994:3) is explained as the ability of individuals or groups of learners

(perpetrators of bullying) to impose their will on other learners (victims of bullying) negatively.

## **1.8 Ethical issues**

This study followed the relevant procedure required as stipulated in the code of ethics for social research (Babbie, 2005:61). The rights, feelings and privacy of all the participants who took part in this study were duly respected as indicated below.

Firstly, the study was approved by relevant authorities namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Western Cape Education Department (WCED), principals and parents. Secondly, before data were collected from each source the purpose of the research and research processes were explained to the participants and all participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Thirdly, all participants signed consent forms to assure protection of self and information provided. Fourthly, all potential participants were informed that participation in the study is voluntary and potential participants who chose not to participate did not experience any negative effects. Lastly, informed consent was obtained from all participants and in the case of learners parental/care giver's consent was also obtained before the start of the investigation to ensure anonymity of participants.

To conclude, the research was conducted within the parameters set for the study. During the research process the researcher showed openness by acknowledging criticisms and suggestions from her supervisors and peers on ideas regarding research instruments, sources of data collection and presentation of results.

## **1.9 Limitations of the study**

Though the research aim was accomplished some limitations have been identified in terms of the findings, research tools and research participants. Firstly, the findings presented in this study may be understood in terms of the experiences of the participants within a specific school environment. The data obtained from the questionnaires were used to determine the general experiences of learners with bullying at each of the three selected schools. The interviews were used to probe common problems raised in the questionnaires and to clarify concepts or topics that were not clear to the researcher. The context of each of the three

selected schools was interrogated and the analysis of the data was determined by the contextual factors of each school. As such the findings for each school may be generalizable to all learners at the specific school only.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that parents of learners at the three selected schools were not involved in the research. Parents are role players at a school, and as such the parents could have explained their views and feelings about the experiences of their children in respect of bullying. Besides, parents are in a better position to suggest the role they can play to control bullying at school based on their experiences. Thus the recommendations made for parents in Chapter Five are formulated on the basis of data gained from teachers and learners, and from the literature review only. I consider this to be a limitation.

In addition, the views of the school principals are absent in this study. Although a lot has been reported about the school culture, leadership and management styles and school policies on bullying including the role of the principals at the three selected schools, the principals did not participate in the study. Hence the recommendations made for school authorities in this study could have reflected the expertise of principals. I use this limitation to caution future researchers on school policies, management and leadership to include the views of principals or school authorities (especially for triangulation purposes) as this would give a researcher greater confidence in the interpretation and presentation of research results.

A further limitation of this study is the fact that, during the interviews with teachers, the researcher found it difficult to keep her thoughts to herself. Some of the questions were very specific and sensitive and hence created some silence. For example, if a teacher narrated a bullying incident which he or she observed and was asked the question: What did you do to the victim or the bully? The teacher seemed to find it challenging and paused. The researcher had to open up the discussion to keep the session interactive. Therefore the findings presented may be influenced by the researcher's views.

During data analysis and presentation it was realized that social bullying was not intensively interrogated. Only one variable of social bullying (learners left out of groups) was included. In future all forms of bullying may be given the same weighting on the questionnaires so that the findings will reflect a holistic experience of learners.

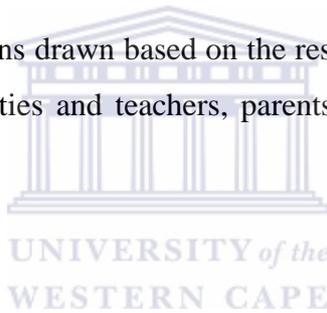
## 1.10 Outline of remaining chapters

**Chapter Two** presents an analysis of the power relations theory and a review of relevant literature which serves to enable the reader to fully grasp the concepts involved in the phenomenon of bullying and the context within which the research is situated.

**Chapter Three** provides an explanation of mixed methods (a qualitative methodological paradigm and a quantitative methodological paradigm), an interpretive theoretical framework and a case study research design in relation to this study. The data collection process, sampling of participants, justification of research tools, data analysis procedure and a research ethics statement are also discussed.

**Chapter Four** comprises the presentation and analysis of data and a discussion of findings of the study. The data analysis and discussions are done in relation to the theoretical framework and literature review in Chapter Two.

**Chapter Five** provides conclusions drawn based on the research findings. Recommendations are also made for school authorities and teachers, parents/care givers as well as for future research.



## 1.11 Conclusion

Bullying is a common practice at schools in all communities. The occurrence of peer bullying is informed by individual factors, school factors and community influences. Entrenched in the latter factors, is unequal power relations among learners which kindles bullying. Bullying has damaging consequences on learners both at global and national levels. However, findings indicate that bullying can be controlled at school to reduce the negative effects on some learners. Some schools have investigated bullying and implemented measures which have successfully reduced the level of bullying. Despite the latter, some schools have not assessed the level of bullying and are unable to tackle the problem of peer bullying as well. With this in mind, it is imperative to investigate the phenomenon of bullying in schools where bullying is not being addressed.

The next chapter presents an analysis of the power relations theory and a review of relevant literature which serves to enable the reader to fully grasp the concepts involved in the phenomenon of bullying and the context within which the research is situated.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

Bullying by peers is a major problem and occurs in almost all school communities. Findings on bullying indicate that most children have experienced peer victimization at least once in the course of their schooling (Ladd & Ladd, 2001:25). It is assumed that bullying is on the increase but on the other hand it may be that the phenomenon of bullying has not been given enough attention by school authorities and policy makers (Roberts, 2006:3). However, bullying has damaging consequences on both victims and perpetrators of bullying and some victims of bullying do assert that bullying does impact negatively on their social, emotional and academic development (Ladd & Ladd, 2001:25). The concept ‘bullying’, the different forms of bullying, the causes and consequences of bullying are discussed in the paragraphs below. Some intervention measures to control school bullying are also discussed.

### 2.2 Understanding the concept ‘bullying’

The word ‘bullying’ is ambiguous; it has various meanings, is associated with different actions and has a variety of implications. Elliott (1992:2-4) describes bullying as a set of socially changing ideas and practices. In addition to the definition of ‘bullying’ provided in Chapter One, in Australia bullying is defined as “a willful conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress” (Rigby, 2002:27). In South Africa Townsend *et al.* (2008:21) define ‘bullying’ as “largely unprovoked, negative physical or psychological actions perpetrated repeatedly over time between bullies and victims”. The above definitions of bullying have common features which include: the intention to hurt; the actions must be systematic over a defined period of time; and, in most cases, victims of bullying lack support (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009:12; Sharrif, 2008:16). During an investigation on bullying, it is important to make a clear distinction between bullying and other forms of violence at school. This would enable an understanding of the concept investigated and may also facilitate

reliability and validity of learners' views on the phenomenon investigated. Hence, in this study the variables of the concept 'bullying' were clearly stated on the questionnaires and explained during interviews.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

In this section the power relations theory (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3) which is the theoretical framework and pivot for understanding bullying in this study is discussed.

Power is defined as the ability of individuals and groups of people to impose their will on others despite resistance either in the form of withholding regularly supplied rewards or in the form of punishment in as much as the former as the latter constitute, in effect, a negative sanction (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). This definition of power is consistent with Olweus's (1993:9) assertion that for an incident to be considered as bullying there should be an imbalance of power in which the victim is unable to defend him/herself or is helpless in opposing the bully. The latter aligns with a finding by Randall (1996:107) which states that there is a power aspect of social relationships which is based on physical size, natural strength and the ability of an intelligent learner to dominate a less intelligent person. Therefore an abuse of power leads to unhealthy human relationships in communities and at school.

A significant aspect of the power relations theory is the claim that the exercise of power is triggered by rewards expected from others (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Most learners who perpetrate bullying want to impress their friends or wish to be regarded as powerful. The exercise of power is a voluntary form of behaviour by an individual (Radtke & Stam, 1994:4). Perpetrators of bullying at school do it willfully and in most cases the perpetrators are happy to inflict pain on other learners. This is consistent with a definition of bullying by Suckling and Temple (2002:10) which states that bullying happens when a perpetrator likes to have power over the victim, hurt the victim with words and actions and the action is done repeatedly and may occur without provocation from the victim.

The exercise of power is executed in various ways. Power involves physical ability or strength, intelligence, verbal abilities and group leader status (Rigby, 1996:19). In addition, all social practices, including traditional gender roles, are shaped by power relations because of the conflict between male and female dominance. Radtke and Stam (1994:4) assert that

the exercise of power also depicts a conflict of interest among people. Hence power is a relative and an active process which happens within relationships between individuals (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3).

The theory of power relations has been carefully selected for this study for the following reasons: Firstly, the definition of bullying mentioned earlier (see Section 2.2) draws attention to an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993:9) which is embedded in the power relations theory. Thus bullying is defined and analysed in terms of the power of an individual or a group of people over others.

Secondly, gender bullying at schools is also informed by power relations. Most boys bully younger or smaller boys and girls as a result of adhering to a male domination practice which denotes that men are more powerful than women. Paradoxically there is also intra-sex bullying where some boys bully other boys and some girls bully other girls at school. This latter phenomenon makes the gender theory a limited theory in terms of which to understand bullying.

Thirdly, the power relations is used to enable readers and school authorities to see the influence of an abuse of power by school authorities in addressing bullying among learners. According to Suckling and Temple (2002:10) most schools have a punishment system for perpetrators of bullying actions. School authorities use powers embedded in their leadership role to punish a perpetrator of bullying actions. On the other hand, the punishment system does not satisfy the needs of the victims; as such the victims still suffer the negative effects of fear, resentment or guilt (Mahaffey & Newton, 2008:11). Therefore school authorities also exercise an abuse of power in addressing bullying.

In the remainder of this chapter, the researcher undertakes a review of the literature on bullying. During the course of this literature review the researcher clarifies concepts relating to bullying; provide information about places where bullying most frequently takes place; clarify different forms of bullying; pay attention to causes of bullying and consequences of bullying. Finally, the researcher draws attention to intervention programmes to control bullying at school.

## **2.4 Literature review**

In this section previous studies on school bullying which were deemed relevant are reviewed to enable a comprehensive understanding of the various facets of bullying. The literature reviewed also aided in the identification of the research topic and investigation process.

### **2.4.1 Concepts relating to bullying**

In this section various concepts relating to the phenomenon of bullying identified in the literature reviewed are described and the relevance for this study of each concept is also explained.

#### **a) The bully**

This is the perpetrator of a bullying incident at school. Bullies usually have the intention to hurt and this can be with or without any provocation from victims (Lee, 2004:38). Sullivan (2006:18) adds that bullies are hot tempered and lack empathy. Some characteristics of bullies are that they: desire power; want to dominate and control others; want social prestige; do not care about others' needs; do not think about consequences; lack empathy; and take advantage of the absence of adults (Lee, 2004:38). The characteristics of bullies have been included in this study because Sullivan (2006:39) asserts that in order for scholars, parents and school authorities to address bullying effectively all have to understand the psyche of bullies.

#### **b) The Victim**

Sullivan *et al.* (2004:17) explain that a victim is someone who is targeted and is less powerful than the perpetrator. Some victims of bullying usually suffer negative sanctions from their perpetrators and can also be influenced by pressure from a bully or a group. Some victims of bullying at school are compelled to act in a way which is against their desire in order to belong to a group (Rigby, 1996:18). Rigby (1996:18) mentions that some learners who bully can be termed conformist because they do not know what they are doing but merely want to belong to a group that enjoys bullying. The latter can be explained in terms of the theory of

power relations by Radke and Stam (1994:4) which states that power is the ability to evoke change in one's behaviour.

There are two types of victims of school bullying, namely passive victims and proactive victims (Sullivan, 2006:62). Passive victims possess qualities which signal to others that they will not retaliate when bullied. The passive victims are learners who do not conform to the power dynamics of the influential bullies or groups. Thus passive victims are nervous about new situations and as such victims take steps such as absenteeism from school to avoid bullying encounters (Sullivan, 2006:62). The following are some characteristics of passive victims: they are physically weaker than the perpetrators; they have body anxiety and are afraid to be hurt; they have poor social skills and find it difficult to make friends; they are sensitive, quiet, withdrawn, cautious and shy; they cry or become angry easily; they are anxious, insecure and suffer from low self-esteem; and they are unable to defend themselves (Tattum, 1993:3). The feeble position of passive victims provides a reason why the problem of bullying at school needs to be given considerable and timely attention by education policy makers.

Proactive victims are learners who retaliate when bullied. The characteristics of proactive victims include: being hot tempered; resort to bullying when bullied; being hyperactive and restless; have difficulty to concentrate in class; create tensions in the classrooms; and have irritating habits (Sullivan, 2006:65). Sullivan (2006:64) mentions that these actions may disrupt classrooms and lead to social rejection of the proactive victim by the peers.

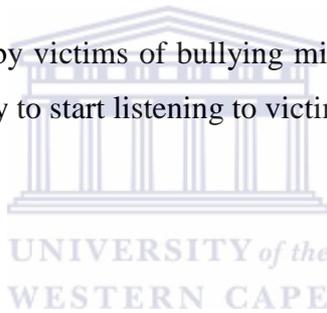
Some scholars (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:18; Schwartz *et al.*, 2001:147; Olweus, 1993:54-55; Elliott, 1992:9) of bullying at schools have identified some signs of victims of bullying that parents and school authorities must be aware of. The signs include: bruises and injuries on learners; learners with torn clothing; learners who do not speak in class; learners who are excluded from social groups; a drop in academic performance; learners who have nicknames; learners who cry often at school; learners who use different roads to school every day; and learners who do not want to walk to and from school.

Some teachers and adults underestimate the extent of a bullying incident despite bullying being repeatedly reported (Lee, 2004:48). Varnava (2002:51) adds that underestimating a bullying incident or taking no action implies that the complaint is ignored. As a consequence some victims of bullying feel it is humiliating to report cases of bullying to teachers because no action would be taken (Rigby, 1996:185). In South Africa, Myburgh and Poggenpoel

(2009:455) also found that learners feel adults and teachers are not willing to assist in addressing bullying hence victims of bullying do not report cases of bullying because teachers and adults do nothing about reported cases of bullying. Lee (2004:48) found that a third of victims of bullying tell their parents/care givers about the bullying but ask their parents not to contact the school.

Rigby (1996:185) cautions that when all cases of bullying occurring at a school are reported to the principal or deputy, it ensures that the cases are taken seriously. Rigby (1996:185) adds that teachers and councillors may be given the opportunity to evaluate cases of bullying and separate less serious cases of bullying from the serious ones and the serious ones reported to the principals. Therefore teachers have to listen carefully to the victims of bullying and speak to both victims and bullies. Lee (2004:33) and Varnava (2002:1) state that the only way to stop bullying is to take action against bullying, and supporting victims is an effective way to combat bullying.

Knowledge of the actions taken by victims of bullying might encourage teachers and adults who do not take bullying seriously to start listening to victims of bullying.



### **c) Bystanders**

Sullivan *et al.* (2004:20) assert that bystanders are learners who witness a bullying incident and may encourage bullying or stop the bullying. Some bystanders may step in to support the victims while some may step in to support the perpetrator. However, some bystanders do not get involved in bullying.

Rigby (1996:41) states that in a school situation, it is difficult to label a child as a bully or a victim since a learner can assume different roles at different times in the course of schooling. In line with the latter view, Roberts (2006:44) asserts that some victims of bullying are usually filled with vengeful behaviour and as a consequence some victims have injured their perpetrators in a fatal way.

## **2.4.2 Places where bullying most frequently takes place at school**

Sullivan (2006:43) states that bullying occurs mostly in crowded conditions where there is little adult supervision. Bullying takes place in the classroom and some teachers condone and promote classroom bullying. Rivers *et al.* (2007:72) assert that some teachers are not sure how to handle cases of bullying in the classroom. In addition, some findings report that most playground bullying takes place due to the absence of adult supervision (Rivers *et al.*, 2007:72; Olweus, 1993:25). Previous research findings on bullying actions reveal that most bullying incidents take place at school and less bullying on the way to and from school (Olweus, 1993:21). Rivers *et al.* (2007:72) add that bullying on the playground may also be promoted by teachers who stereotype learners during sporting events. For example, Chabaya *et al.* (2009:98) found that some teachers refer to specific sporting activities as specifically for boys or girls during sports and this has a great influence on learners' behaviour.

## **2.4.3 Different forms of bullying**

Bullying can either be described as direct or indirect though the description varies from one author to another as discussed below. Direct and indirect forms of bullying at school may be manifested physically, verbally and emotionally (Boulton *et al.*, 2002:354; Rigby, 1996:20). Direct forms of bullying are mostly physical and verbal in nature and expressed through processes which can be seen and/or heard (Boulton *et al.*, 2002:354). On the other hand, bullying is considered as indirect when the aggressor influences others to attack the victim (Owens *et al.*, 2001:217). Rigby (1996:20) states that physical and verbal bullying are considered indirect when a learner asks another learner to physically assault or verbally abuse the victim. Therefore indirect bullying usually involves a third party.

Some findings report that most girls are exposed to subtle and indirect forms of bullying (Anderson, 2007:41). Indirect forms of bullying include non-verbal bullying as well as isolation or exclusion of a learner from games or group activities; the spread of rumours to make the victim appear untrustworthy to their peers; and threatening gestures and hiding of belongings (Anderson, 2007:41; Rigby, 1996:20). On the other hand, boys are more exposed to direct forms of bullying (Sharrif, 2008:5; Rigby, 1996:45; Sullivan, 2006:44; Olweus, 1993:18). Direct and indirect forms of bullying are manifested in different ways namely physically, verbally, socially or through cyber-bullying.

In the remainder of this section, the researcher characterizes different forms of bullying namely: physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying, cyber bullying and gender bullying.

#### **a) Physical bullying**

Physical bullying entails the use of a physical ability or strength by a learner to hurt or control another learner (Rigby, 1996:19; Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Physical bullying is overt in nature, includes open attacks and is usually caused by immediate spontaneous anger (Rigby, 1996:12; Olweus, 1993:10). Some scholars on bullying (Sharrif, 2008:15; Owens *et al.*, 2001:216; Rigby, 1996:45; Olweus, 1993:18) assert that forms of physical bullying are more prominent among boys than girls. In addition, Sharrif (2008:9) contends that, although physical bullying is observable, it is also termed hidden bullying because it often happens in the absence of adults, teachers and supervisors. The practise of physical bullying is entrenched in unequal power relations (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Physical bullying usually leaves victims in a state of fear and with feelings of insecurity. The dangerous consequences of physical bullying on learners caused Horsthemke (2009:202) to refer to schools as dangerous sites. However, findings on bullying indicate that physical bullying constitutes only a third of the types of bullying experienced at school (De Wet, 2005:715; Coloroso, 2003:16). The nature of physical bullying indicates that schools have a challenge to initiate and maintain the safety of learners.

#### **b) Verbal bullying**

Verbal bullying occurs when a learner or a group of learners use(s) language to hurt another learner or group of learners (Culpeper, 2011:12). Direct verbal bullying happens when the expression used by a learner does not conform to the values and norms of a cultural group (Culpeper, 2011:12). In the case of verbal bullying the audience or hearer perceives the utterance as ostracizing, painful and negative (Sharrif, 2008:17). Therefore verbal bullying is also termed overt bullying since it can be heard and witnessed. Rigby (1996:43) asserts that verbal bullying is very common and is practised by both boys and girls and constitute about 70% of reported cases of bullying at schools but is mostly neglected because it is difficult to substantiate. Some examples of verbal bullying are name calling, verbal insults and verbal

assaults, spreading rumours about a learner, and making sexually abusive and threatening remarks (Shariff, 2008:23; Sullivan, 2006:45; Rigby, 1996:20; Olweus, 1993:19). Hence schools need to educate learners about the different aspects of verbal bullying and the negative consequences of bullying on learners' academic and emotional development.

### **c) Social bullying**

Field *et al.* (2009:10) define social bullying as “behaviour that seeks to destroy a person’s social status through attacking her social and sexual reputation”. Social bullying is a non-verbal form of bullying which cannot be heard or seen because its aim is to hurt silently (Culpeper, 2011:12; Anderson, 2007:41). Field *et al.* (2009:9) state that if social bullying involves a larger group, some victims will find it difficult to understand their fault or know the perpetrator. In addition, non-verbal bullying (social bullying) is very difficult to verify because it is quite demanding to determine if the action was deliberate and intended to hurt (Shariff, 2008:20). Field *et al.* (2009:57) found that a school policy on bullying which involves consequences for direct physical and verbal bullying may promote social bullying because some learners would be isolated and targeted. The latter practice by learners confirms the assertion that power is a relative and active process which happens within relationships (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Hence learners who do not feel strong enough to bully physically or exercise verbal threats resort to social bullying.

### **d) Cyber-bullying**

Hinduja and Patchin (2009:64) and Meyer (2009:21) define cyber-bullying as the use of an electronic medium of communication such as emails or text messages to threaten or harm others. Computers, cellphones, emails, Facebook and YouTube can be used for hate speech and offensive and improper comments, and video clips and photographs by a learner to hurt other learners (Meyer, 2009:21; Shariff, 2008:29). Trolley and Hanel (2010:33) assert that cyber-bullying is the traditional form of bullying that has transformed into a more dangerous form. With this in mind, Hinduja and Patchin (2009:71) state that perpetrators of cyber-bullying are mostly victims of school bullying who are unable to defend themselves. As a consequence they seek revenge in cyberspace where they can make an impact on their perpetrators. This again illustrates the relative nature of power among learners and how

power influences and shapes patterns of bullying among learners (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). Trolley and Hanel (2010:33) found that instances of cyber-bullying are increasing and have destructive consequences on learners as well. For example, at a school in Japan a student was forced into the bathroom and stripped naked. Pictures of her naked body were taken and circulated among her school mates (Shariff, 2008:50). The following table presents the difference between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying.

**Table 1: Differences between traditional forms of bullying and cyber-bullying**

<b>Traditional bullying</b>	<b>Cyber-bullying</b>
Traditional bullying can be seen	Cannot be seen until reported
It is more direct	Cyber-bullying could be anonymous
Always involves fewer people	Cyber-bullying can involve hundreds of people

In this study cyber-bullying was not intensively interrogated because cyber-bullying is different from the traditional forms of bullying. As such it is necessary to conduct a specific investigation in the area of cyber-bullying to enable a deeper understanding of the manifestations of cyber-bullying.

**e) Gender bullying**

Gender bullying occurs when a student hurts another as a consequence of adhering to the acceptable or traditional sexual norms, dominant sex culture or male domination practices (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:465). Consistent with the latter, Bhana *et al.* (2009:50) found that the teachers involved in their investigation asserted that males have to dominate and view gender bullying as triggered by female disrespect for males. Hence it is in the light of the ideological belief of male domination that some male teachers handle gender-based bullying at school. In line with this view, Meyer (2009:4) also mentions that 83% of the learners who participated in her study indicated that most teachers rarely intervened when they hear gender-based remarks. Meyer (2009:4) asserts that teachers lack effective control strategies to

stop gender bullying at school. Therefore some school cultures accept and condone gender-based bullying which is influenced by ideological gender practices.

The gender variable is quite pervasive at schools for the following reasons. Firstly, gender practices which lead to gender bullying at schools are enshrined in the culture of the larger society (Bajaj, 2009:489; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98; Field *et al.*, 2009:16; Meyer, 2009:3; Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463). Secondly, due to peer pressure, some boys find it difficult to abstain from practices (gender bullying) to assert their masculinity since they would be considered as weak and not living up to the cultural expectations (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98). Therefore, the more powerful boys are able to evoke change in the behaviour of others as noted above (Section 2.3). Thirdly, schools do not have a systematic way of dealing with gender bullying (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:103-104; Meyer, 2009:4). Thus gender bullying is evaluated subjectively by school authorities and handled differently, based on the severity of an incident.

In addition, some school curricula are designed to perpetuate different gender roles and assert the domination of female learners by male learners (Rigby, 2003:4). In order to maintain the dominant place boys bully girls and other boys who do not abide by the cultural practice to sustain male dominance at school (Bhana *et al.*, 2009:58). Thus, through socialization at school some children learn gender stereotypes and male domination practices which are socially constructed and influenced by power relations which they (some learners) use to hurt other learners (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:464, Rigby, 2003:3; Radtke & Stam, 1994:3) Some aspects of gender bullying mentioned by Meyer (2009:5) are: showing defaced female images; grabbing breasts; pinching bra-straps; calling female learners slags or dogs; commenting on the size of a girl's breasts; and making statements like "that is so gay". Thus with gender bullying girls are mostly targeted due to ideological socialization processes.

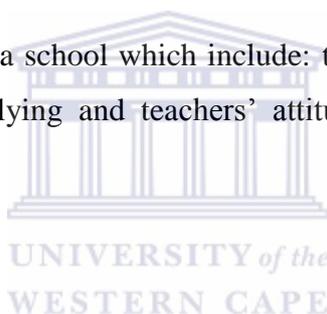
The purpose of this discussion on gender based bullying is to alert readers to the factors which promote the various aspects of gender bullying among learners at school. And to encourage teachers and school authorities to control the discrimination which encourages gender bullying at school. However, the latter would require schools to investigate how gender is reproduced in the specific school's context and seek ways on how to prevent the reproduction process of gender differences among learners.

## 2.4.4 Causes of bullying at school

In this study the causes of bullying are classified into two main categories, namely the ‘inside of school’ factors and the ‘outside of school’ factors. The ‘inside of school’ factors include the school culture which influences the activities and consequently the behaviour of learners within a specific school context (Meyer, 2009:23; Suckling & Temple, 2002:20; Rigby, 1996:80; Olweus, 1993:36). The ‘outside of school’ factors explained in this chapter are cultural influences (Rigby, 1996:78), the family environment (Lines, 2008:127; Perry *et al.*, 2001:83; Rigby, 1996:73-77) and media influence (Randall, 1996:115; Olweus, 1993:2). The objective of this classification is to illustrate the fact that a good school culture has the capacity to reshape learners’ behaviour within a school community.

### a) The ‘inside of school’ factors

In this section the factors within a school which include: the school culture; the educational climate; a school policy on bullying and teachers’ attitudes are examined in relation to bullying.



#### i) School culture

School culture refers to the general aims, values, attitudes, beliefs and the assumptions of the principal, teachers and learners at a school. The culture of a school is noticeable in the collective views of the teachers and students, their actions and words, which are contained in how they think and behave (Meyer, 2009:23; Suckling & Temple, 2002:20; Rigby, 1996:80; Olweus, 1993:36). In line with this view, Suckling and Temple (2002:20) discovered that 85% of learners’ behaviour at school is influenced by the school structures. The different aspects of a school culture examined in this study include the educational climate of a school (Rigby, 1996:81), a school policy on bullying (Meyer, 2009:24; Rigby, 1996:86) and teachers’ attitudes towards bullying (Meyer, 2009:27; Rigby, 1996; 83). Thus a school culture is influential in encouraging or reducing forms of bullying.

With a good school culture a principal, teachers, parents and learners have shared aims, beliefs and assumptions about the functioning of a school. As a result, all the stakeholders work towards the achievement of the general goals of the school which may include a

reduction of bullying (Field *et al.*, 2009:57; Meyer, 2009:23). On the other hand, with a bad school culture all the stakeholders have different aims hence there is no cooperation to reduce bullying.

A school culture is usually promoted by a dominant interest which is hardly challenged at school (Rigby, 1996:80). The dominant culture of a school can be acquired through a social learning process where new learners and teachers are bound to follow an already existing culture at a school. In addition, the power to bully or the formation of positive relationships among learners is embedded in a school culture. Hence a pattern of bullying can be deep-rooted or controlled in a school culture (Suckling & Temple, 2002:10). For instance, if a school culture promotes gender stereotypes or the notion of male domination new learners and teachers at that school will learn and practise such behaviour, thereby reproducing a cycle of gender bullying.

## **ii) Educational climate**

The educational climate of a school can also influence bullying among learners. The educational climate of a school refers to how formal learning takes place and the content of a school curriculum (Rigby, 1996:81). Formal learning refers to how the overt curriculum is being implemented; the content of the school subjects and the interest and attitude of the teachers towards their subjects (Rigby, 1996:82). Inappropriate content or the type of teaching or learning activities selected may cause a lesson to be boring and this may cause some learners to act out on other learners in the classroom (Rigby, 1996:82). In line with the latter view, Suckling and Temple (2002:13) mention that learners learn in diverse ways and teachers should use a variety of strategies to minimize behaviour problems in a classroom. Thus the teaching and learning styles selected by a teacher have an effect on learners' behaviour in a classroom.

## **iii) A school policy on bullying**

Another cause of bullying within a school is the nature of the school policy on bullying. A school policy on bullying is a guideline for what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour at a school and it may exist in written or unwritten form but is generally understood by the members of a school community (Rigby, 1996:86). The expected

behaviour is clearly stated in the policy and the sanctions for defaulters made very clear (Meyer, 2009:24; Rigby, 1996:86). The objective of a school policy on bullying is to promote positive forms of behaviour among the members of the school community (Rigby, 1996:86). A fair and just approach from school authorities and teachers may promote positive behaviour among learners while unfair practices by school authorities and teachers may promote negative behaviour among learners. Therefore, how the members of a school community respond to the provisions of a policy on bullying is pertinent in influencing the behaviour of learners at a school (Rigby, 1996:86). However, Meyer (2009:24) asserts that many schools do not have a school policy on bullying or a systematic approach to dealing with bullying problems.

#### **iv) Teachers' attitudes in relation to bullying**

Teachers' behaviour at school may provoke bullying among learners. Bhana *et al.* (2009:50), Chabaya *et al.* (2009:104), Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:456), Meyer (2009:4) and Rigby (1996:83) have identified various practices by teachers which encourage bullying among learners. For example, name-calling of learners by teachers encourages direct and indirect forms of classroom bullying (Rigby, 1996:83). Also, some teachers simply do not take action against bullying, thereby promoting bullying at school (Suckling & Temple, 2002:10). In addition, Bhana *et al.* (2009:50) and Chabaya *et al.* (2009:104) found that cases of gender bullying are evaluated subjectively by teachers hence there is no defined punishment for specific actions. In line with this view, Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:456) found that inconsistency by teachers in dealing with cases of bullying is a cause of bullying among learners. With this in mind, Meyer (2009:4) states that 83% of participants in her study indicated that teachers rarely intervened when learners bullied others verbally. However, some teachers assert that they cannot determine bullying or feel confident to address a bullying situation at school because they were never trained to address cases of bullying (Meyer, 2009:22). Meyer (2009:4) contends that there is a deficiency of effective intervention by teachers to interrupt the process of bullying at school. Therefore, the teacher's attitude may incite negative use of power in the form of verbal bullying among learners. Suckling and Temple (2002:10) assert that many learners do not have an opportunity to experience moral teaching other than in a school environment. Hence teachers have a duty to contribute to the well-being of learners in order to make effective learning possible.

## **b) The ‘Outside of school’ factors**

The ‘outside of school’ factors include: the family environment; individual characteristics of a learner; cultural influences and media influences.

### **i) The family environment**

There are various conditions within a family which may promote the rate of bullying at school. Sullivan (2000:22) found that 40% of perpetrators of bullying at school are victims of bullying at their home. Some of the family conditions mentioned by Schwartz *et al.* (2001:83), Sullivan (2000:23) and Rigby (1996:75) which influence bullying in learners include:

- No encouragement to cooperate with others;
- A family without moral values;
- A family where there is little or no communication;
- Lack of love or care from parents/care givers;
- A child not being accepted by the parents/care givers;
- A family where honesty is not important;
- A family that does not sympathize with a child or care about a child’s feelings;
- Physical and emotional maltreatment from parents/guardians or care givers;
- A family where a grown-up is treated as a child; and
- Children whose parents/care givers do not teach them the consequences or set limits to their behaviour.

Thus, these inept family circumstances may influence a child to bully other learners at school.

### **ii) Individual characteristics of a learner**

A major cause of bullying at school is the personal features of a learner. Schwartz *et al.* (2001:74) point out that victims of bullying possess personal characteristics which attract bullies. Some personal attributes which attract bullying are a state of poor mental health and low cognitive development (Fisher *et al.*, 2012:2). Schwartz *et al.* (2001:74) include obesity and inappropriate social attitudes as factors which may precipitate bullying among learners at

school. In addition, the perpetrators of bullying have some characteristics which push them to bully, as discussed above (Section 2.4.1). Therefore the features of victims on the one hand and the physical strength, intelligence, verbal abilities or group leader status of perpetrators on the other hand influence bullying among learners.

### **iii) Cultural and community influences**

In addition, Bhana *et al.* (2009:57), Rigby (1996:78) and Lips (1994:90) have identified the influence of some cultural practices of a community on learners' behaviour. As a child grows up in a particular community, he/she is exposed to a culture which influences his/her behaviour at school. Some cultural practices which may determine a bullying attitude in a child are a culture of violence, gender stereotypes and a culture of male domination (Bhana *et al.*, 2009:57; Lips, 1994:90). The cultural practices listed above are influenced by a notion to dominate or control, which are enshrined in unequal power relations (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). For example, in an investigation carried out on the Zulu culture, in relation to violence and bullying at school, it was found that a culture of male domination reinforces gender violence and bullying at school (Bhana *et al.*, 2009:57). Some boys may have to establish their masculinity over other boys and girls at school through bullying. As a consequence, some male learners find it difficult to act contrary to this view of male domination because they may be considered as weak and not living up to their cultural expectations. Thus the culture of a community influences how learners interact and relate to one another.

### **iv) Media influences**

Findings on bullying have confirmed that some learners are influenced by the media to bully their peers at school (Sharrif, 2008:105; Roberts, 2006:3). The kind of bullying activities influenced by the media are grabbing one's crotch, making obscene gestures and threatening to urinate on others (Roberts, 2006:3). Violence in wrestling, for example, may encourage some children to emulate such practices at school (Rigby, 1996:78). Thus children who are already prone to bullying may be encouraged by a programme where the aggressor is victorious. As such the media encourages some learners to use their natural strength to bully other learners at school.

From the synthesis of findings on the causes of bullying discussed above it is obvious that learners experience negative effects. Therefore it is imperative at this juncture to examine some of the consequences of bullying on learners.

### **2.4.5 Consequences of bullying**

Both perpetrators of bullying actions and their victims suffer terrible consequences as a result of bullying. The consequences of bullying for victims are influenced by factors such as: the resilient nature of the victim; the frequency with which the bullying occurs; and the duration of the bullying (Ladd & Ladd, 2001:26). Hence the consequences of bullying for victims differ from one learner to another (Rigby, 1996:54-65; Olweus, 1993:33). Some learners may be able to shrug off the consequences of bullying. However, Ladd and Ladd (2001:26) contend that frequent peer bullying overwhelms learners' coping devices and therefore has a severe negative impact on the victim. On the other hand, perpetrators of bullying actions also experience consequences such as truancy and dropping out of school, juvenile delinquent activities and shoplifting (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009:14). At a later stage in life perpetrators of bullying may experience depression, which is a significant consequence of being a bully (Rigby, 1996:64). Therefore bullying at school has both short and long term consequences on victims and perpetrators.

The consequences of bullying on learners indicate that school authorities may adopt restorative measures which would help perpetrators of bullying actions and victims alike rather than a punishment system (Mahaffey & Newton, 2008:11). On the other hand, Rigby (1996:48) asserts that not all relevant stakeholders acknowledge the impact of bullying on victims. Thus it is important to discuss some consequences of bullying on learners to enlighten the various stakeholders about such effects.

#### **a) Low self-esteem**

One of the most damaging consequences of bullying on learners is a low self-esteem experienced by victims of bullying (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:20; Olweus, 1993:33). Bullying results in low self-esteem because some victims of bullying have not yet developed skills to assert themselves among their peers (Rigby, 1996:51). The inability of a victim to defend

him/herself is considered a victory against him/her and may lead to low self-esteem. A breakdown in the self-esteem of a learner makes him/her more vulnerable to bullying (Olweus, 1993:33). Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:456) state that low self-esteem as a consequence of bullying at school affects the mental health of learners and hinders their ability to make progress in their studies. Sharrif (2008:25) adds that bullying often leaves victims with mental anguish which is sufficient to destroy the learner's sense of self. Low self-esteem as a consequence of bullying at school is illustrated in the quotation below: "They [i.e. other learners] think I am just useless" (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009:452). Low self-esteem has repercussions such as a drop in academic performance, depression and isolation of self from others.

#### **b) Absenteeism from school**

Absenteeism from school is another consequence of bullying experienced by learners at schools globally (Rigby, 1996:52; Olweus, 1993:33). In a study conducted in South Africa by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:452) it was found that victims of school bullying hate schooling due to their fear of being bullied. Also, Townsend *et al.* (2009:33) found that bullying is one factor that contributes to high rates of absenteeism and consequently school dropouts in South Africa. These are consistent with findings by Smith and Sharp (1994:7) that some victims of bullying stay absent from school to avoid being bullied.

#### **c) Isolation of victims of bullying**

Furthermore, victims of bullying have few or no friends (Rigby, 1996:51; Olweus, 1993:33). This aligns with Rigby's (1996:51) finding that learners who have not been bullied do not like to be friends with victims of bullying. This leads to the isolation of victims of bullying. Smith and Sharp (1994:7) also found that some victims of bullying deliberately isolate themselves by choosing subjects that many learners are not interested in. Such victims might also not be interested in the subjects but merely want to avoid the bullies or other learners. Isolation causes victims to be sad and this may affect their concentration and ability to learn.

#### **d) Self-harm effect**

Another effect of bullying on victims is self-harm. Some victims of bullying experience depression, anxiety and consequently a state of poor mental health (Sharrif, 2008:25). A state of poor mental health may cause a few learners to self-harm or commit suicide (Fisher *et al.*, 2012:4). An intention of self-harm by a victim of bullying can be illustrated by the quotation below from another South African learner: “Sometimes I felt like I should harm myself ... I felt like doing it” (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009:452). Rigby (1996:56) affirms that school bullying may cause learners to commit suicide in many countries. However, though bullying is not the sole cause of self-harm, preventing bullying at school will also prevent some incidents of self-harm among teenage learners. Therefore, Fisher *et al.* (2012:4) assert that there is a great need for research into bullying and self-harm to be carried out at schools to ensure the availability of various effective coping strategies for victims of bullying both nationally and internationally.

Bullying impedes the social, emotional and academic development of learners. As such, bullying demands the implementation of anti-bullying policies at school (Lee, 2004:54) which will serve to enable learners to use the power they possess positively in order to prevent bullying actions. Some intervention strategies that can be used to control bullying among learners at school are discussed below.

#### **2.4.6 Intervention programmes to control bullying**

Field *et al.* (2009:55) describe an intervention programme on bullying as any individual, group or systematic efforts and processes geared towards the control of bullying at school. Varnava (2002:14) suggests that the main objectives of an intervention programme should be to raise the awareness of the entire school community about the occurrence of bullying and to provide guidance for both bullies and victims. In line with the latter view, McEwan and Damer (2000:151) propose that an intervention programme should promote safety and an appropriate learning environment for all learners. Field *et al.* (2009:57) also caution scholars and school authorities that the selection of an intervention programme at a school should be based on the specific needs of learners. Hence an intervention policy on bullying can enable a development of context-appropriate curriculum programmes that will assist learners to modify their behaviour.

Consistent with the above discussion, O'Moore and Minton (2004:8) caution school authorities and teachers that punishment meted out to perpetrators of bullying at school is reactive to bullying and does not satisfy the victim's needs. The traditional approach whereby punishment is meted out for school bullies is an ineffective means to control bullying at school because its aim is to apportion blame since it is an execution of legitimate power by the school authority over illegitimate power of the learners. With punishment meted out to bullies, victims of bullying still live in fear, resentment or guilt hence the problem is unresolved (Mahaffey & Newton, 2008:11). In addition, O'Moore and Minton (2004:10) state that a punishment system excludes bullying on the part of teachers towards learners, and on the part of learners towards teachers, which is also problematic in schools. Thus the caution on the use of punishment to address bullying is quite relevant in the South African context because most school policies are reactive to bullying.

#### **a) A whole school approach: The development of an anti-bullying policy**

The development of a whole school policy on bullying has been suggested by most scholars as a proactive means to control bullying at school (Lee, 2004:53; Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:93; Rigby, 1996:115; Sharp & Thompson, 1994:66). A whole school approach should address the main goals, plans and practices which a school envisages to pursue (Rogers, 2007:6). However, Rogers (2007:6) cautions that with a whole school approach a school has to identify the weaknesses of a practice and state clearly how that practice would change.

Rigby (1996:129-131) identifies the different stages involved in the development of a whole school anti-bullying policy as follows:

- identification of the need for an anti-bullying policy at a school based on the causes, forms and adverse consequences of bullying identified at a school;
- consultation with all stakeholders of a school;
- the development and implementation of the policy; and
- The evaluation and monitoring of the policy.

The different phases of a whole school policy are examined below.

## **b) Phases in the development of an anti-bullying policy**

The different phases of an anti-bullying policy at a school include: an assessment of the level of bullying; consultation with all stakeholders of a school; implementation of the policy; and a periodic evaluation of the success of the policy as described below.

### **i) Assessment of bullying at a school**

Roberts (2006:67), Sullivan *et al.* (2004:93) and Rigby (1996:115) declare that the first step in developing an anti-bullying policy is to conduct research to assess the level of bullying at a school. Roberts (2006:67) and Rigby (1996:115) state that after the assessment, the whole school should be educated on the bullying going on at the particular school in order to create awareness. Hence, Rigby (1996:130) and Trolley and Hanel (2010:66) state that a definition of bullying at a school should be developed and made known to all parents, teachers, community members, classrooms and individuals.



### **ii) General Consultation**

After identifying the need for an anti-bullying policy at a school, the next step should be to consult all relevant stakeholders of a school community to suggest ideas to be included in the school policy (Sharp & Smith, 1994:32). Previous findings have established that consultation encourage commitment in the development and implementation of policies at school (Lee, 2004:55; Sharp & Thompson, 1994:65; Olweus, 1993:66). The level of commitment of relevant stakeholders of a school when consulted to contribute to the development of an anti-bullying policy is illustrated in the quotation below:

All the kids were consulted. They felt really good about that. We actually talked about the fact that this identified it as a really important document for the school. They took it as a really important task and came up with all sorts of comments ... this has been different and good. I am really pleased that the parents are now going to be drawn in on this (Sharp & Thompson, 1994:65).

The quotation above illustrates the excitement of a school teacher who was consulted for suggestions to be included in a school policy on bullying. The teacher also expressed the cheerful feelings of the learners who were consulted and the significance the learners

attached to the document due to their participation. In addition, the school teacher also indicated his enthusiasm for parents to be involved in the development of the school policy.

### **iii) Implementation of an anti-bullying policy**

The third phase in the development of an anti-bullying policy is the implementation phase. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:93) mention that a whole school community works together to arrive at a shared understanding of bullying and use the shared knowledge to develop and implement strategies to prevent bullying. Trolley and Hanel (2010:66) and Field *et al.* (2009:55) add that responsibilities for all the different roles players should be clearly defined in the policy. Thus the implementation process would be a joint and consistent effort of the different role players which will ensure effectiveness.

### **iv) Evaluation phase of an anti-bullying policy**

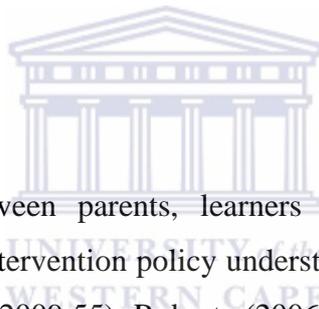
Rigby (1996:134) states that it is essential to evaluate an anti-bullying policy because ideas and activities do change over time and may also affect the success of a policy. Consistent with the latter, O'Moore and Minton (2002:20) and, Sharp and Smith (1994:39) also suggest that a review process should include formal research processes and informal feedback from parents, teachers and learners on the success of the policy in practice. Some authors such as Sullivan *et al.* (2004:93), O'Moore and Minton (2002:20), Suckling and Temple (2002:38) and Rigby (1996:134) mention the significance of a periodic evaluation or revision of an intervention policy to enable its effectiveness. Hence, strategic management should be used to monitor an existing programme on bullying.

## **2.4.7 Duties of different role players in an intervention policy**

An anti-bullying policy should have defined roles for all stakeholders for purposes of effectiveness. The different roles suggested for various stakeholders by previous authors on bullying are explained below.

### **a) Role of school authorities**

School authorities should investigate bullying and educate the entire school community on the specific forms and consequences of bullying happening at the school. In addition, it is the responsibility of the school authorities to make a very powerful statement denouncing bullying from all members of the school community (Rigby, 1996:131). Roberts (2006:67) states that school authorities have to initiate the development and implementation of prevention strategies. In line with the latter, Sullivan *et al.* (2004:98) state that school authorities have to convince parents and learners about the approaches that can be used to help both victims of bullying and bullies. The school administration should also create and sustain a friendly environment for parents, learners and teachers. However, Field *et al.* (2009:55) warn that school authorities should expect contrary behaviour from some parents of bullies during such meetings but should ensure that the parents see the need for intervention.



### **b) The role of teachers**

Teachers have to mediate between parents, learners and school authorities within a framework of procedures in an intervention policy understood by all stakeholders at a school (Varnava, 2002:51). Field *et al.* (2009:55), Roberts (2006:67) and Rigby (1996:134) outline teachers' interaction with parents of learners in relation to bullying as follows: Firstly, the teachers have to be patient, listen to and tolerate parents. Secondly, teachers have to assure parents of their care towards the learners and that further action will be taken when a learner is bullied. Thirdly, teachers should caution parents about the time needed to investigate a bullying incident. Fourthly, teachers should inform parents about the provisions of a school policy on bullying. Fifthly, teachers should listen to parents' suggestions in relation to a bullying incident and avoid arguments with parents. Lastly, teachers should arrange a follow-up session with the parents to inform them about the findings and decisions regarding a bullying incident. On the other hand, the roles bestowed on teachers in their engagement with learners in a whole school policy can be summarized as follows: In their engagement with learners, teachers have to assume the following roles: act as role models to learners; exercise fairness and equality in dealing with learners; create an appropriate learning environment; listen to victims of bullying and initiate dialogue with victims of bullying; and encourage the victims (Field *et al.*, 2009:55; Roberts, 2006:67; Rigby, 1996:134). Therefore the final

implementation of an anti-bullying policy at a school rests with teachers who have to drive the policy and the necessary educational programmes needed to implement the policy.

### **c) Role of parents/guardians/care givers**

Suckling and Temple (2002:63) and Rigby (1996:247) outlined some key activities for parents to engage with their children to control bullying at school. The activities include:

- Keep a record of decisions arrived at during school meetings;
- Stay calm and do not abuse teachers;
- Share their views with other parents and make suggestions on a case;
- Listen to children and show love;
- Teach children to distinguish between bullying and assertive behaviour;
- Teach children to understand the consequences of bullying on others;
- Work in partnership with a school to support children; and
- Praise children for good behaviour.

The above listed duties of parents/guardians/care givers in relation to bullying at school will encourage collaboration with the school authorities, hence may reduce bullying among learners at school.

### **d) Role of learners**

Varnava (2002:57), Suckling and Temple (2002:101), Elliott (1992:195) and Rigby (1996:144) outline some roles for learners in a whole-school policy on bullying as follows:

- Read and sign an anti-bullying policy of a school;
- Abide by the provisions of an anti-bullying policy;
- Stop anger or disagreement leading to bullying;
- Discuss regularly with peers ways of preventing bullying;
- Report cases of bullying to teachers; and
- Encourage bystanders to accompany a victim to report a bullying incident to a teacher.

Hence, Hinduja and Patchin (2009:151) assert that a learner can take some measures to protect him/her from bullying. Therefore, when given an opportunity the different role players may develop the capacity to initiate and implement change in a collegial manner at a school. However, most schools' management systems have a top-down approach where school managers, teachers and learners are forced to implement policies developed from outside the school. The contrived nature of school policies (Lee, 2004:39) may account for the reason why most stakeholders are not fully committed to initiatives to counter bullying at school or other initiatives to improve schools.

#### **2.4.8 Intervention through the school curriculum**

Lee (2004:62) and Sullivan *et al.* (2004:150) mention that bullying can also be controlled at a school through the use of the formal and informal curriculum. Through formal teaching subjects like history, drama and literature the issue of bullying can be incorporated into the subject content to enable learners to learn to be assertive and to denounce the abuse of power (Lee, 2004:62; Rigby, 1996:152; Sharp & Thompson, 1994:67). In the informal curriculum, teachers can arrange cooperative sessions within a classroom to enable decisions by learners through positive use of power (Rigby, 1996:155). Therefore through a curriculum schools can create awareness among learners about bullying and promote an anti-bullying culture.

To sum up, there is evidence that intervention programmes have succeeded in reducing the rate of bullying at schools (Rigby, 1996:110). A successful intervention policy includes suggestions from all members of a school community; ensures consistency in its implementation; and each group at a school has defined roles (O'Moore & Minton, 2002:20; Sharp & Thompson, 1994:65). Although there are numerous intervention programmes, the selection of a specific intervention programme for a particular school should be determined by the needs of learners within a specific school context. The influential role of a school culture is worth mentioning at this point as a determining factor in the success or failure of an intervention programme.

The implementation of an intervention programme to control bullying in a school is determined by a school culture. Where school culture is positive, the stakeholders share views and arrive at a consensus on how the policy would be implemented. Each stakeholder feels committed and there is consistency in how the policy is interpreted and implemented

(Fullan, 2007:86). Hence, a positive school culture may lead to the success of an intervention programme to control bullying in a school. On the other hand, where the school culture is negative, the implementation of an intervention programme is forced upon the stakeholder without his/her participation in decision making about the policy (Owens, 2004:112). Thus a lack of shared views among the stakeholders will hinder the success of an intervention programme.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Bullying is informed by both “outside of school’ and ‘inside of school’ factors. Peer bullying at school is also determined by the ability to abuse power by some learners. The latter includes gender-based bullying whereby some boys choose to establish their masculinity by bullying other boys and girls. Bullying is manifested in different forms namely: physical, verbal and non-verbal, and electronic. The causes and consequences of bullying are very similar within and between countries. However, the rates of bullying differ from one country to another and also within countries among different social settings. In addition, at schools where bullying is contextually investigated, suitable intervention programmes may be developed to control the bullying. Nevertheless, effective implementation of a suitable anti-bullying programme at a school rest with teachers who have to drive the essential learning programmes needed to apply the policy. Thus bullying can be controlled in a school based on the teachers’ response to bullying although all stakeholders may play a role in the implementation process.

In the next chapter the research methodology of the study is described.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes a qualitative methodological paradigm and a quantitative methodological paradigm within which this research was located, and an interpretive theoretical approach which was used to carry out this investigation. In addition, a case study research design is outlined. An account of the data collection and analysis processes is also included in this chapter.

### 3.2 Mixed method paradigm

This study combined both the qualitative and quantitative methodological paradigms (mixed method) to data collection and data analysis. Mixed method involves the planned use of two or more different kinds of data gathering and analysis techniques (Creene *et al.*, 2011:259). A study with joint paradigms uses methods that collect and represent data on a social phenomenon with numbers such as questionnaires and structured observations along with methods that investigate a social phenomenon with words such as interviews and unstructured observations (Creene *et al.*, 2011:259). Hence, a mixed method involves explanation and description since it is based on the quantitative and qualitative dichotomy (Giddings, 2006:198). Therefore, methods within the quantitative methodological paradigm are used to analyse and explain the numerical data. On the other hand, methods within the qualitative methodological paradigm are used when appropriate to identify and describe themes within the data. The qualities of a qualitative methodological paradigm and a quantitative methodological paradigm are discussed in the paragraphs below.

### 3.2.1 A qualitative methodological paradigm

A qualitative study can be defined as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Cresswell, 1998:15). This definition is significant in this study since the main purpose was to develop an in-depth understanding of bullying, which is a social crisis faced by most school communities in various contexts in South Africa. The study was also located within a qualitative methodological paradigm since it captured participants’ views on bullying which corresponds with the ‘insiders’ perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270), that is; the individual reasons and intentions behind an action which is a starting point in a qualitative paradigm.

Proponents of a qualitative methodological paradigm hold the view that human action is influenced by historical, social, political and cultural contexts (Flick, 2006:12). Thus within a qualitative paradigm a researcher must be present at the research site, see the participants and interact with the participants within their context (Cresswell, 2009:175; Gail *et al.*, 2007:449). Flick (2006:12) establishes that within a qualitative methodological paradigm a researcher investigates how the participants make meaning of their experiences with no predictions or speculations..

A view of a qualitative methodological paradigm requires researchers to construct a process of the occurrence of a social phenomenon and not to reconstruct a phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). This study made use of the latter view and knowledge of the occurrence of the phenomenon of bullying was constructed at the three selected school based on the interrogation of learners’ experiences and the conditions at each school through the use of questionnaires and interviews. With the use of interviews, learners and teachers provided exhaustive explanations which led to the development of a comprehensive view of how the process of bullying is created and sustained at the three selected schools. Thus in the course of data collection the researcher in this study was very sensitive in order not to interrupt the process of narrations or bring in biased views into the discussion with the participants.

In addition, a qualitative methodological paradigm takes into account the participants’ environment. Data collection takes place in a natural setting and involves the collection of narrative data and visuals over an extended period of time (Cresswell, 2009:175; Gail *et al.*, 2007:449). A study within a qualitative methodological paradigm seeks to investigate the natural development of a social phenomenon taking into consideration the experiences and

practices of the participants to develop local knowledge (Flick, 2006:12). The school environment represented the 'natural context' which is a significant feature of a qualitative methodological paradigm (Drew *et al.*, 2008: 156; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). The situation at each school, which influences learners' behaviour and how the learners interpreted their behaviour within the context of the school conditions, was investigated.

A researcher within a qualitative methodological paradigm deals with descriptive data in the form of words and pictures, field notes, videotapes and excerpts from videotapes in order to present findings. Cresswell (2009:175) adds that research within a qualitative methodological paradigm involves multiple sources of data such as observation, interviews, documents and the researcher reviews all the data and organizes categories, themes and patterns in the data. The inquirer also keeps an account of his/her personal motives and decisions made during an investigation (Gay *et al.*, 2006:401). The research process in a qualitative methodological paradigm develops as an investigation unfolds. Research methods are adjusted in the process of data collection based on interactions with participants (Cresswell, 2009:175; Drew *et al.*, 2008:186). The initial research process can be altered during the research process and all phases of the research may shift or change after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data (Cresswell, 2009:176). The researcher focuses on discovering and understanding the experiences of participants and this requires a reflexive research design (Gay *et al.*, 2006:401). With this in mind, the interview questions were formulated after the data from the questionnaires had been coded and categorized.

Within a qualitative methodological paradigm the processes of data collection and analysis take place simultaneously (Cresswell, 2009:175). From the first data collection source, a researcher makes reflections and seeks to confirm or refute the hunches in interviews or observations. In analysing data common themes and patterns are developed within the data and the findings described from the perspective of the participants (Gay *et al.*, 2006:401). The researcher builds patterns, categories, themes in the data from bottom up. Therefore the researcher organizes the data into more abstract units of information and work back and forth with the themes to establish a comprehensive set of themes (Cresswell, 2009:175). The final research report also includes the role of the researcher and his or her biases or preferences (Gay *et al.*, 2006:401). In this study the process of inductive analysis started in the first classroom when the questionnaire was administered. A question from a respondent on why teachers have not been included on the list of people who bully learners made the researcher in this study reflective and the researcher decided to include that in the interview questions.

Also, the data from the questionnaires were organized and themes developed and the themes were further explored during the interviews.

Lastly, Gay *et al.* (2006:399) mention that within a qualitative methodological paradigm the research reports include clear and detailed descriptions of a study which includes the voices of participants. The latter view is referred to as a ‘thick description’ (Babbie & Mouton: 2001:278). To arrive at a detailed description or ‘thick description’ (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278) of data collected a researcher within a qualitative methodological paradigm has to do the following: construct patterns within the data through analysis and resynthesis of essential parts of data collected, and interpret the social meaning of events and analyse relationships between internal and external factors influencing the phenomenon investigated (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271-272; Gail *et al.*, 2007:446-470). Consistent with the latter view the data in this study were categorized, patterns constructed and analysed to enable a ‘thick description’. Hence a qualitative methodological paradigm promotes a deep and holistic understanding of a social phenomenon.

### **3.2.2 A quantitative methodological paradigm**

A quantitative methodological paradigm involves the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that the observations reflect (Guthrie, 2010:168). A quantitative methodological paradigm involves a systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena with the use of statistical and mathematical techniques. Within a quantitative methodological paradigm data are expressed in the form of graphs, tables or other visual images which enable the phenomenon under investigation to be adequately described (McMillan, 2008:186-187). The data are usually in the form of statistics such as frequencies or percentages, averages and sometimes variability. The frequency distribution of data may display the number, percentage and mean corresponding to each variable investigated (Schutt, 2006:452). Proponents of a quantitative methodological paradigm believe that numbers will yield unbiased results that could be generalized to some larger population.

A quantitative methodological paradigm is based on variables; one of which is the cause and the other the effect or the independent and dependent variables respectively (Babbie, 2006:49; Punch, 2005:62). This implies that to be able to explain an event within a quantitative methodological paradigm, the researcher needs to know the cause of the event.

Proponents of a quantitative methodological paradigm believe that if a researcher knows the variables involved, he/she can set to control the independent variable and consequently predict the effect on the dependent variable using predetermined research instruments (Henning, *et al.*, 2004:3). Hence within a quantitative methodological paradigm the views of the researcher and experiences of the subjects under investigation are eliminated.

### **3.3 An interpretive theoretical approach**

An interpretive theoretical approach was considered the most suitable for this study since an interpretive approach centres on human thoughts and interactions. The major tenet of an interpretive theoretical approach focuses on understanding, describing and interpreting human actions. Explanations are generated from knowledge derived from interpreting human events (Ogunniyi, 1992:7). In this regard research participants are considered to be conscious of their thoughts and actions (Henning, *et al.*, 2004:20). In other words, in this study a thorough understanding of bullying was developed by exploring learners' consciousness of bullying, their individual decisions to bully or reject bullying and the conditions at school which influence learners' behaviour.

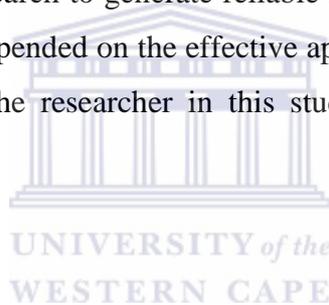
The notion of social rules and individual reasons embedded in an interpretive approach are central to understanding, describing and interpreting social behaviour (Henning *et al.*, 2004:19). This implies that for an action to take place the actor must have a reason and the action must be influenced by the norms of a social setting (Henning *et al.*, 2004:21). Therefore it is considered that bullying at school is determined by individual characteristics, the conditions of the school environment and the social conditions of a community. This study dealt with the personal reasons or unique characteristic of a learner which determined his/her reasoning and behaviour at school (Henning *et al.*, 2004:19). In this study, the learners completed questionnaires and participated in individual interviews which enabled an understanding of the school policies, social conditions of learners and learners' individual reasons in relation to bullying.

Next, an interpretive theoretical approach contends that reality is not pre-existent and there is no objective reality in the social world. These conceptions framed this study because knowledge of bullying at the schools involved was not pre-existent. The intention of this study was to construe knowledge on bullying by digging into the daily interactions and

everyday reasoning of learners at school based on the existing conditions which is consistent with the views of Babbie and Mouton (2001:28). With this in mind, this study interrogated the meaning the learners associated with their everyday behaviour at school.

Hence within an interpretive approach human actions are relative in various social settings. Some facts of the same event can be true to one natural environment but false to another (Henning *et al.*, 2004:19-21). This view ties in with the focus of this research because grade 10 learners' experiences with bullying in different social settings were investigated. The truth in relation to explanations and interpretations of the sets of responses for the three selected schools involved are not the same for all the variables. The factors which encourage bullying at the three selected schools are different in relation to each school context.

By way of summing up, this study embraced the key views of an interpretive theoretical approach which are to understand, describe and interpret learners' actions at school. However, the capacity of the research to generate reliable knowledge on the social reality of learners in relation to bullying depended on the effective application of the research methods, instruments and the ability of the researcher in this study to interpret the data within a confluence of social factors.



### **3.4 Research design: Case study**

A case study can be defined as, “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009:18). Also, a case study design can be used to investigate individuals, communities or organizational events (Punch, 2005:314). In a case study design, probes are used to enable participants to present their current actions, past actions, past environment and emotions and thoughts (Punch, 2005:144). Intensive probes may lead to previously unsuspected relationships between individuals and the environmental conditions.

This research has a case study design. In this study bullying was investigated at three different school environments. In a case study the same phenomenon is investigated using the same methods, sources and instruments of data collection (Yin, 2009:20; Punch, 2005:144). All the techniques of data collection are focused on a single phenomenon and information is collected that can help understand the specified unit (Gail *et al.*, 2007:448). The data from the

various cases were triangulated separately and a common conclusion derived based on the theory underpinning the investigation (Yin, 2009:15). Bullying was investigated at the three selected schools involved in this study using the same methods, sources and instruments of data collection. Also, the data from the three selected schools were described and interpreted separately because the factors that influence the actions of individuals or a social unit may bear little relationship to the influence of others (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320). Therefore case studies are used to produce hypothesis which can be verified through more detailed investigations.

In addition, conceptualization of a problem to be investigated is an integral part of a case study design in order to avoid any misinterpretation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:282). In this thesis the concept of bullying is extensively discussed, moving from an international perspective to a South African context which identifies the research problem. Chapter Two also explains how to define bullying and how to understand bullying. Literature on bullying has been reviewed and the theoretical framework (which constitutes the abuse of power by some learners) for this study has also been established to provide an in-depth understanding of the concept 'bullying' and this enabled a platform for analysing the data collected. It was anticipated that this clarification of what bullying is in the context of this study would facilitate quick and reliable responses from the respondents during the investigation.

A case study design involves an examination of multiple variables (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:281). This investigation is a case study design since the different forms of bullying, the reasons why learners bully, the different types of bullying and schools' policies put in place to address bullying were interrogated at three selected schools. Each of the above listed factors had different variables which were probed during the process of data collection. In addition, the impact of the different socially constructed systems on learners' actions and relationships at school were researched. This coincides with the views of Radtke and Stam (1994:3) that social conditions and cultural practices play significant roles in influencing learners' behaviour and relationships at school.

### **3.5 The process of triangulation**

Triangulation is a strategy in research whereby researchers put together data from multiple data sources, methods and/or disciplines, to enable an in-depth data interpretation in juxtaposition with the theoretical variables underpinning the study (Flick, 2006:24). This study made use of multiple methods (questionnaires and interviews) and sources (learners and teachers) of data collection. The data from questionnaires, individual interviews with learners and focus group interviews with teachers were brought together. This enabled similarities and dissimilarities in the data to be noticed and interpreted to develop an in-depth understanding of the dilemma of bullying at each of the three selected schools. In addition, the process of triangulation enabled the data to be analysed using the power relations theory which underpins the understanding of bullying in this study. Thus, the process of triangulation is imperative in understanding and interpreting data from multiple sources.

To sum up, bullying is a contemporary social problem which made a case study design quite suitable. Though case study designs have been criticized on the grounds that, results obtained from case studies cannot be generalized to a wider population but only assumes a theoretical generalization, a case study design remains the best option among qualitative research designs to investigate existing social events (Yin, 2009:3) because the subject's environment and history are taken into consideration. Although the problem of bias is envisaged within a case study design, the procedure of triangulation is often applied in case study investigations to minimize bias.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

In this section the instruments which were used to collect the data are discussed. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data in this study.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires for learners**

Questionnaires were administered to two hundred learners in the classroom to collect data which were analysed and interpreted in this study. Johnson and Christensen (2008:170) describe a questionnaire as follows:

A questionnaire is a self-report data-collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study. Researchers use questionnaires so that they can obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality and behavioural intentions of research participants.

Researchers use questionnaires to obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality and behavioural intentions of research participants. Questionnaires are not restricted to a single research method (quantitative study), that is, questionnaires can be used both in a qualitative and quantitative study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:170). In line with the latter view questionnaires (see Appendix 1) were used in this study to obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behavioural intentions of grade 10 learners at three selected schools. The information that was provided on the questionnaires was used to establish baseline data and for probing during interviews.

The questionnaire included both open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions had a list of alternative views for the respondents to select one or more. In this case clear instructions were included for each question on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire questions were used to draw responses to subsidiary research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 namely:

1. How does bullying happen among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools?
2. What factors influence the different forms of bullying at the three selected schools?
3. What are the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners at the three selected schools?
4. What policies are in place to address bullying at the three selected schools?

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

The second instrument which was used to collect data in this study was interviews (see Appendices 2 and 3). An interview consists of asking questions and receiving answers. Therefore it is an exchange of information between the researcher and the participant (Greeff, 2011:342). An interview is defined as, “essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general course for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the interviewee” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:291). This definition is significant for this study

because during the process of interviewing, topics raised by the interviewees were further probed and explored by the researcher in this study in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the process of bullying at the three selected schools.

There are two frequently used types of interviews namely: structured and semi-structured interviews. Fielding and Thomas (2009:246) assert that with a structured interview the researcher asks the same questions to all participants in the same order. Punch (2005:170) also states that structured interviews consist of preset questions. On the other hand, a semi-structured interview is flexible and probes may be formulated based on the interactions or discussions. Silverman (2006:110) asserts that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer is a facilitator who allows the interviewee the freedom to talk and offer his/her definitions of concepts on the topic investigated. The researcher in this study facilitated the interview discussions, and some interview probes were reformulated, based on the interactions during discussions. Hence semi-structured interviews enable participants to provide a richer version of events and experiences (Flick, 2006:175). Punch (2005:170) declares that the type of interview selected for an investigation depends on the research purposes and questions. Therefore semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study because the aim was to collect rich and detailed data to develop an in-depth understanding of learners' experiences with bullying at school. Two sets of interviews were conducted at the each of the three selected schools: individual interviews with some grade 10 learners and focus group interviews with some grade 10 teachers.

#### **a) Individual interviews**

During individual interviews the researcher asks questions and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time (Cresswell, 2005:215). Individual interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who can share ideas freely (Cresswell, 2005:215). In this study six Grade 10 learners who could share ideas freely participated in individual interviews which were tape recorded. The individual interviews with learners were used to probe issues raised in the questionnaires and elicited responses for subsidiary questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 as well.

## **b) Focus group interviews**

A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through an interview with a group of people, typically four to six (Cresswell, 2005:215). A focus group interview is a group discussion by people who meet together to express their views on a specific topic defined by a researcher (Cronin, 2009:227-228). Participants in a focus group are selected because they have characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the investigation (Greeff, 2011:361). In a focus group interview, the researcher asks general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group (Cresswell, 2005:215). A focus group interview is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Greeff, 2011:361). In this study the focus group interviews were carefully planned and took place in non-threatening environments with grade 10 teachers who have characteristics in common that relate to the experiences of grade 10 learners' bullying.

Flick (1998:122) asserts that focus group interviews are used as a method on their own or in combination with other methods. Firstly, a focus group interview is used as a self-contained method of data collection in studies where they serve as the principal source of data. Secondly, a focus group interview is used as a supplementary source of data in studies that rely on some other primary method. Thirdly, a focus group interview is used in a multi-method study that combines two or more means of gathering data in which no one primary method determines the use of the other (Greeff, 2011:361). The latter view is applicable in this study since multi-methods of data collection were used during this investigation.

The members in focus group interviews act as 'checks and balances' for each other which prevent false information from being included (Punch, 2009:146; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:291; Flick, 1998:122). Hence focus group interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher in this study to gather evidence on the collective views of teachers on bullying and the differences on views on bullying which contributed to an understanding of the phenomenon of bullying at the three selected schools.

The focus group interviews with teachers were used to probe issues raised in the questionnaires by learners and individual interviews with learners, and elicited responses for subsidiary questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 as well.

### **3.7 Data collection process**

The principals and teachers at the three selected schools were very approachable, hospitable and helpful in the process of data collection. Most of the arrangements to complete the questionnaires and conduct the interviews were done telephonically with the grade head for grade 10 in School B and the school principals and/or their deputies for Schools A and C. The principals and/or their deputies for Schools A and C chose the learners who completed the questionnaires and participated in the individual interviews, and the teachers who took part in focus group interviews. The grade head for grade 10 in School B chose the learners who completed the questionnaires and participated in individual interviews and the grade 10 teachers who took part in the focus group interview. Also, the class teacher of each of the grade 10 classes involved assisted to distribute the questionnaires to the learners in the classroom and the questionnaires were completed in the presence of the class teachers as well in the three selected schools.

#### **3.7.1 Visits to schools**

The researcher in this study paid a visit to each of the three selected schools two weeks before the questionnaires were administered. The purpose of the visit was to inform all potential participants about the research, the research aims and the procedure required to collect the data. During each visit, the researcher in this study explained the aims of the research, data collection processes and ethical procedures and consent forms for parents/care givers were given to learners in the selected grade 10 classes. The researcher in this study pleaded with the learners to take the letters and consent forms to their parents/care givers. The learners were also instructed to hand the signed consent forms (from their parents) to their class teachers three days before the questionnaire was completed at each school.

#### **3.7.2 Questionnaires for grade 10 learners**

The first instrument which was used to collect data were anonymous self-administered questionnaires completed by some grade 10 learners who consented to participate in the study (see Appendix 1). The researcher in this study introduced herself and explained the purpose of the research again to all learners. Next, the researcher in this study explained the ethical procedure (see Section 3.10 below) to all potential participants. This was guaranteed by each

participant signing the consent form and in the case of learners, parental/care givers' consent was obtained prior to the date of completing the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were completed in the classrooms during school hours. When the questionnaires were handed out some of the respondents asked questions and the researcher in this study clarified their doubts. In addition, each section on the questionnaire was introduced to the learners and the purpose clearly stated. On average each respondent took about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end of the exercise the respondents handed back the questionnaires and remained seated in their classroom while the researcher in this study left the classroom. Two grade 10 classes completed the questionnaire at each school hence the above process was repeated in the next class at each of the three selected schools. The questionnaires were completed at the three selected schools on three different days as arranged by the school authorities and/or teacher in charge (grade head) of grade 10 learners.

The numbers of learners who completed the questionnaires were as follows:

38 grade 10 learners X 2 (Grade 10) classes at School A = 76 (46 girls and 30 boys)

28 grade 10 learners X 2 (Grade 10) classes at School B = 56 (34 girls and 22 boys)

34 grade 10 learners X 2 (Grade 10) classes at School C = 68 (40 girls and 28 boys)

Hence a total of 200 questionnaires were completed by 200 Grade 10 learners. Of the 200 respondents 120 were girls and 80 were boys.

### **3.7.3 Individual interviews with grade 10 learners**

The second stage of data collection in this study was individual interviews with some grade 10 learners. Prior arrangements were made with all the potential interviewees through the grade head for grade 10 at School B and through the principals and/or their deputies at Schools A and C as explained above (see Section 3.7). The purpose of the study was explained to the interviewees and each interviewee was asked to volunteer half an hour of his/her time for the interview. The date, time and venue for interviews were pre-arranged. Each interviewee was reminded telephonically through the contact persons at the school of the interview date and time.

In order to maximize the fruitfulness of the interviews, a non-threatening and supportive environment was organized in each school by the school authorities. At School A, the deputy principal's office was used, at School B, a room reserved for departmental meetings was used and at School C, a room reserved for meetings was used as well.

At the start of each interview session, the researcher in this study greeted the participant, introduced herself and stated the purpose of the study. Next, the participant was informed about the voluntary nature of the study and all the participants consented and the interviews were tape recorded.

After each interview the researcher in this study reflected on the key aspects mentioned during the interview in her note book and waited for the next participant.

### **3.7.4 Focus group interviews with grade 10 teachers**

The third stage of data collection in this study was focus group interviews with some grade 10 teachers. Prior arrangements were made with all potential interviewees through the grade head for grade 10 at School B and through the principals and/or their deputies at Schools A and C as explained above (see Section 3.7). The purpose of the study was explained to potential participants and each participant was asked to volunteer half an hour of his/her time for the focus group interview. The date, time and venue for interviews were pre-arranged. Each interviewee was reminded telephonically through the contact persons at the school of the interview date and time.

In order to maximize the fruitfulness of the focus group interviews, a non-threatening and supportive environment was organized at each school by the school authorities. The same venues used for individual interviews were also used for focus group interviews. The physical environments of the interview venues were suitable ones; hence interruptions were minimized during the interview discussions.

The ethical procedure discussed in Section 3.7.3 was also applied during the focus group interviews. The researcher in this study also emphasized confidentiality in terms of the content of the focus group interview at the start of each focus group discussion and all members of a focus group at each of the three selected schools signed a confidentiality clause in respect of discussions during focus group interviews.

### **3.8 Criteria for selection of schools and participants**

Purposive sampling was used to select the schools and participants in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:166) state that purposive sampling is based on the researcher's judgment and the purpose of the study. The reasons for the selection of schools, learners and teachers who participated in this investigation are explained below.

#### **3.8.1 Selection of schools**

The existing WCED categorization of Western Cape schools into quintiles (Hall & Giese, 2009:37) was used for the selection of the three schools which participated in this study. Schools in South Africa have been classified into five different categories (quintiles) determined by the poverty level of the parents or care givers of the learners (Marais, 2001:2). The disadvantaged schools are found in quintile one and the more affluent schools are found in quintile five (Hall & Giese, 2009:37). The quintile classification of schools has enabled the Department of Basic Education to separate schools into high and low income schools as well as 'fee paying' and 'no fee' schools. The 'fee paying' schools are schools in the upper quintiles which are quintiles four and five while the 'no fee' paying schools are schools found in the lower quintiles which are quintiles one to three (Hall & Giese, 2009:37). Each national quintile contains 20% of all schools in South Africa (Hall & Giese, 2009:37). Following the quintile classification of schools, Schools A and C in this study were selected from quintiles one and three while School B was drawn from quintile four. Therefore, schools were chosen from the lower and the upper quintiles. The intention was to have a representative sample of South African learners in this study.

#### **3.8.2 Selection of learners**

Grade 10 learners were selected because previous investigations have found that more bullying occurs among high school learners than among primary school learners due to less adult supervision in high school (Roberts, 2006:7). In addition, learners in high school (as opposed to primary schools) are undergoing adolescence which causes emotional challenges that may influence bullying in some learners (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:11). Grade 10 learners were also selected because the average age is 16, which falls in the category of adolescence.

Two grade 10 classes at each of the three selected schools were purposefully chosen to complete the questionnaires. The objective was to have a representative sample of grade 10 learners in each of the three selected schools. The selection of learners for individual interviews was based on gender and participants' knowledge of the phenomenon of school bullying. The gender variable is identified as the most pervasive cause of bullying at school (Bhana *et al.*, 2009: 57; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98; Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463; Olweus, 1993:18). A total of six grade 10 learners (three female learners and three male learners), two from each school, were selected to participate in individual interviews. The selection on a gender basis was influenced by the research aim. The main research aim was to explore the different forms of bullying which transpire among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools. The researcher in this study liaised with the grade head for grade 10 at School B and the school principals and their deputies at Schools A and C to select learners who took part in the individual interviews. This is because the principals and teachers know the learners who have a good knowledge of bullying at their schools.



### **3.8.3 Selection of teachers for focus group interviews**

Four grade 10 teachers from each of the three selected schools (two female grade 10 teachers and two male grade 10 teachers) selected on a gender basis constituted a focus group. Hence a total of twelve grade 10 teachers, selected on a gender basis, participated in focus group interviews. Research on bullying have found that male and female teachers have different perspectives on bullying and as such male and female teachers respond differently to cases of bullying as well (Bhana *et al.*, 2009: 57; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98; Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463; Olweus, 1993:18). It has also been found that most victims of bullying prefer to report a bullying incident to a female teacher than to a male teacher because female teachers are more willing to assist victims of bullying than male teachers (Bhana *et al.*, 2009:57; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:98; Stromquist & Fischman, 2009:463; Olweus, 1993:18). In addition, grade 10 teachers were selected because they have a sense of the grade 10 learners' experiences with bullying at school. The intention of the selection of teachers of both genders was to have the different views of male and female teachers on bullying among grade 10 learners represented in the data.

### 3.9 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is defined as an attempt by a researcher to summarize data in a dependable and accurate manner while a qualitative data interpretation is an attempt by a researcher to find meaning in the data and to answer questions in terms of the implications of the study's findings (Gay *et al.*, 2006:467). Gay *et al.* (2006:467) affirm that the process of data analysis and interpretation is the most important stage in an investigation of a social problem because the researcher tries to understand what he/she has learnt from the entire research process. Cresswell (2009:184) asserts that the process of data analysis takes place concurrently with the processes of gathering data, making interpretations and writing reports. In the course of conducting research the researcher reviews the data, asks questions and looks for clarifications while gathering data (Gay *et al.*, 2006:468). This conscious approach in collecting and analysing data simultaneously permits a researcher to reflect on what has been achieved and what still has to be done in the data collection and analysis processes. Hence, the process of data analysis starts with a researcher's initial interaction with participants under investigation and continues throughout the entire study.

Cresswell (2009:185) and Punch (2005:198) have identified three different simultaneous processes that happen at all stages of a qualitative data analysis. The processes include:

1. Data reduction which refers to organizing and coding data;
2. Data display which means to organize, compress and assemble data with the use of tables, graphs, charts and diagrams of different types, and provides a basis for further analysis; and
3. Drawing and verifying conclusions.

Gay *et al.* (2006:469) add that a description of participants' context is inevitable in the process of data analysis since the activities of participants are influenced by the social, political and cultural contexts. Therefore data analysis involves reducing data, organizing data and synthesizing data to search for themes and patterns and to discover important facts in relation to the research participants.

In line with the explanations above on data analysis, the processes of data collection and data analysis in this study were treated as a continuum. This corresponds with the views of Gay *et al.* (2006:468) who state that the process of data collection and data analysis in qualitative studies are interwoven. In the first phase of data analysis and interpretation in this study, the

questionnaire responses were captured electronically according to the categories on the questionnaire on Microsoft Excel.

Next, the percentage of affirmative/negative responses for each response category per school was calculated and included. For each of the three selected schools the total number (N) of participants is indicated and the total number (n) of responses for each response category (variable) for each questionnaire question was recorded on Microsoft Excel. The mean percentage of affirmative responses for each variable of the questionnaire questions at the three selected schools was also calculated for each variable.

There is a formula already inbuilt in Microsoft Excel for calculating the mean. The formula was used as follows. The mean (or average) percentage of affirmative responses was calculated by adding the percentages of affirmative/negative responses from the three selected schools and dividing the sum by three. The sum was divided by three because there were three schools in the sample.

The interview discussions for six grade 10 learners and three focus group interviews with teachers were tape recorded. Each interview discussion was transcribed verbatim and common patterns and themes were developed in line with the themes and categories on the questionnaire. The raw data were synthesized and the questionnaire responses and interview data were coded and organized into categories. Themes were created which were used to analyse the data.

In the next step the data were organized, compressed and displayed in tables which corresponds to the views of Cresswell (2009:185) and Punch (2005:198) who state that the second stage in data analysis is data display which means to organize, compress and assemble data with the use of graphs, charts, networks and diagrams of different types. The total number (N) of participants per school, the total number (n) of responses for each response category of the questionnaire questions, the percentage of affirmative or negative responses for each response category per school and the mean percentage of affirmative or negative responses for each variable of the questionnaire questions for the three selected schools were transferred from Microsoft Excel to tables in Microsoft Word. Thus the questionnaire responses for each response category were presented in a table for all the three selected schools. The schools were named as School A, School B and School C in the tables to enable confidentiality and anonymity of the schools. The questionnaire responses represented in the

tables are presented and described using the mean percentage of affirmative or negative responses per variable in each response category.

In case of differences in the response sets contextual factors within each of the three selected schools were examined to enable an understanding of the differences in the experiences of learners for the specific variable. Hence each category of variables was examined and compared among the three sets of responses and the researcher in this study looked for negative cases and discrepant data. The negative cases were used to contradict a pattern or category and the discrepant data provided a new angle for understanding and interpreting learners' experiences with bullying at the three selected schools. Therefore the contextual factors discovered at each school were used to justify the similarities or differences in the sets of responses for the three selected schools.

The next step required drawing and verifying conclusions from the data as indicated by Cresswell (2009:185) and Punch (2005:198). The data from questionnaires and interviews were synthesized and analysed. The questionnaire responses were analysed and extracts drawn from the transcribed interview data to support the analysis. The analysed data were then discussed in relation to the literature reviewed and the power relations theory which underpins this study. Hence reference was made to previous findings for each theme or category of data indicating how similar or different previous findings are to the findings in this study.

### **3.10 Research ethics statement**

Generally, codes of ethics have been formulated to regulate the relations of researchers and the fields which they study in social research. Ethics in research obliges researchers to avoid harming participants involved in a research process. Researchers have to respect and take into account the needs and interests of participants (Flick, 2005:36). Research ethics require respect for the participants' democratic values and researchers should contribute to knowledge (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:517; Flick, 2006:48). A code of ethics in research can be summarized as follows:

Persons, who are observed, questioned or who are involved in some other way in the investigation, for example persons who are connected with the analysis of personal documents, shall not be subject to any disadvantages or dangers as a result of the research. All risks that exceed what is normal in

everyday life must be explained to the parties concerned. The anonymity of interviewees or informants must be protected (Flick, 2005:37).

This analysis required the researcher in this study to ensure that participants do not face any negative consequences as a result of participating in the study. Secondly, the researcher guaranteed the anonymity of participants throughout the investigation and in the presentation of the findings. This study adhered to the ascribed ethical requirements proposed by Dowling and Brown (2010:35), Punch (2009:50) and Drew *et al.* (2008:200) for conducting educational research in order to promote confidentiality, anonymity and reliability of research findings. The human rights of participants, anonymity and confidentiality of participants and research sites and the protection of participants and schools against harm were implemented as described below.

Firstly, the research process started when the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape granted ethical clearance for the research project based on the research proposal submitted.

Secondly, informed consent was obtained from the WCED to carry out the research at the three selected schools namely, Schools A, B and C involved in the study.

Thirdly, prior arrangements were made with the authorities in charge at the three selected schools to set up meetings with the principals. Each principal was provided with a letter bearing the aims, focus and ethical considerations of the study in advance (see Appendix 10). During the meetings the aims, focus, research procedure and ethical considerations of the study were explained to the principals. The researcher also pledged to respect and abide by the school rules and regulations for the duration of the investigation.

Fourthly, informed consent was obtained from the school principal, the parents or guardians of the participants and the participants themselves. Confidentiality in terms of the content of the focus group interview was also emphasized at the start of each focus group discussion. All focus group participants signed a confidentiality clause in respect of discussions during focus group interviews (see Appendix 9).

Fifthly, anonymous self-report questionnaires were administered which ensured that the participants remained anonymous. Hence the information they shared remained confidential throughout the entire study. None of the respondents included their personal details on the questionnaires. As a result no problems were encountered with the anonymous nature of the study. The anonymity of participants and schools are safeguarded in the presentation and

analysis of data by the use of fabricated identities, for example, schools are referred to as Schools A, B, and C and all the participants are referred to as teachers or learners with no names.

Sixthly, to ensure that none of the participants were misinformed the researcher paid a visit to the three selected schools two weeks before the questionnaires were administered. The purpose of the visit was to inform all potential participants about the research, the research aims and the procedure required to collect the data. During the visit potential participants asked questions about the research which enabled the researcher to clarify the doubts.

Seventhly, all potential participants were informed that participation in the study is voluntary and potential participants who chose not to participate did not experience any negative effects.

Lastly, at the beginning of each process of data collection consenting participants were advised that they reserve the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to discontinue participation at any time without any negative effect. A potential participant informed me that he was not willing to complete the questionnaire and gave it back to me. In this regard I reiterated to the participants the fact that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This research is situated between a qualitative and a quantitative methodological paradigm. An interpretive theoretical framework was used to describe and interpret the data. The research has a case study design. The use of the two methodological paradigms enabled triangulation which enhanced confidence in the validity of the research results. Questionnaire surveys and qualitative interviews were used to collect data. Quantitative methods were used to analyse the numerical data and qualitative methods were used to develop themes and interpret the qualitative data. Purposeful sampling was used to select the research sites and research participants. Learners and teachers were selected based on their knowledge of the phenomenon of bullying and on gender basis because the gender variable is quite widespread at school. Lastly, the researcher presents and describes the process by which the data were collected.

The next chapter entails the presentation and analysis of data, and discussion of findings.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter Three), the results presented and discussed in this chapter are analyses of the questionnaire responses and interview data of an investigation on bullying at three selected schools in the Western Cape. In Section 4.2, the coded and categorized questionnaire responses are presented to show the findings at each of the three selected schools. Next, the findings are analysed, described and interpreted simultaneously in relation to the literature review and power relations theory using themes that describe the experiences of grade 10 learners' bullying at the three selected schools.

### **4.2 Presentation and discussion of findings**

In this section the data from the questionnaire survey and interviews are presented and discussed. The questionnaire responses are learners' responses only and are presented in Tables 2 to 13 for the three selected schools. The percentage of affirmative/negative responses for each response category for each questionnaire question per school and the mean percentage per variable are included and used in the analysis. The data from the questionnaire survey and interview are jointly analysed in line with the literature review and the power relations theory. Each set of responses for the three selected schools presented in Tables 2 - 13, are interpreted, described and discussed based on the situation in each school.

#### 4.2.1 The occurrence of bullying at the three selected schools

Table 2 presents information on learners' responses to the questionnaire question on the occurrence of bullying at the three selected schools.

**Table 2: The occurrence of bullying at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Yes	74	97.37	55	98.21	63	92.65	96.08
No	2	2.63	1	1.79	5	7.35	3.92

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

The findings in this investigation indicate that bullying is a common practice at the three selected schools although not all learners experience or observe bullying. In Table 2 the majority (a mean of 96.08%) of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire indicated that bullying happens at the three selected schools as opposed to only 3.92% of learners' negative responses on the questionnaire which indicated that bullying does not happen at the three selected schools.

In addition, all the interview sources (a mean of 100%) stated that bullying happens at the three selected schools. Hence the interview data confirms the questionnaire responses. This finding is consistent with a finding from a previous study at national level which state that bullying is rife at South African schools and is experienced by all school communities irrespective of social class, economic level of community members of a school or size of the school (Mybrugh & Poggenpoel, 2008:72). Also, this finding is consistent with findings by Tattum (1993:4) at international level which affirm that bullying is a common form of human behaviour and occurs in all human communities. This indicates that learners at the three selected schools which are situated in the lower and upper quintiles experience high rates of bullying. Thus the issue of school bullying should be given some attention at all quintile levels.

#### 4.2.2 Testifying to bullying at school

Table 3 presents the percentages of affirmative and negative responses of learners who reported via the questionnaires that they bully or do not bully others at school.

**Table 3: Testifying to bullying at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
No	71	93.42	41	73.21	61	89.71	85.45
Yes	5	6.56	10	17.86	7	10.29	11.58
No response	0	0	5	8.93	0	0	2.98

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

In Table 3 a mean of 85.48% of learners' negative responses indicated via the questionnaire stated that most learners do not bully other learners at school while a mean of 11.58% of affirmative responses stated that a few learners perpetuate bullying at school. The mean percentage of affirmative responses of learners which indicate that they perpetuate bullying in Table 3 do not correspond with the mean percentage (96.08%) for the occurrence of bullying (see Table 2) at the three selected schools discussed in Sections 4.2.1.

More so, all the learners who participated in the individual interviews (a mean of 100%) indicated that they do not bully other learners. Again the interview data confirm the questionnaire responses. Based on the high mean percentage (96.08%) of affirmative responses which stated that bullying happens at the three selected schools, it may be concluded that most of the perpetrators of bullying did not testify. This finding is contrary to that of Rigby (1996:12) which indicates that bullies often feel excited to report about their activities on a questionnaire because they cannot be identified. However, 8.93% of learners at School B did not respond to the question and there is no information in the data collected to support their position. Thus it may be asserted here that most perpetrators of bullying at the three selected schools situated in the upper and lower quintiles do not admit their bullying.

### 4.2.3 The different forms of bullying

In this section, the findings on physical, verbal, emotional and cyber-bullying are presented, discussed and interpreted in the paragraphs below.

#### a) Physical bullying

Table 4 presents information on the different types of physical bullying as investigated in the three selected schools. The responses categorized in this table are learners' responses to the questionnaire questions in respect of physical bullying.

**Table 4: The different types of physical bullying investigated**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Through beating	49	64.47	19	33.93	34	50.00	49.47
Through pushing	39	51.32	28	50.00	15	22.06	41.12
Through kicking	30	39.47	20	35.71	15	22.06	32.42
Through punching	22	28.95	28	50.00	9	13.24	30.73
Through pulling of uniform	14	18.42	24	42.86	16	23.53	28.27
Through smacking	18	23.68	20	35.71	16	23.53	27.64
Through pulling of hair	20	26.32	21	37.50	7	10.29	24.70

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

Table 4 shows learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire with regard to physical bullying at the three selected schools. The findings in this study prove that physical bullying is prominent at the three selected schools but the frequency of physical bullying is not as high as the frequency of verbal bullying (Table 5 below). The most frequent types of physical bullying reported on the questionnaire are beating (a mean of 49.47%), pushing (a mean of 41.12%), kicking (a mean of 32.42%) and punching (a mean of 30.73%). The different types

of physical bullying reported in this study are consistent with the types of physical bullying reported by Sharrif (2008:19), De Wet (2005:707-715), Rigby (1996:20) and Olweus (1993:9). Again the mean of the different types of physical bullying reported is 33.48% which coincides with the views of Coloroso (2003:16) and De Wet (2005:707) that physical bullying constitutes only a third of the different types of bullying experienced at school.

The disparities in the questionnaire responses on the different types of physical bullying between the three sets of responses shown by the mean percentages of each type are significant in this study because the various school contexts were investigated. Firstly, beating as a type of physical bullying reported by learners via the questionnaire has a mean of 49.47%. School A has a mean of 64.47%, School B has mean of 33.93% and School C has a mean of 50.00% of affirmative responses.

In addition, during individual and focus group interviews with learners and teachers respectively at Schools A and C, both the teachers and learners testified that the teachers do not intervene in bullying and that all cases of bullying are referred to the principal. Teachers at Schools A and C also mentioned that they do not know how to deal with cases of bullying. The latter is consistent with findings by Meyer (2009:22) that some teachers assert that they cannot determine what constitutes bullying or feel confident to address bullying because they were never trained to address cases of school bullying. This may be the cause of the high rate of physical bullying experienced at Schools A and C. At School B, it was found that some of the teachers frown at bullying and some of the teachers do explain the consequences of bullying to learners. Besides, School B has a school policy on bullying even though it is not effectively implemented. These may be reasons why the percentages of the occurrence of overt forms of bullying such as beating vary at the three selected schools.

Another possible reason for the disparity in the sets of responses could be based on the social conditions of learners. It was revealed (in the questionnaire responses and interview data) that some children at Schools A and C come to school hungry and some of the hungry children are often very irritated or angry and tend to be violent towards their peers. In addition, both the female and male learners interviewed at the three selected schools indicated that learners who live with violent parents are always full of anger and resentment which may cause them to beat other learners. Although the latter reason is applicable to the three selected schools, it may be one of the reasons why the rates of physical beating are high at Schools A and C.

Secondly, there is a disparity between the mean percentages of pushing as a type of physical bullying. Schools A and B have totals of 51.32% and 50.00% of affirmative responses respectively and School C has a total of 22.06% of affirmative responses. Also, punching as a type of physical bullying has a mean of 30.73% of learners' affirmative responses. Schools A and C have totals of 28.95% and 13.24 % of affirmative responses respectively while School B has a total of 50.00% of affirmative responses. A mean of 28.27% of learners' affirmative responses indicated that physical bullying happens in the form of pulling of uniform. Schools A and C have totals of 18.42% and 23.53% of affirmative responses respectively while School B has a total of 42.86% of affirmative responses. These differences between the percentages of the various types of physical bullying as indicated in the sets of responses for the three schools may be due to the fact that these are the actions that learners at School B can quickly execute without being noticed by teachers or their peers. This finding is consistent with findings by Sharp and Thompson (1994:65) which establish that bullying can be redefined at a school when control measures are implemented. Hence less physical bullying may be occurring at School B due to the fact that there are measures in place to control bullying.

The different types of physical bullying are mostly perpetrated by a group of boys or bigger boys who beat the younger and smaller learners. The interview data can be used to substantiate the aspect of physical strength involved in bullying, a teacher during a focus group interview remarked that: "There is a case of a girl who was dragged into the boys' toilet by a group of big boys at school". Again this example aligns with the assertion that physical bullying happens in the absence of adults or where it cannot be observed (Shariff, 2008:9; Rigby, 1996:26). Therefore, an imbalance of power among learners determines bullying at school.

On the other hand, one of the male learners during an individual interview reported that: "There is a group of girls at our school and in our grade who want to behave like boys; they call themselves 'tomboys'. If a boy hurts them they immediately resort to physical means of bullying". This implies that both boys and girls use physical strength to bully their peers. In addition, a female learner during an individual interview reported:

There was a big boy who insulted me all the time during assemblies. One day he asked a girl in my class to smack me and she did, but I did not fight back because she is bigger in size than me and secondly my mother never brought me up to fight.

This quotation implies that some big girls are also motivated by their physical strength to bully other girls and boys at school. The quotation also indicate that physical bullying assumes both direct (where the perpetrator attacks the victim directly) and indirect forms (where the perpetrator influences another learner to attack the victim), as stated by Rigby (1996:20). An analysis of the interview data indicate that the interview data confirms the questionnaire responses in respect of physical bullying at the three selected schools. Therefore, physical bullying is perpetrated by both girls and boys at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintile levels in the Western Cape.

### b) Verbal and emotional bullying

Table 5 presents learners' responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the occurrence of verbal and emotional bullying as investigated at the three selected schools.

**Table 5: Responses for the types of verbal and emotional bullying**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Learners laughed at others	54	71.05	35	62.50	36	52.94	62.16
Called names	48	63.16	45	80.36	30	44.125	62.54
Use of vulgar language	50	65.79	35	62.50	29	42.65	56.98
Shouting	46	60.53	25	44.64	24	35.29	46.82
Insults	26	34.21	34	60.71	21	30.88	41.94
Teased	27	35.53	34	60.71	17	25.00	40.41
Learners are left out of groups	11	14.47	14	25.00	2	2.94	14.14

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

The various types of verbal bullying found in the present study are consistent with the types of verbal bullying reported by Sharrif (2008:23), Sullivan (2006:450), Rigby (1996:20) and Olweus (1993:19). Verbal bullying at the three selected schools is the most frequent type of bullying experienced by the learners as illustrated in Table 5. The finding can be justified

with the mean percentages of learners' affirmative responses to the different types of verbal bullying mentioned in the groups of responses for the three selected schools on the questionnaire. The latter finding may imply that some learners at school may be influenced by power which is enshrined in their verbal abilities, intelligence and/or group leadership status (Rigby, 1996:19) to hurt other learners (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). To illustrate verbal bullying a male learner during an individual interview stated:

There is a lot of verbal bullying going on at this school. The girls swear ugly and insult other girls and boys in a terrible way. They use very hurting words and I mean words are more hurtful than a punch.

The quotation shows that verbal bullying is mostly perpetrated by female learners. Another male learner during an individual interview reported:

The boys force the girls to fall in love with them and in class when a child does not know the work then there will be children laughing at him or her so as to hurt the learner emotionally.

The quotation above illustrates that both boys and girls bully verbally but boys are mostly inclined to verbal threats. This frequent occurrence of verbal bullying is in line with Rigby's (1996:45) findings that verbal bullying is very common among boys and girls although girls are more prone to subtle and indirect bullying. The high rate of verbal bullying in this study may be a consequence of the high number of girls (120 girls and 80 boys) who participated in the study. In addition, all the interview sources (a mean of 100%) stated that there is a lot of name-calling, verbal insults and learners laughing at others at school. The interview data in respect of verbal bullying confirm the questionnaire responses on verbal bullying from the three selected school.

To substantiate the latter view a learner during an individual interview remarked:

At times when you tell the teacher that another learner insulted you the teacher will merely say go and sit down or what do you want me to do. Sometimes the bullies also deny that they did it and the victims cannot prove it.

The quotation indicates that verbal bullying is difficult to prove. The latter is in line with findings by Rigby (1996:43) that verbal bullying is common and constitutes about 70% of reported cases of bullying at school though verbal bullying is mostly neglected because it is difficult to substantiate. The high rate of verbal bullying reported is also consistent with the view of Culpeper (2011:12) that some learners use language which does not conform to the

values and norms of their cultural group. The occurrence of verbal bullying at the three selected schools is an indication that the schools need far more than physical protection.

The percentages of learners' responses on the questionnaire in respect of the different types of verbal bullying vary between the three selected schools. Firstly, a mean of 62.16% of learners' affirmative responses in respect of 'learners laughing at others' as a type of verbal bullying show a disparity in the experiences of learners at the three selected schools. School A has a total of 71.05% of affirmative responses and School C has a total of 52.94% while School B has a total of 62.50% of affirmative responses. The difference in the response sets of the three selected schools might be due to the fact that learners at School A, consider verbal bullying as offensive and hurtful while learners at School C do not consider verbal bullying as offensive and hurtful as reported by the two learners (male and female) in individual interviews and the teachers in focus group interviews at each school. Thus, learners at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintiles experience high rates of verbal bullying in respect of learners 'laughing at others'.

Name-calling as a type of verbal bullying has a mean of 62.54% of learners' affirmative responses stated on the questionnaire. At Schools A, B and C totals of 63.16 %, 80.36% and 44.12% of affirmative responses correspondingly, indicated that learners are called names at school. At Schools A and B name calling is considered by learners as offensive while at School C learners stated that name calling is monotonous and as such they are not offended by name calling. The latter explanation on the feelings of learners about name calling may also explain why the mean percentages of affirmative responses of the other types of verbal bullying are lower at Schools A and C. For instance, the mean for 'teasing' as a type of verbal bullying is 40.41% of affirmative responses. School A (a total of 35.53%), School B (a total of 60.71%) and School C (a total of 25.00%) of affirmative responses respectively. The high rate of name calling at School B may be due to the fact that some teachers intervene to control bullying at the school hence most learners resort to verbal bullying which cannot be substantiated. Therefore learners at the three selected schools situated in the upper and lower quintiles in the Western Cape experience high rates of verbal bullying.

To sum up, the prevalence of verbal bullying experienced at school is an indication that there is a high rate of abuse of power and this leads to unhealthy relationships among learners at school. The findings in the present study also indicate that emotional bullying happens at the three selected schools with a mean of 14.14% of affirmative responses.

### c) Cyber-bullying

Table 6 presents information on learners’ responses to the questionnaire question on the occurrence of cyber-bullying as investigated at the three selected schools.

**Table 6: Types of cyber-bullying at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
On Facebook	40	52.63	24	42.86	34	50.00	48.50
Through cell phone text	33	43.42	25	44.64	20	29.41	39.16
Use of electronic photograph	32	42.11	16	28.57	15	22.06	30.91
Through phone call	21	27.63	10	17.86	24	35.29	29.93
Through email	8	10.53	4	7.14	4	5.88	7.85

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

The most established type of cyber-bullying at the three selected schools takes place on Facebook with a mean of 48.50% (see Table 6). Bullying on Facebook can be substantiated by the following quotation. A male learner during an individual interview stated that: “The most intelligent girl in our class pasted a message on Facebook stating that some bitches in her class want to get on her nerves but they will never be like her”. The quotation indicates that the learner who pasted the message was reacting to playground bullying from classmates. This corresponds to a claim made by Hinduja and Patchin (2009:71) that perpetrators of cyber-bullying are mostly victims of playground bullying who seek revenge in cyber space because they feel less powerful to attack the perpetrators verbally or physically at school.

Other types of cyber-bullying reported in this study via the questionnaire are ‘cell phone text message’ which is widespread among the learners at the three selected schools with a mean of 39.16% of positive responses. In addition, the mean of positive responses for ‘the use of electronic photographs’ as an aspect of cyber-bullying is 30.91%. A phone call as a type of

cyber-bullying scored a mean of 29.93%. Lastly a mean of 7.5% of affirmative responses indicated that cyber-bullying occurs through the use of an email. As stated in Chapter Two, cyber-bullying often takes place outside of the school which is beyond the scope of this study. The percentages of affirmative responses on the various types of cyber-bullying are not as high as the percentages of positive responses for the various types of verbal and physical bullying (Tables 5 and 6 respectively).

#### 4.2.4 Gender and bullying

Table 7 below presents information on learners' responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the different categories of learners who bully other learners as investigated at the three selected schools.

**Table 7: Gender and bullying at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Group of boys	48	63.16	31	55.36	38	55.88	58.13
Both boys and girls	50	65.79	23	41.07	23	33.82	46.89
Group of girls	34	44.74	18	32.14	21	30.88	35.92
A big boy	24	31.58	20	35.71	13	19.12	28.80
A big girl	9	11.84	16	28.57	3	4.41	14.94
Small boy	8	10.53	10	17.86	4	5.88	11.42
Small girl	3	3.95	7	12.50	3	4.41	6.95

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

All the interviewees (a mean of 100%) stated that both boys and girls bully other learners at the three selected schools. All the interviewees mentioned that boys bully mostly physically and girls bully mostly verbally. Thus, there is consistency in the interview data and the questionnaire responses in respect of gender and bullying at school.

Bullying at the three selected schools is perpetrated by both boys and girls as shown in Table 7 above. The findings show that groups of boys bully more at the three selected schools with a mean of 58.13% of learners' affirmative responses reported on the questionnaire. This finding is in line with findings by Sullivan (2006:38), Olweus (1993:19) and Sharrif (2008:11) which state that some learners bully in groups due to a desire to control and dominate other learners. To support the above finding during an individual interview a female learner reported:

The big boys always bully in a group because they want to make their victims less powerful. At our school because we have the feeding scheme when food is being shared at times the big boys will push us (small girls and boys) aside and eat all the food.

The quotation above substantiates bullying by a group of boys. As such the power used to oppress the victims by a group of boys is determined by the group status (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3).

Again a mean of 28.80% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire stated that bullying is perpetrated by a big boy. A single big boy is influenced by his physical strength and personality (power) to bully others, as indicated by Sullivan (2006:38). The latter finding is consistent with the views of Suckling and Temple (2002:10) which state that bullying occurs when someone likes to have power over you, hurt you with words and actions and the actions may occur without cause from the victim. The mean of 28.80% of affirmative responses which states that 'single big boys' bully and a mean of 11.42% of affirmative responses which indicates that small boys bully at school may imply that fewer single boys are influenced by their physical strength and personality to bully others at the three selected schools. Hence most boys bully in groups at the three selected schools.

Above all, a mean of 46.89% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire stated that bullying is triggered by both boys and girls. This aligns with findings by Sharrif (2008:15) which state that both boys and girls display similar levels of bullying although boys are more exposed to open attacks and girls to verbal and emotional bullying. Rigby (1996:45) also states that verbal bullying is practised by both boys and girls at school. The mean of 46.89% of affirmative responses indicates that both boys and girls at the three selected schools situated at the upper and lower quintiles perpetrate bullying at school.

In Table 7 a mean of 35.92% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire reported that a group of girls bully at the three selected schools. Some (a mean of 14.94%) of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire stated that bullying is initiated by a big girl at school. The latter findings are consistent with findings by Sharrif (2008:11), Sullivan (2006:38) and Olweus (1993:38) which state that bullying at school is manifested by a single learner or a group of learners.

In addition, all the learners and teachers (a mean of 100%) who participated in individual interviews and focus group interviews respectively admitted that both boys and girls bully, but girls are more subjected to verbal bullying or social bullying than are boys. This also indicates that the interview data supports the questionnaire responses in respect of gender bullying at the three selected schools. In line with the latter a female learner during an individual interview revealed that:

Some girls bully more than boys. Some of the big girls always tell the smaller children to buy lunch for them (big girls) or they (the big girls) will give a learner five cents and tell her (small girl) to go and buy lunch with it. If the learner does not bring the lunch, the bullies will bully her for about a week.

The above quotation implies that some girls also perpetuate overt bullying at school. This aligns with a finding from Rivers *et al.* (2007:65) that in some schools girls are forceful, aggressive and physical just like boys. This finding indicates that girls also bully in groups at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintiles in the Western Cape. Therefore intervention strategies to combat bullying at school should also consider that girls bully physically.

From the latter discussions on gender and bullying, it might be concluded that big boys and groups of boys bully more than big girls and groups of girls. Also small boys bully more than small girls at school. Hence the pattern of bullying observed at the three selected schools portrays the abuse of strength practised by both boys and girls in a group or individually due to their personality to dominate or hurt other learners.

Sexual orientation bullying is another form of gender bullying happening at the three selected schools. One of the learners during an individual interview mentioned that: "The gays and lesbians at our school are always called names. One will always hear the lesbians saying: 'Things are not working for me because people do not want me to be myself'". Other

participants (during individual and focus group interviews) testified that homosexuals are bullied at school and they always feel lonely, isolated and depressed. This finding aligns with previous findings by Stromquist and Fischman (2009:465) that gender bullying occurs when a learner hurts another because the bully adheres to the acceptable or traditional sexual norms, dominant sex culture or male domination practices while the victim does not. During an individual interview a male learner mentioned that: “The boys touch the girls on places that they (girls) do not like; and boys pull the girls and hit girls without any provocation at school”. The latter quotation may indicate that the schools do not control bullying or gender bullying. The findings are also consistent with findings by Bhana *et al.* (2009:50), Chabaya *et al.* (2009:98) and Meyer (2009:4) who state that some school cultures accept and condone gender based bullying.

To sum up, a discussion on gender and bullying provides a better understanding of the different forms of bullying experienced by learners at the three selected schools as discussed above.

At this point in the data analysis, subsidiary research question 1 is answered. Subsidiary research question 1 is: How does bullying happen among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools? Hence subsidiary research aim 1 namely; to understand how bullying happens among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools, is also achieved.

#### 4.2.5 Places where bullying frequently takes place at school

Table 8 presents information on learners' responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the places where bullying frequently occurs at the three selected schools.

**Table 8: Places where bullying frequently occurs at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
In the classroom	51	67.11	40	71.43	39	57.35	65.30
On the playground	42	55.26	44	78.57	20	29.41	54.42
On the way to and from school	51	67.11	22	39.29	29	42.65	49.68
In the toilets	45	59.21	19	33.93	36	52.94	48.69
In the corridor	10	13.16	21	37.50	4	5.88	18.85
In the school hall	3	3.95	9	16.07	6	8.82	9.61

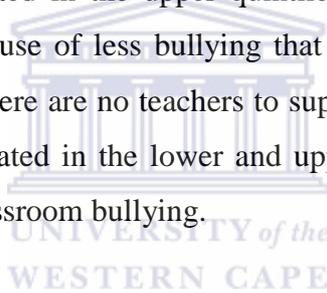
N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

##### a) Bullying in the classroom

Table 8 indicates that the majority (a mean of 65.30%) of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire in the three selected schools declared that much bullying takes place in the classrooms. This finding is consistent with findings by Sullivan (2006:43) which state that bullying occurs mostly in crowded conditions with less supervision. The high rate of classroom bullying may be an indication that teachers do not apply classroom management skills to control learners' behaviour during lessons. To provide evidence of classroom bullying a learner during an individual interview said:

The class is not like a class should be. The learners swear at each other in class. They break each other down. There is no cooperation in our class. In our class the girls mock each other. They do not help each other. It is not a nice feeling.

The above quotation illustrates the unpleasant nature of the classroom due to verbal bullying. The swearing and mocking of some learners by their peers in the classroom suggests that there are no procedures in place to adequately control learners' behaviour. Also, a teacher during a focus group interview mentioned that a lot of bullying goes on in the classrooms in a sly way. The direct and indirect forms of bullying happening in the classroom signify power imbalance among learners. The high frequency of classroom bullying coincides with findings by Rivers *et al.* (2007:72) that most teachers have a passive knowledge of bullying among learners and are not able to handle cases of bullying including sexual orientation bullying in the classroom. Some learners during individual interviews also reported that some teachers do nothing about reported cases of bullying in the classroom. Hence, some learners bully more (a mean of 65%) in the classroom as shown in Table 8 because the teacher does nothing about the bullying. This finding is again consistent with findings by Sullivan (2006:43) which show that bullying occurs mostly in crowded conditions with less supervision. Contrary to this, at School B which is situated in the upper quintile, some teachers address cases of bullying, and this may be the cause of less bullying that takes place in the classroom and more on the playground where there are no teachers to supervise the learners. Thus, learners at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintile levels in the Western Cape experience high rates of classroom bullying.



### **b) Bullying on the playground**

More than half (a mean of 54.42%) of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire indicated that bullying happens on the playground at the three selected schools (see Table 8). One of the female teachers during a focus group interview remarked that: "During lunch time every day bullying happens on the playground because of no teacher supervision". The latter is in line with findings by Roberts (2006:7) and Olweus (1993:25) which established that bullying among adolescent learners is more severe than in the early years of schooling due to less supervision by teachers. To further illustrate playground bullying one of the male learners during an individual interview reported:

During lunch time today I observed a group of boys grab a cool drink and chips from one small boy and the small boy did nothing to defend himself. Also, there is a group of boys selling cigarettes at our school if you do not buy they hit you and take your money during break on the playground. No other learner can sell; if you sell they (the group of boys) will hit you and

take the money. The group of boys considers the playground as their territory.

The quotation above indicates the magnitude of playground bullying. It can be induced from the quotation that power is the ability “to get what one wants” and that power is a relative and active process which happens within relationships among learners at school (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3). At the level of the three selected schools, it was found that bullies usually exercise power to meet their needs; they (bullies) collect money and food from other learners. These results suggest that intervention programmes should aim at discouraging the abuse of power among learners.

### **c) Bullying on the way to and from school**

The findings in this study as shown in Table 8 indicate that bullying also takes place on the way to and from school. A mean of 49.68% of learners’ affirmative responses via the questionnaire acknowledged that there is a lot of bullying or group fights every day after school on the way from school. The teachers (a mean of 100%) during focus group interviews also confirmed that bullying happens on the way to and from school. A male teacher during a focus group interview stated that: “They (bullies) wait until they can settle things because they know that if they do it (bully) at school they can get into problems”. A female teacher during a focus group interview stated that: “Sometimes the bullies take the bags of the victims on the way from school and throw out the books and take the bags to their homes”. To further illustrate bullying on the way to and from school another female teacher during a focus group interview mentioned that:

There is a girl at this school who has been permitted to leave school ten minutes each day before the final bell rings because she is being bullied after school most of the time. The school cannot approach the perpetrators because any attempt by the school to intervene might make things worse for the girl (victim) since the bullying happens outside of the school.

These quotations indicate that teachers at the three selected schools are aware of bullying on the way to and from school but do not develop measures to protect the victims. Also, the high rate of bullying on the way to and from school, are consistent with findings by Rivers *et al.* (2007:72) which state that schools can do little about bullying outside of the school. However, the high frequency of bullying on the way to and from school found in the present

study contradicts findings by Olweus (1993:21) that less bullying occurs on the way to and from school.

At Schools A and C situated in the lower quintile, most of the learners said they walk to and from school and that is why they are attacked by their peers on the way to and from school. At School B situated in the upper quintile, most of the learners travel by car to and from school and this may justify why fewer learners experience bullying on the way to and from school. Thus learners at Schools A and C situated in the lower quintiles experience more bullying on the way to and from School compared to learners at School B situated in the upper quintile. Thus the implementation of any effective multi-dimensional intervention policy on school bullying may have a ripple effect because it would also reduce peer bullying on the way to and from school.

#### **d) Bullying in the school toilets**

In Table 8 a mean of 48.69% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire at the three selected schools indicated that bullying occurs in the toilets. Also, all the learners (a mean of 100%) who participated in individual interviews stated that bullying happens in the school toilets. In respect of bullying in the school toilets, Schools A and C have very high percentages of affirmative responses of 59% and 54% respectively while School B has a total percentage of 34% of affirmative responses. The difference between the sets of responses at the three selected schools may be explained in relation to the reaction of teachers towards bullying at each school. Although it has been noticed that at School B, bullying happens more frequently in places out of the sight of teachers, this low frequency of bullying in the toilets may still be influenced by some teachers' intervention in bullying. On the other hand, the high rate of bullying actions experienced in the school toilets in Schools A and C might be due to the fact that the teachers do not intervene to control bullying.

Most of the bullying in the school toilets is physical and violent in nature and is instigated by boys as can be seen in the quotations below. One of the male learners during an individual interview reported that: "When I was in the toilet one day a group of boys forced open the toilet door, pulled off my trousers and took my lunch money". Another male learner during an individual interview reported that: "One morning a boy was in the toilet and another boy came and pulled him out when he was still using the toilet. How does that boy (who was pulled out) feel then"? The quotations above indicate that bullying in the toilets is manifested

by individual learners and groups of learners as reported by Sharrif (2008:11) and Sullivan (2006:38). Hence learners at the three selected schools situated in both the lower and upper quintile levels experience bullying in the toilets although the rates are higher in Schools A and C situated in the lower quintile and lower at School B situated in the upper quintile. However, the high rate of bullying in the school toilet found in this study contradicts findings by Sullivan (2006:43) which state that bullying occurs mostly in crowded conditions with less supervision.

Half (a mean of 50%) of the learners during individual interviews stated that learners bully in the toilets because they cannot be seen by the teachers. The latter justifies the assertion by Sharrif (2008:9) that physical bullying is also termed hidden bullying because it happens in the absence of adults. This finding on bullying in the school toilet also confirms previous findings that direct forms of physical bullying are more prominent among boys than girls (Sharrif, 2008:15; Owens *et al.*, 2001:216; Rigby, 1996:45; Olweus, 1993:18). Hence some boys are influenced by their physical strength and group status (Radtke & Stam, 1994:3) to bully other learners in the school toilets.

#### **e) Bullying on the staircase and on corridors**

In Table 8 few responses (a mean of 18.85%) by learners on the questionnaire affirmed that bullying takes place on the school corridors. During an individual interview, a male learner confirmed that he had been smacked on the corridor. Some of the participants also reported that bullying takes place on the staircases at school where the bullies block their victims and seize their lunch or money. Again, it can be seen in Table 8 that learners at School B bully more (a total of 38%) on the corridors than learners at Schools A and C (a total of 13.16% and 5.88% respectively) and this may be influenced by the absence of teachers in the corridors. The latter aligns with findings from Rivers *et al.* (2007:72) and Olweus (1993:25) which established that bullying among adolescent learners is more severe than in the early years of schooling due to less supervision by teachers. Therefore, bullying happens in the staircase and on corridors at the three selected schools in the Western Cape. This finding may imply that learners need adult supervision on the staircases or corridors when learners move from one class to another or after break when learners are returning to the classrooms.

#### **f) Bullying in the school hall**

In Table 8 a minority (a mean of 9.61%) of the questionnaire responses by learners mentioned that bullying occurs during assemblies in the school hall. A female learner during an individual interview said:

During assemblies friends want to please each other and so the bigger learners bully the smaller ones. And whenever a learner (victim) resorts to bullying such as teasing the perpetrators, the perpetrators will pull their hair or their bags. At times the perpetrators resort to physical means because there are many learners watching.

Evident in the above quotation is the negative influence of power and the fact that the bullies want to impress their friends. The finding on bullying in the school hall in this study is consistent with a finding by Sullivan (2006:43) that bullies usually like to attract peer attention. Though the number of learners who experience bullying in the school hall is small (a mean of 9.61%), the consequences also have a ripple effect and are damaging to learners. Thus adult supervision is inevitable in the school hall to protect the vulnerable learners.

To conclude the quotations from the interviewees (individual interviews and focus group interviews) at the three selected schools indicated that most bullying takes place in the classrooms, on the playground and on the way to and from school. Thus, the interview data supports the questionnaire responses in respect of places where bullying frequently takes place at school.

#### 4.2.6 Causes of bullying

Various causes of bullying were revealed at the three selected schools. The causes have been classified as in Chapter Two of this study namely; the ‘outside of school’ factors and the ‘inside of school’ factors as discussed in the paragraphs that follow. Table 9 below shows the various percentages of learners’ affirmative responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the causes of bullying at the three selected schools.

**Table 9: Reasons why the perpetrators bully their victims at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Family environment	43	56.58	22	39.29	34	50.00	48.62
High performance	33	43.42	17	30.36	11	16.18	29.98
Low performance	21	27.63	22	39.29	15	22.06	29.66
Divorced parents	12	15.79	6	10.71	8	11.76	12.76
Because you are a girl	14	18.42	3	5.36	8	11.76	11.85
Because you are a boy	13	17.11	3	5.36	4	5.88	9.45

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

##### a) The ‘outside of school’ factors

The ‘outside of school’ causes of bullying are the influence of the family environment and community on learners’ behaviour and the individual characteristics of a learner. The factors are discussed below.

##### i) Family environment

In Table 9 a mean of 48.62% of learners’ affirmative responses on the questionnaire show that some perpetrators of bullying bully their victims at school because of circumstances at the perpetrators’ home environment. One male learner during an individual interview affirmed: “Others (perpetraors) live with parents who fight most of the time at home and this

causes them (perpetrators) to beat their peers at school”. Also, another learner during an individual interview said:

One of my friends told me that he kicked a girl at the school gate and break her leg because his parents fight every evening at home even though the girl (victim) did not provoke him (bully).

The above quotation indicates that the perpetrator of bullying concerned enjoys causing pain or misery to his victims as a consequent of his home environment which is consistent with findings by Sullivan (2000:23). Teachers during focus group interviews also confirmed the latter finding. A male teacher during a focus group interview explained the family circumstance of a perpetrator of bullying in his classroom:

I have a learner in my class whose father killed the mother; he (the perpetrator) spends part of his time with his uncle who is a drug addict ... He has come to school sometime with a very long knife. Hence this learner bullies other learners as a consequence of the home circumstances.

The above quotation reveals the violent family environment which affects the behaviour of the perpetrator concerned. The family conditions discussed above correspond with findings from Schwartz *et al.* (2001:83) and Rigby (1996:75) which indicate that in a family where people’s feeling are not respected and where children suffer physical and emotional maltreatment from their parents the children may bully at school. Sullivan (2003:22) also states that 40% of perpetrators of bullying at school observe bullying at their homes. Thus the family environment influences the behaviour of perpetrators of bullying in the most affluent school (situated in the upper quintile) and in the least affluent schools (situated in the lower quintile) in this study.

## **ii) Economic background of learners**

Some perpetrators of bullying come to school hungry because they do not have something to eat at home due to poverty. One of the male learners during an individual interview stated that: “She (a perpetrator) is stressed because she leaves home with an empty stomach most of the time to come to school and that is why she bullies others”. The latter aligns with findings by Lines (2008:127), Schwartz *et al.* (2001:83) and Rigby (1996:75) which affirm that there are various conditions within a family which may promote the rate of bullying at school. This indicates that teachers at school should talk to learners who bully to identify the reasons that

cause them to bully and if possible resolve the problems. If the teachers know the problem of the perpetrator in question then it may be easy to assist the learner.

### **iii) The community influence on the perpetrators' behaviour**

Certain perpetrators live in communities where there is much violence. They (perpetrators) often observe physical violence at their home environments and neighborhoods. Some of the perpetrators in turn emulate such behaviour at school.

Some of the teachers (a mean of 75%) during focus group interviews reported that most of the boys hit girls at school for no reason, and they find no fault in their actions due to the community influence. Thus, the environment where the learners live has a great impact on their behaviour at school. Bullying as a consequence of community influence implies that other people in the community have the power to evoke change in others' behaviour (Radtke & Stam, 1994:4). This finding is consistent with findings by Stromquist and Fischman (2009:463), Bajaj (2009:489), Chabaya *et al.* (2009:98) and Radtke and Stam (1994:3) that some cultural practices such as a culture of violence; gender stereotypes; and a culture of male domination may influence bullying among learners at school. Therefore some boys hit girls as a consequence of violence experienced in the community with a notion to control and dominate the girls.

To sum up, all learners (a mean of 100%) during individual interviews and all teachers (a mean of 100%) during focus group interviews mentioned that the social circumstances of learners are the most prevalent causes of bullying at the three selected schools. Thus the interview data confirm the questionnaire responses in respect of the 'outside of school' causes of bullying.

### **b) The 'inside of school' factors**

The 'inside of school' factors which influence bullying include: a school culture; teachers' attitude; inconsistency in teachers' actions against bullying; lack of trust in teachers by learners; peer pressure; the nature of school policies and academic performance. Each of the factors is discussed below.

### **i) School culture**

It was found that the school culture at the three selected schools is not empowering to the learners and teachers. Evident from the questionnaire responses and interview data was the fact that the learners, teachers and school management at the three selected schools have distinct aims within a school. The learners blame teachers and the principal for not taking measures against bullying. On the other hand, the teachers blame learners for unruly behaviour and the school management for not being proactive. Hence there seems to be no collaboration of the stakeholders to address bullying and other challenges faced by learners at the three selected schools. A teacher during a focus group interview mentioned that:

I did not attend the Matric Ball this year because grade 12 learners took grade 8s and 9s as partners. I raised the matter up with the administration and since then, nothing has been done. It will definitely happen again next year. We have to be proactive.

In addition, a female teacher during a focus group interview stated that: “I have never heard of a school policy on bullying. Maybe the principal knows about or has the document”. The two quotations are indications that the stakeholders may not share common aims and objectives. This confirms previous findings that school culture is influential in encouraging or reducing forms of bullying at school (Field *et al.*, 2009:57; Meyer, 2009:23). Suckling and Temple (2002:20) assert that 85% of the behaviour of learners at school is influenced by the school structures. Therefore, the stakeholders of the three selected schools in this study chosen from the lower and upper quintiles do not share common aims and values. However, the school management may improve relationships at school by establishing common aims and values for the school through consultation with all stakeholders. Consultation may also encourage participation and commitment in implementing strategies geared towards the achievement of common aims at school which may include the control of bullying.

### **ii) Teachers' attitudes**

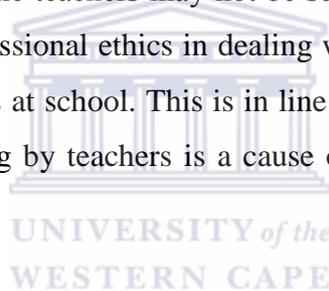
It was discovered that some teachers have an attitude which encourages bullying at school. Specific teachers call learners names such as ‘stupid’ and ‘baboon’ in class. The name-calling of learners by teachers initiate verbal bullying and the class mates continue calling the learner concerned ‘stupid’ or ‘baboon’. This soon spreads to other classes and the victims always feel humiliated and hurt as a consequence. A learner reported on the questionnaire that: “Each time she (the teacher) is teaching I have to disturb the class or the lesson because the teacher

hates me and calls me names”. Other perpetrators also reported on the questionnaires that they have decided to bully other learners because their teachers constantly bully them and as such they have lost interest in the subjects.

To illustrate name calling by teachers, a female teacher commented during a focus group interview that:

One day a learner was absent from school and the teacher asked the classmates “Where is that baboon?” From that day henceforth the classmates called the learner in question ‘baboon’. Again I entered a classroom one day and was very shocked to see that a teacher and a group of learners were calling another learner names in her presence and laughing. I could see that the learner who was called names was very uncomfortable but was pretending to accommodate the abuse because it came from the teacher.

This quotation illustrates that some teachers may not be sensitive to learners’ needs and that some teachers do not apply professional ethics in dealing with learners, thereby encouraging perpetrators to bully their victims at school. This is in line with findings by Rigby (1996:83) which specified that name calling by teachers is a cause of direct forms of verbal bullying among learners.



In addition, some Life Orientation teachers do not inform learners in advance of the requirements of a lesson. For example, during a life orientation lesson a teacher expected female learners to jump over a rope held by boys on both sides meanwhile the girls were putting on short skirts because the teacher did not inform learners about the lesson in advance. Some girls jumped but two girls in the class refused to jump over the rope. When the girls refused to participate in the exercise, the teacher bullied the two girls. The incident led to peer bullying because some learners (girls) who had short skirts and could not assert themselves jumped over the rope and in turn verbally bullied the two girls who refused to jump. The two girls bullied back their perpetrators including the teacher verbally. Therefore, some teachers at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintiles instigate bullying among learners. This discussion implies that teachers have to be reminded of their role to encourage appropriate environments that are conducive to learning and to be sensitive to the learning needs of learners. In addition, any strategy developed to combat bullying at school should aim to discourage teachers from instigating bullying among learners.

### **iii) Inconsistency in teachers' actions against bullying**

It was also found in this study that some teachers are not consistent in handling cases related to bullying. School B has a punishment system whereby learners accumulate a certain number of levels (red files) to sit for detention. A female teacher during a focus group interview remarked: "Some teachers level too much; they level any little thing and some teachers level too little". The quotation indicates that there is no consistency in handling cases of bullying among teachers at a school. Again, during a focus group interview at School B, a male teacher confirmed that teacher intervention in a bullying incident varies between individual teachers. Some teachers ignore reported cases of bullying while other teachers do not take effective measures to resolve the problem; hence the perpetrators continue to bully the victims due to the teachers' inability to address the situation. The latter finding is consistent with findings by Bhana *et al.* (2009:50) and Chabaya *et al.* (2009:104) who found that cases of bullying are evaluated subjectively by teachers hence there is no defined punishment for specific actions. This finding on teachers' attitudes also aligns with findings by Suckling and Temple (2002:10) according to which some teachers simply do not take action against bullying, hence promoting bullying at school. However, a learner asserted that it is difficult for a teacher to intervene effectively in a bullying incident because teachers do not often know the problem behind the problem (what is causing the bullying). Thus, Rivers *et al.* (2007:114) assert that teachers have to discuss, persuade and negotiate with the perpetrators of bullying to understand their actual problems to enable suitable interventions by the teacher.

### **iv) Lack of trust in teachers**

Some teachers find it difficult to create a relationship with learners which may promote trust. The majority of victims do not report cases of bullying to teachers because they (victims) are scared that the teacher will not intervene effectively and the perpetrators will come back and bully them. Some teachers (a mean of 75%) during focus group interviews confirmed that most victims of bullying do not usually report to the teachers because most teachers do not take action against bullying. With this in mind, Suckling and Temple (2002:81) mention that teachers should encourage learners to report bullying in a safe and private manner because some reported incidents are inflamed by the teachers' behaviour. Most often, teachers are notified of a bullying case by the parents of a victim of bullying at school and the intensity of

some of the incidents reported by parents is overwhelming for the teachers. In addition, a female teacher during a focus group interview commented: “You hear teachers say, in our days we adapted to the teachers’ ways and school rules. As such, some teachers argue that they cannot adapt to the perpetrators’ style of doing things”. The quotation indicates that some teachers are hesitant to relate to learners at school. Thus the inability of some teachers to relate to the social circumstances of learners may make it difficult for the learners to trust their teachers. These findings imply that some learners at the three selected schools situated in the lower and upper quintiles do not trust their teachers. Hence, teachers are encouraged to listen to victims of bullying, initiate dialogue with the victims and assure learners who report bullying cases that an appropriate solution will follow to prevent further bullying.

**v) Peer pressure**

From the interview data collected in this study, it was found that several learners are forced by their peers to bully other learners at school. A learner during an individual interview reported the following:

When your peers realize that you do not bully other learners, they will tell you what to do to another learner. At times they (perpetrators) tell you to go and collect another learner’s lunch or money. If you refuse to join in the bullying, then the group will bully you.

The quotation implies that some perpetrators are forced to bully others against their will. This is consistent with findings by Rigby (1996:18) who mentions that children who are forced to bully are termed conformist because they do not know what they are doing but merely want to belong to a group that enjoys bullying and/or to avoid being bullied. On the other hand, it was also found in this study that learners who do not resort to bullying when bullied are called ‘chicken’ and/or ‘rabbit’, which implies that the victims are weak. So some learners are forced to resort to bullying because they do not want to be called ‘chicken’ or ‘rabbit’ which are associated with a weakness. Again, at the centre of peer pressure is the active nature of power which influences the powerful in strength to compel the less powerful to do what they would not have done willingly (Radtke & Stam, 1994:4). Hence Suckling and Temple (2002:110) mention that teachers may encourage learners to trust their thoughts, feelings and attitudes to enable learners to resist peer pressure. The impact of peer pressure as a factor which encourages the perpetrators to bully their victims was reported at the three

selected schools. Hence some learners at the three selected schools situated in the upper and lower quintile levels bully other learners as a result of peer pressure.

**vi) The nature of school policies to address bullying**

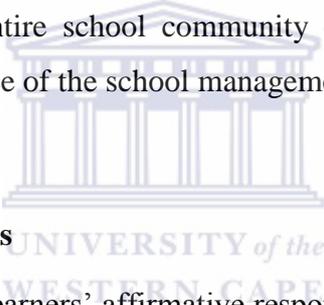
The interview data collected in this study indicate great controversy among teachers and learners about the existence and provisions of a school policy on bullying. At the same school, some learners and teachers stated that they have never heard or seen a school policy on bullying while some of the other teachers and learners mentioned that there is a school policy on bullying. For instance, during an individual interview a female learner at School A stated that there is no school policy on bullying while the male learner (at School A) during an individual interview stated that there is a school policy on bullying. The male learner in School A further stated: “In our classroom there is something written on the wall ‘no bullying’. It does not say what bullying is and what will be done if a perpetrator bullies another learner (victim). Also, in School B a male learner during an individual interview said that the school has a policy on bullying while the female learner during an individual interview said there is no school policy on bullying. All the teachers in School B stated that School B has a school policy on bullying. On the other hand, the teachers and learners who stated that there is a school policy on bullying ended up with explanations which implied that there are no specific consequences to address specific bullying. One of the male teachers at School B, during a focus group interview who acknowledged that there is a school policy on bullying, further stated that:

Even though the school has its policies in place it depends on how you (the teachers) apply it. In the case of bullying we wait until the incident happens and then we want to do something; we are not proactive.

Another teacher at School B during a focus group interview who also admitted that there is a school policy on bullying said: “Last week a boy threw a girl’s bag into the bin. ... yet I could not do anything because the perpetrator may bully the victim again”. These quotations clearly show that the policies in place at School B are not effective since they are merely punitive in nature. Also, there are no specific sanctions for specific actions because the severity of an incident is evaluated subjectively by a teacher which could be further interpreted that there are no defined policies on bullying at the school. It may be concluded that the perpetrators of bullying are encouraged by the fact that there are no effective policies

in place at the three selected schools to control bullying. This finding on a school policy on bullying at School B contradicts the view of Meyer (2009:24) who asserts that in a school policy on bullying the acceptable behaviour is clearly stated and punishment for defaulters made very clear. Therefore, the inconsistent manner in which incidents of bullying are addressed at School B is influenced by the fact that there is no defined punishment for specific actions. This is consistent with findings in Meyer (2009:24) which state that most schools do not have a systematic approach to bullying.

Also, the punitive nature of school policies to address bullying implies that victims of bullying are not attended to at school. As such, Roberts (2006:73) recommends that for bullying to be effectively controlled, school authorities have to be proactive and not reactive to bullying. Ironically, perpetrators of bullying may bully without understanding the effects on the victims (Rivers *et al.*, 2007:114). Hence discussion, persuasion and negotiation may be the most appropriate responses to bullies. A more proactive approach may enable schools to raise the awareness of the entire school community on the types of bullying and its consequences, indicating the stance of the school management on bullying.



#### **vii) High academic performances**

In Table 9 a mean of 29.98% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire revealed that learners who perform well academically and in sport are always bullied by their peers because the perpetrators are jealous of the achievement. It was found that some of the high achievers at school are called names such as 'high class', 'Miss President' or 'Mr. President'. The latter coincides with findings from Olweus (1993: 33) which state that some learners who underachieve may decide to bully learners with a high academic performance in order to prove their area of dominance.

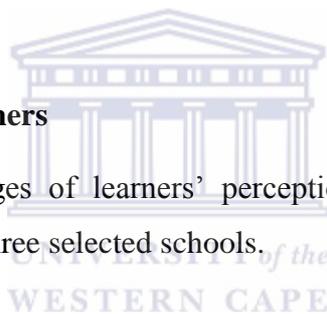
#### **viii) Characteristics of victims**

The interview data show that victims of bullying have some peculiar characteristics which encourage the perpetrator to bully the victim. The personal qualities of victims which were found to trigger bullying in this study are quietness, loneliness and low self-esteem. This is consistent with a finding reported by Schwartz *et al.* (2001:74) that victims of bullying have the kind of appearance which attract bullies such as quietness, obesity and/or shortness.

Rivers *et al.* (2007:106) assert that schools have to ensure that victims of bullying feel safe and are assured about the efforts to combat bullying.

To sum up, the ‘inside of school’ factors of bullying found in this study namely: School culture, teachers’ attitude, inconsistency in teachers’ actions against bullying, lack of trust for teachers, peer pressure, the nature of school policies to address bullying, high academic performance and characteristics of victims show that much happen within a school environment and this may influence bullying.

At this juncture subsidiary research question 2 of this study is answered. Subsidiary research question 2 is: What factors influence the different forms of bullying at the three selected schools? And subsidiary research aim 2 is achieved. Subsidiary research aim 2 is: To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners at the three selected schools.



#### 4.2.7 Effects of bullying on learners

Table 10 presents the percentages of learners’ perceptions via the questionnaire of the consequences of bullying at the three selected schools.

**Table 10: Learners who state that bullying has negative consequences on victims, perpetrators and bystanders**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Yes	75	98.68	50	89.29	54	79.41	89.13
No	1	1.32	6	10.71	14	20.59	10.87

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

In Table 10 the majority (a mean of 89.13%) of learners’ affirmative responses stated in the questionnaire agreed that bullying is detrimental to victims, perpetrators and bystanders and the entire school body at the three selected schools. A male learner during an individual interview said:

When bullying is happening during lessons in the classroom, the teacher has to stop the lesson and resolve the bullying issue before continuing with the lesson. Most often the bullies do not obey the teacher. Sometimes the victims also bully back their perpetrators and as such much of our teaching time is wasted.

The quotation shows that teachers spend a lot of valuable teaching time in addressing bullying problems. The quotation also indicates the negative use of power by learners during lessons. Also, a female learner stated on the questionnaire: “If a learner bullies another learner at school it affects me because I think the bully can also bully me. ... Because we are here to learn and if some learners bully others; I will be affected”. The extract from the questionnaire illustrates that bullying actions have a ripple effect on the entire school community. The finding indicates that a majority of learners at the three selected schools situated at the lower and upper quintiles are aware of the negative effects of bullying.

However, the effects of bullying on a learner are influenced by certain factors as indicated in the quotation below. A learner during an individual interview remarked:

Sometimes victims (especially boys) try to ignore the bullying and at times some learners (victims) pretend to be strong but the perpetrators continue with the bullying actions until the victims are bound to react or be affected by the bullying. Most often, such victims lie by saying things are not working for them, but we (other learners) know that it is because of bullying that he/she is depressed.

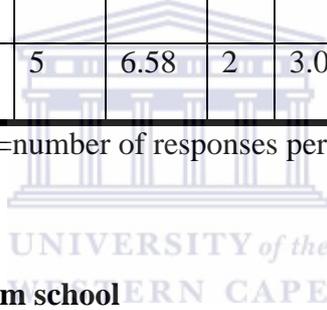
The quotation above indicates that frequent peer bullying at school overwhelms learners' coping devices and therefore has a severe negative impact on the victim. The quotation also indicates that the consequences of bullying are influenced by factors such as the resilient nature of the victim, the frequency with which the bullying occurs and the duration of the bullying which coincide with findings by Ladd and Ladd (2001:26). The repeated nature of bullying proves that victims do not report bullying and/or teachers do not intervene to assist the victims of bullying actions.

The various consequences of bullying revealed in this study include: high rates of absenteeism, school dropout, lowering of self-esteem, self-harm effect, inability of learners to make progress in their studies, isolation of victims and a feeling of insecurity at school. Each of the negative effects of bullying stated is analysed in the paragraphs below. Table 11 presents learners' responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the various negative effects bullying has on learners at the three selected schools.

**Table 11: The negative consequences of bullying on victims, perpetrators and bystanders**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
High rates of absenteeism	32	42.11	30	53.57	35	51.47	49.05
Inability to concentrate on studies	31	40.79	28	50.00	33	48.53	46.44
Low self-esteem	32	42.11	27	48.21	25	36.76	42.36
Insecurity	27	35.53	22	39.29	30	44.12	39.64
Drop-out of school	16	21.05	15	26.79	17	25.00	24.28
Isolation of victims	12	15.79	1	1.79	5	7.35	8.31
Self-harm effect	5	6.58	2	3.00	5	7.35	5.64

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable



**a) High rates of absenteeism from school**

As indicated in Table 11 a mean of 49.05% of learners’ affirmative responses on the questionnaire show that victims of bullying stay absent from school. Both the questionnaire responses and the interview data affirmed that victims of bullying stay absent from school because they are afraid to be bullied again by their attackers. The latter finding in this study aligns with findings reported by Rigby (1996:52) and Olweus (1993:33) which elucidate the fact that bullying results in frequent absenteeism from school globally. A learner during an individual interview stated: “Bullying affects the learners because they are fearful and tend to stay absent a lot which in turn affects their academic performance negatively”. Another learner during an individual interview also stated: “Bullying affects learners at our school because sometimes the victims are scared to come to school because the bullies will take their phones and lunch money”. The former and the latter quotations from learners substantiate the view that bullying results to absenteeism from school. The effect of absenteeism reported in the present study is consistent with findings by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:452) that victims of school bullying hate schooling due to their fear of being bullied. This confirms a

power imbalance between the perpetrators of bullying actions and their victims. This finding implies that high rates of absenteeism are registered for learners at the three selected schools drawn from the upper and lower quintiles due to bullying.

#### **b) Inability to concentrate on their studies**

In Table 11 some learners' affirmative responses (a mean of 46.44%) indicated via the questionnaire state that bullying impedes victims' concentration on their studies. All the interviewees (a mean of 100%) also stated that bullying hinders victims' abilities to make progress in their studies. A learner during an individual interview mentioned:

Our class (Grade 10X) had the highest pass rate in the examinations in the first and second term among the five grade 10 classes. But it has changed because of a lot of bullying problems. I am just on my own in class now because if you ask another learner especially a girl something about class work, then they give you a rude answer and some learners especially victims cannot concentrate in class because they are thinking of what their attackers will do next. This causes some learners to fail the examinations.

The quotation indicates that bullying actions leads to a drop in academic achievement since victims lack the ability to concentrate on their studies as a consequence of a negative use of power by their perpetrators. Smith and Sharp (1994:2) mention that bullying causes victims to be unhappy which may in turn affect their concentration and learning negatively. Thus, it is imperative for each of the three selected schools to set up strategies to control bullying. This may enable victims to concentrate on their studies.

However, during an individual interview, one of the learners declared that:

It is not only the victims who find it difficult to concentrate on their studies. Most of the bullies that I know and some who have bullied me always fail because they concentrate on bullying strategies instead of concentrating on their academics.

The quotation indicates that perpetrators of bullying actions spend more time thinking how to use their power negatively against their peers. This finding is consistent with findings by Hinduja and Patchin (2009:14) and Rigby (1996:64) that bullying has negative effects on victims and perpetrators alike.

### **c) Low self-esteem**

Another negative effect of bullying experienced by victims is low self-esteem. In Table 11 a mean of 42.36% of learners' responses on the questionnaire stated that bullying at school leads to low self-esteem for some victims. In addition, all the interviewees (a mean of 100%) reported that bullying leads to low self-esteem for the victims. One learner during an individual interview remarked:

Bullying destroys the self-confidence of learners, for example, if a learner stands up in class to answer a question and gives a wrong answer, the other learners laugh at him or her even many months after. This breaks the learner emotionally and the learner stops to answer questions in class.

The quotation above is an illustration that bullying actions lowers the self-esteem of some learners. The quotation also implies that teachers do not effectively control bullying actions during lessons. This is consistent with findings by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:456) which state that bullying affects the mental health of learners and hinders their ability to make progress in their studies. This also affirms findings by Olweus (1993:33) that low self-esteem for victims of bullying is one of the most damaging consequences of bullying in school. Therefore some victims of school bullying at the three selected schools situated at the upper and lower quintiles in the Western Cape suffer from low self-esteem as a consequence of bullying.

### **d) Insecurity**

A state of fear and insecurity is also one of the consequences of bullying experienced by victims and bystanders at the three selected schools. Table 11 shows that a mean of 39.64% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire affirmed that some learners fear for their lives at school. Other questionnaire responses by learners also mentioned that many bystanders are scared at school because they do not know when they may be bullied. During an individual interview a learners stated that: "I do not listen to the teacher in the classroom during lessons because I am afraid of bullying". Another learner during an individual interview remarked that: "A school should be a place where we are free and feel safe but that is not the case here. Some learners especially the smaller ones do not feel secure at school". These quotations indicate that some learners at the three selected schools do not feel safe and secure which may in turn affect their concentration on their studies.

### **e) Isolation of victims**

In addition, some victims of school bullying are often isolated at the three selected schools. Table 11 shows that a mean of 8.31% of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire stated that victims of bullying are often lonely and isolated by their peers at school. All the interviewees (a mean of 100%) affirmed that victims of school bullying are often isolated. A learner during an individual interview stated that: "Victims of bullying do not have friends. I feel sorry for them. If a learner makes the victim his/her friend, they (bullies) will also bully the learner or call him/her chicken or rabbit" which are names associated with victims of bullying. This finding is consistent with findings by Rigby (1996:51) and Olweus (1993:33) which state that victims of bullying have fewer or no friends. Hence, the perpetrators of bullying actions use their strength to ensure that the victims are isolated. Rigby (1996:51) also reported that learners who have not been bullied do not like to be friends with victims of bullying. Thus, some victims of bullying at the three selected schools situated in the upper and lower quintiles are often isolated.



### **f) Self-harm effect**

Again, bullying may have fatal effects on victims. In Table 11 a mean of 5.64% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire indicated that some victims of bullying think about committing suicide. During an individual interview a learners stated: "At times we (other learners) can see that some victims of bullying are depressed which is very dangerous because it can cause some victims to hurt themselves". This quotation indicates that some victims of school bullying are likely to commit self-harm. This finding on self-harm is consistent with findings by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:452) which indicate an intention of self-harm by a victim of bullying as illustrated by the following quotation: "Sometimes I felt like I should harm myself ... I felt like doing it". The fewer number of learners who stated that bullying may lead to self-harm is consistent with findings by Fisher *et al.* (2012:4) which assert that few learners commit suicide or self-harm as a consequence of bullying. Hence, it is necessary for bullying to be investigated and controlled to prevent such fatal effects on victims of school bullying.

At this point subsidiary research question 3 is addressed and subsidiary research aim 3 is achieved. Subsidiary research question 3 is: What are the consequences of bullying on grade

10 learners at the three selected schools? Subsidiary research aim 3 is: To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners at the three selected schools.

#### 4.2.8 Actions taken by victims of bullying

Table 12 presents information on learners' responses to the questionnaire question in respect of the different actions taken by victims of bullying at the three selected schools.

**Table 12: Actions taken by victims of bullying at the three selected schools**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Do nothing	36	47.37	42	75.00	26	38.24	53.53
Go to the teacher	36	47.37	6	10.71	29	42.65	33.58
Tell a friend	31	40.79	15	26.79	16	23.53	30.37
Tell their parents	37	48.68	3	5.36	23	33.82	29.29
Tell the Principal	32	42.11	1	1.79	23	33.82	25.90
Resort to bullying	24	31.58	10	17.86	17	25.00	24.81

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

At the three selected schools there was some discrepancy regarding responses from interviewees. During the interviews, 33.34% of the interviewees stated that victims of bullying do not report the incident while 66.66% of the interviewees stated that victims of bullying report bullying incidents. At School A, one of the learners during an individual interview, stated that victims of bullying usually report to the teachers though the teachers do nothing about reported cases of bullying. On the other hand, the other learner at School A, during an individual interview, stated that victims of bullying are afraid to report to teachers or anyone else because they are scared of further bullying. At School B, both learners who were interviewed individually stated that victims of bullying do not take any actions because they are scared of the perpetrators or to be called names at school. During the focus group

interview at School B, the teachers also confirmed that the victims hardly report bullying incidents. At School C, one of the learners (during an individual interview) also stated that victims do not report cases of bullying while the other learner (during an individual interview) stated that some victims report to specific teachers. The teachers, who participated in the focus group interview at School C, also mentioned that few victims report incidents of bullying. Each of the actions taken by victims of bullying in the three selected schools is discussed in the paragraphs below.

#### **a) Victims of bullying do nothing**

In this study it was found that most victims of bullying do nothing when bullied by their peers. In Table 12 more than half (a mean of 53.53%) of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire indicated that victims do nothing when bullied at school. All the teachers (a mean of 100%) during the focus group interview at School B mentioned that victims of bullying do not report bullying cases because they are threatened by the perpetrators and the teachers do not take any effective measures to protect victims from further bullying. To substantiate the latter view a male learner during an individual interview said:

I am one of the library assistants at school. Last week a big boy was making noise in the library, I asked him to stop noise but he continued. I went to the principal and reported the incident and the principal came and chased him out of the library. On my way to class from the library he hit me in my face and pushed me down on the stair case. I realized how serious the problem would be and decided not to tell the principal again because the boy can get me out of school.

The quotation shows that the victim did nothing when bullied a second time and that the principal did not take effective measures to protect the victim from further bullying. Hence when a victim of bullying reports a bullying incident he/she is usually targeted again by his/her perpetrators. However, the quotation also indicates that the victim was influenced by his leadership power to act (report to the principal) but the principal did not do enough to protect the victim and the bully used his physical strength to bully the victim again. The above quotation also shows that some victims fear further attacks by their perpetrators and hence do not report cases of bullying incidents at school.

At Schools A and C, both learners and teachers during individual interviews and focus group interviews respectively confirmed that many victims of bullying report to the teachers at

school although the teachers refer all cases of bullying to the principal. This finding is consistent with the view of Rigby (1996:185) that some victims of bullying feel it is humiliating to report cases of bullying to teachers because some teachers do nothing about the reported cases. The finding also aligns with a finding by Lee (2004:48) that some teachers and adults underestimate the extent of a bullying incident despite the bullying being repeatedly reported. To sum up, this finding indicates that victim of bullying at Schools A and C situated in the lower quintile (one and three) report cases of bullying to their teachers more often than victims of bullying at School B situated in the upper quintile (quintile four).

### **b) Victims of bullying report to the teacher**

Some victims of bullying at the three selected schools tell the teacher. In Table 12 above a mean of 33.58% of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire indicated that victims of bullying tell their teachers. A female learner during an individual interview mentioned that victims tell the teachers because the teachers are the only ones who can protect learners at school. This finding contradicts previous findings by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:455) who found that learners feel adults and teachers are not willing to assist in addressing bullying hence victims of bullying do not report cases of bullying because teachers and adults do nothing about reported cases of bullying.

There are differences between the sets of responses via the questionnaire from the three selected schools, and this demands an explanation in terms of the contextual factors. At School B, it was found that learners who report bullying are called 'chicken' or 'rabbit'. This may be the reason why few learners (10.71%) go to the teacher when bullied at School B as opposed to almost half of the learners (47.37% and 42.65%) who go to the teacher when bullied, at Schools A and C respectively. Despite the fact that the teachers at Schools A and C refer all cases of bullying to the principal, both learners and teachers during individual interviews and focus group interviews respectively confirmed that many victims of bullying report to the teachers at school. The latter is consistent with the views of Rigby (1996:185) who cautions that when all cases of bullying are reported to the principal or deputy, it ensures that the cases are taken seriously. As such teachers and councillors may be given the opportunity to evaluate bullying cases and separate less serious cases of bullying from the serious ones and the serious ones reported to the principals.

However, in School A the principal does not effectively deal with reported cases of bullying. To further illustrate the latter, a female learner during an individual interview said:

One day I was sitting with my group members doing a group project given by one of our teachers. A boy stood upstairs and poured water on our project (on a book). We reported to the principal and he said I am not a small boy to run after the learner (perpetrator). So we had to do the work all over.

The quotation signifies that the principal does not address reported cases of bullying effectively. This aligns with findings by Lee (2004:48) that some teachers and adults underestimate the extent of a bullying incident despite the bullying being reported.

In line with the above discussion, a learner during an individual interview cautioned that victims of bullying have to take actions against bullying. The learner emphasized that:

The teachers play a big role but the victims do not report the bullying. The teachers cannot just accuse someone of bullying, so the learners (victims) need to report the bullying. For example one perpetrator of bullying was reported to the teacher, the teacher went to the principal who took the case to the SGB and the learner (perpetrator) was expelled from school. If I (victim) am bullied when I come to school, that is stuck in my mind because I (victim) am scared. But that will happen every day until I (victim) stand up for myself.

The above quotation by a learner emphasizes the need for learners to report bullying. Again, the quotation indicates that some teachers take action to curb bullying. A female learner at School B during an individual interview remarked that: “Usually when the teacher addresses the bullying which is very seldom then the bully will listen”. Implied in this quotation is the fact that teachers do not often intervene to control the process of bullying at school. However this finding that some victims report bullying to the teachers contradicts a finding by Smith and Sharp (1994:5) that most victims of bullying deliberately hide it from their teachers.

### **c) Victims of bullying talk to a friend**

It was also found that some victims of bullying talk to a friend. In Table 12 some (a mean of 30.37%) of learners’ affirmative responses on the questionnaire mentioned that victims report cases of bullying to their friends. The questionnaire responses and the interview data indicate that the main reason why victims of school bullying involve their friends is to seek help to take revenge on the bullying incident. This is to threaten the perpetrator not to bully him/her

(victim) again. This finding is in line with a finding by Smith and Sharp (1994:5) who found that most victims of bullying prefer to tell a friend. This is also consistent with findings by Lee (2004:33) that victims of bullying need support from peers. To substantiate this finding a learner during an individual interview stated:

Most learners who are bullied at school tell their friends. The friends come with a gang to beat the perpetrator. That is why after school every day there are fights on the way. But the fights are usually very dangerous.

The quotation implies that friends usually gang up to fight the perpetrators of bullying when notified and the fights take place mostly on the way from school. Therefore it can be concluded that due to a lack of effective intervention by teachers and school authorities to curb bullying, some victims seek intervention from their friends.

#### **d) Victims of bullying tell their parents**

Some victims of bullying at the three selected schools report bullying cases to their parents. In Table 12 a mean of 29.29% of learners' affirmative responses stated on the questionnaire mentioned that some victims of school bullying tell their parents when bullied. To illustrate the latter view during a focus group interview a teacher remarked:

An incident happened at school and I only knew about it when the girls' mother came to school. At the beginning of this year there were four girls who 'picked' on one girl in my class regularly. They (perpetrators) called her (victim) names just to hurt her and break her down. I never knew about it because no one reported it. I learnt about the four girls from the parent of the victim.

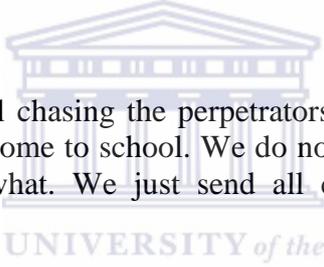
The above quotation indicates that some victims of bullying prefer to report the incident to their parents rather than to the teachers. This contradicts previous findings in South Africa by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:455) that learners feel adults and teachers are not willing to assist in addressing bullying; hence victims of bullying do not report cases of bullying because teachers and adults do nothing about reported cases of bullying. The quotation also contradicts a finding by De Wet (2005:706) that complaints against school bullying are often ignored by the various stakeholders.

However in School B only a few victims (5.36%) talk to their parents about the bullying. This may be so because victims might not want their parents to come to school to intervene in the

bullying. Lee (2004:48) states that a third of victims of bullying tell their parents about the bullying but ask their parents not to contact the school.

#### **e) Victims of bullying tell the principal**

Some victims of bullying do report to the principal. In Table 12 about a quarter (a mean of 25.90%) of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire stated that some victims of bullying usually report the incident to the principal. This is in line with Rigby's (1996:185) view that when all cases of bullying are reported to the principal or deputy, it ensures that the cases are taken seriously. The total percentages of responses per school are School A: 42.11%, School B: 1.79% and School C: 33.82%. The difference between the sets of responses might be due to the fact that some learners at Schools A and C report cases of bullying to the principal via the teachers. To substantiate the latter a teacher during a focus group interview reported that:



We just see the principal chasing the perpetrators of bullying to go home and tell their parents to come to school. We do not know if the principal is following a policy or what. We just send all cases of bullying to the principal.

The quotation indicates that all cases of bullying at the school are handled by the principal. The quotation above also justifies the difference between the sets of responses that teachers at Schools A and C do not intervene in respect of bullying. On the other hand, at School B it was found that some teachers deal with reported cases of bullying. To substantiate this finding, during an individual interview a learner at School B said: "There is one of our teachers who told some girls who were bullying another learner straight to stop it and the perpetrators stopped the bullying". The other learner at School B also reported that:

Teachers deal with situations differently. Some get the bully to speak about the incident but the teachers do not know the problem behind the problem. ...The male teachers are not sympathetic because they feel that bullying is what everybody should go through. The female teachers are more sympathetic because they put themselves in the situation of the learners and go in depth into the problem.

The two quotations above show that some teachers at School B address cases of bullying. Also at School B the school structures and hierarchies are well respected. For example, learners report cases of bullying to their various teachers and grade heads who handle the

problem in consultation with the principal and other staff members. Hence it might be concluded that at Schools A and C all the powers are in the hands of the principals while at School B responsibilities are shared with regards to bullying.

#### **f) Victims of bullying resort to bullying**

Table 12 shows that a mean of 24.81% of learners' affirmative responses on the questionnaire mentioned that some victims of bullying resort to bullying. One of the male learners during an individual interview said: "If someone bullies me, I will bully back immediately. I have to stand up for myself". Another questionnaire response stated: "I bully because other learners bully me so I have to do the same". This finding is consistent with findings in Sullivan *et al.* (2004:64) that some victims in turn bully their perpetrators. Such victims do not want to be considered as weak or called names such as 'chicken', 'bunny' and 'rabbit' which signify weakness. Victims who resort to bullying are termed proactive victims and are hot-tempered, hyperactive and may have difficulty concentrating on their studies as discussed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, some questionnaire responses stated that some victims resort to bullying so as to intimidate the perpetrators and to signal future perpetrators not to bully them again. A mean of 2% of affirmative responses further indicated that some victims of bullying have stabbed their perpetrators at school. This is consistent with a finding reported by Roberts (2006:44) that some victims of bullying are usually filled with vengeful behaviour and as a consequence such victims have injured their perpetrators in a fatal way.

#### 4.2.9 Learners' perceptions of teachers' responses to bullying

Table 13 presents learners' perceptions via the questionnaire of teachers' responses to bullying at the three selected schools.

**Table 13: Learners' perception of teachers' responses to bullying**

	School A N=76		School B N=56		School C N=68		Mean %
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Punish bullies	49	64.47	20	35.71	35	51.47	50.55
Talk to the parents	50	65.79	17	30.36	27	39.71	45.28
Talk to bullies and victims	41	53.95	30	53.57	18	26.47	44.66
Do nothing	13	17.11	9	16.07	8	11.76	14.98
Send bully and victim to psychologist	4	5.26	6	10.71	9	13.24	9.74
Do not listen	4	5.26	3	5.36	2	2.94	4.52

N=total number of participants; n=number of responses per variable

During focus group interviews a mean of 75% of the teachers accepted that they do not take any actions against bullying while a mean of 25% of teachers during focus group interviews stated that they do take action against bullying based on the severity of the bullying incident. On the other hand, during individual interviews with learners all the interviewees (a mean of 100%) felt that the teachers do not do enough to help the victims of bullying at the three selected schools. The two learners at School B during individual interviews mentioned that this is due to the fact that most victims of bullying do not report to the teachers. The interview data confirm the questionnaire responses in respect of learners' perception on teachers' responses to bullying. The different perceptions of teachers by learners are discussed in the paragraphs below.

### **a) Teachers punish the bullies**

In Table 13 half of the learners' responses (a mean of 50.55%) on the questionnaire affirmed that teachers punish the bullies at school. However the interview data indicate that punishment meted out to bullies at the three selected schools vary between the schools. Punishment may take the form of detention or bullies are sent home to bring their parents to school. This finding in the present study is consistent with the view of Lee (2004:48) who asserts that teachers have legal powers to punish perpetrators of bullying actions at school. However, there is a great difference between the sets of responses at the three selected schools as shown in Table 13. At Schools A and C, the totals of 64.47% and 51.47% of affirmative responses respectively acknowledged that teachers punish the bullies at school. While at School B, only 35.71% of affirmative responses acknowledged that teachers punish the bullies at school. One reason may be that at Schools A and C, both learners and teachers said that in most cases the principal usually sends the bullies home to bring their parents as punishment. By way of contrast, at School B, the teachers reported that although the school has a school policy on bullying, it is not effectively implemented and as such many perpetrators of bullying actions usually go unpunished for their actions. A teacher at School B during a focus group interview commented that: "Some teachers are too relaxed with learners and they do not address bad behaviour". These reasons might be why the percentage of learners at School B who indicated that teachers punish bullies is lower compared to Schools A and C.

### **b) Teachers talk to parents of victims and bullies**

In Table 13 a mean of 45.28% of learners' affirmative responses in the questionnaire stated that teachers talk to both parents of bullies and victims of school bullying. This finding is consistent with some suggestions made by Roberts (2006:67) and Rigby (1996:134) that teachers have to listen to and tolerate parents, assure parents of their care towards the learners and that further action will be taken when a learner is bullied in order to control bullying at school.

There are differences between the response sets at the three selected schools. While School A has a high total of 65.79% of affirmative responses which indicates that teachers talk to both parents of bullies and victims of school bullying, only a total of 30.36% and a total of 39.71%

of affirmative responses at Schools B and C respectively acknowledged that teachers talk to both the parents of bullies and victims of school bullying. The percentage of responses at School A may be higher because the only punishment meted out to bullies is to invite their parents to school. While at School B, there are alternative measures to address bullying such as sitting for detention.

### **c) Teachers talk to bullies and victims**

In Table 13 above less than half (a mean of 44.66%) of learners' affirmative responses stated that teachers talk to victims and bullies at school. This finding is consistent with a finding by Rigby (1996:134) who suggests that teachers have to be open to talk to both victims and bullies who need help as a consequence of school bullying. Also, Varnava (2002:51) suggests that teachers have to mediate between parents, learners and school authorities within a framework of procedures understood by all stakeholders at a school to control or reduce bullying.

There is a discrepancy between the sets of responses at the three selected schools. While there is a high total (53.95%) of affirmative responses at School A and a total of 53.57% at School B who reported that teachers talk to victims and bullies at school, 26.47% of affirmative responses at School C stated that teachers talk to victims and bullies at school. On the other hand, at School C, both learners during individual interviews and teachers during focus group interviews said the teachers do nothing to assist the victims. A learner during an individual interview remarked: "The only thing our teacher says to the victim is, sorry my child go and sit down". This attitude might account for a low percentage of affirmative responses at School C that teachers talk to victims and bullies at school. In addition, teachers at School C during a focus group interview testified that they do not deal with cases of bullying and that they are not sure of what to do with either victims or bullies. The latter finding is consistent with a finding by Meyer (2009:22) that some teachers assert that they cannot determine bullying or feel confident to address a bullying situation at school because they were never trained to address cases of bullying. Hence, Meyer's (2009:4) view that there is a deficiency of effective intervention by teachers to interrupt the process of bullying at school is also confirmed in the present study.

#### **d) Teachers do nothing about bullying**

Another finding on learners' perceptions of teachers' attitude is that some teachers do nothing when learners are bullied. In Table 13 a mean of 14.98% of learners' affirmative responses via the questionnaire indicated that teachers do nothing when cases of bullying are reported. This finding aligns with a finding by Lee (2004:48) which states that some teachers and adults underestimate the extent of a bullying incident despite the bullying being repeatedly reported. Varnava (2002:51) adds that underestimating a bullying incident or taking no action implies that the complaint is ignored. However, some teachers at the three selected schools during focus group interviews stated that they are not sure of how to handle reported cases of bullying. As such, Varnava (2002:1) and Lee (2004:33) state that an effective way to stop bullying is about taking action against bullying and supporting victims of bullying.

#### **e) Teachers send both victims and bullies to a psychologist**

In Table 13 a minority (a mean of 9.74%) of learners' affirmative responses in the questionnaire stated that teachers send victims and bullies to the school psychologist. This point was not further probed in the interview and this can be considered a weakness of this study since the factors which influence a bully and a victim of bullying to be sent to a psychologist were not properly interrogated.

#### **f) Teachers do not listen to victims of bullying**

At the three selected schools, only a small portion (a mean of 4.52%) of affirmative responses by learners on the questionnaire indicated that teachers do not listen to victims of bullying as indicated in Table 13. This finding is consistent with a finding by Bhana *et al.* (2009:50) which states that some male teachers accept gender bullying (male domination) and as such they rarely intervene. Meyer (2009:4) also reported that 83% of the participants (teachers) in her study rarely intervened in gender bullying. Based on the discussion under Sections 4.2.9 and 4.2.10 it can be concluded that most victims of bullying did not answer this question since measures to address bullying at the three selected schools are merely punitive in nature.

At this point in the data analysis and discussion subsidiary research question 4 is answered and therefore the main research question is also answered. Subsidiary research question 4 is:

What policies are in place to address bullying at the three selected schools? The main research question is: What are the different forms of bullying experienced by grade 10 learners at the three selected schools in the Western Cape? Therefore the study is successful because the main research question is answered using the data collected.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter the research findings are presented and analysed and discussed. The findings indicate that bullying is rife at the three selected schools. The data from the questionnaire and interview indicate that most learners bully at school because they wish to control their peers. Bullying at the three selected schools is manifested in different forms namely: physical, verbal and non-verbal, and electronic which is consistent with the different forms reported in the literature review. In addition, most bullying happens in the classrooms and playgrounds. More so, the causes and consequences of bullying are very similar within the three selected schools. However, the rates of bullying vary among the three selected schools and this is determined by the school culture and the teachers' responses to bullying. Schools A and C situated in the lower quintile do not have a school policy on bullying while School B situated in the upper quintile has a policy which is not effectively implemented. Hence, most of the learners perceive that teachers do not do enough to intervene to protect victims of bullying. As a result most victims do not report the bullying to teachers. Finally, the findings show that the learners experience many negative effects due to bullying which impedes their ability to make progress in their studies.

In the next chapter some conclusions are drawn and some recommendations are also made for school authorities, teachers, parents, learners and for future research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter general conclusions of the empirical study are provided by examining the main aims of the study. Also, some recommendations are made for various stakeholders and for future research.

#### **5.2 Conclusions arrived at from the study**

The conclusions drawn in this study are based on the data collected from the three selected schools. The conclusions are also in accordance with the aims of the study which are to establish the following: the different forms of bullying; the causes of bullying; the consequences of bullying on learners; and the school policies in relation to bullying at the three selected schools. Some contentions are also made in relation to the quintile levels of each of the three selected schools as classified by the WCED. These contentions are influenced by an imbalance of power which underpins bullying as discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2). The conclusions are discussed in the paragraphs below.

Firstly, it can be concluded that the problem of school bullying seems to receive less recognition by teachers and school authorities at the three selected schools. The mean percentage (96.08%) of learners' affirmative responses who indicated on the questionnaire that bullying happens at school is very high (see Table 2). Also, all the teachers during focus group interviews at the three selected schools acknowledged the occurrence of bullying in the respective schools. However, the stance of the three selected schools in respect of bullying is not made known to the members of the school community. There are no general standards on learners' behaviour in the three selected schools. What is tolerated or not tolerated is a matter of relative or subjective judgment of teachers and learners. However, there is no expectation that the three selected schools will indulge in a process to address bullying problems experienced by learners in the near future. Hence there seems to be no consideration of the future of the three selected schools with regards to bullying problems.

Secondly, it can be concluded that most teachers at the three selected schools do not assume their leadership and parental roles. At the level of the classroom most teachers do not exercise autonomy to take decisions against bullying and this has an adverse effect on the atmosphere of the classroom. There is lack of teacher intervention in observed or reported cases of bullying during lessons. Most learners at the three selected schools perceive that teachers are not prepared to lay a framework to control bullying. Bullies continue to bully their peers because teachers do not intervene to control bullying (Table 13). Victims of bullying expressed the need of schools that are free from bullying as a vital educational right, but are scared to report bullying since nothing is done to protect victims or stop the bullying. Therefore most teachers at the three selected schools condone bullying among learners.

Thirdly, it can be concluded that the school structures at the three selected schools have similar impacts on the learners' experiences with bullying. The reactive approaches used at the three selected schools to punish perpetrators of bullying leaves the victims unassisted. Schools A and School C do not have a school policy on bullying and all incidents of bullying are referred to the principals. The principals evaluate the incident subjectively and take actions based on the severity of an incident. As such most cases of bullying in Schools A and C are ignored by the principals though the victims see the incident as being very serious. On the other hand, School B has a school policy on bullying which is not effectively implemented. Some teachers at School B intervene to control bullying while most teachers do not. In addition, most victims of bullying in School B do not report cases of bullying to teachers because they perceive that teachers do not intervene to assist victims. Therefore the consequences of bullying on victims are ignored by school authorities at the three selected schools and victims have to sort out bullying problems by themselves.

Fourthly, it can also be concluded that the three selected schools do not provide protective environments for learners with negative family experiences. The measures in place at the three selected schools to address bullying are merely punitive in nature. These reactive approaches used at the three selected schools are inconsistent and increase the levels of bullying rather than decrease bullying. Also, the punitive measures enable learners with negative family experiences to also experience the school environment negatively. In addition, some teachers are unable to relate to the social circumstances of learners during lessons. Therefore the schools turn the negative family situation of learners into educational disadvantages as well.

Lastly, it can be concluded that there are no coping devices for victims of bullying at the three selected schools. The findings indicate that some teachers do not listen to victims of bullying. Therefore, the consequences of bullying on learners are also ignored by school authorities and some teachers and most learners have to address bullying problems by themselves. Learners at the three selected schools experience similar consequences of bullying such as lowering of self-esteem, high rates of absenteeism, self-harm, inability to make progress in their studies, insecurity and isolation of victims (see Table 11). Despite these disastrous effects on victims' ability to study, their emotional health and their self-esteem, teachers and school authorities are not prepared to act on their conviction to assist learners. However, some teachers blame their inability to make individual decisions to control bullying on a disunited school system.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings in this study some recommendations are made for school authorities and teachers, parents/care givers and future research. The recommendations made for school authorities and teachers in this chapter are built on the premise made by Lee (2004:53) that schools are agents of social change and have the capacity to nurture acceptable behaviour in learners. The recommendations can also be justified by this quotation from one of the learners during an individual interview:

Our parents do not talk about many things to us because they think that we are told at school. Some of our parents feel that their knowledge is not useful for us at this age, yet the teachers do not talk to us about many things at school including bullying.

From this quotation it is evident that the school concerned does not meet the expectations of parents and learners on bullying.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for school authorities and teachers**

Recommendations for schools are made in respect of school culture, moral education, workshops and school policies on bullying.

#### **a) Renovation of the school culture**

The results of this investigation clearly indicate that the school culture at the three selected schools does not enable collaboration among the various stakeholders. The language used by the interviewees (both learners and teachers) clearly indicates the divisions among the stakeholders. Hence this study recommends that the school leadership at the three selected schools could renovate the school culture to enable learners, teachers, school management and parents/care givers to work together towards the achievement of common goals to control bullying at school hence promote learning. A school management may improve school culture by establishing common aims and values for a school through consultation with all stakeholders.

The findings also show that learners at the three selected schools are not provided with guidelines or information on how to prevent bullying. Hence the actions taken by teachers and school authorities against bullying at the three selected schools are merely reactive and punitive in nature. With this in mind, this study recommends a proactive school policy on bullying with acceptable and unacceptable behaviour clearly stated. Sanctions for defaulters should be outlined in the policy. Teachers should ensure that learners respect and abide by the school policy on bullying. These may serve to control bullying and protect learners from peer bullying.

Based on the findings on learners' perceptions of teachers' responses to bullying and the actions taken by victims of bullying, the following recommendations have been made for teachers.

- Firstly, this study recommends that teachers use the formal and informal curriculum to enable learners to learn to be assertive and to denounce the abuse of power;
- Secondly, this study recommends that teachers should apply classroom management skills and instill discipline while teaching;
- Thirdly, teachers are recommended to create and maintain a positive teacher/learner relationship, and an appropriate environment which is conducive to learning which

will enable communication and interaction between the teacher and learners on the one hand and among learners on the other hand;

- Fourthly, this study recommends that teachers should encourage learners to report bullying in a safe and private manner. Teachers should also listen to victims of bullying and initiate dialogue with victims of bullying and assure learners who report bullying that an appropriate solution will follow; and
- Fifthly, this study recommends that teachers should talk to learners who bully to identify the reasons that cause them to bully and if possible resolve the problems. If the teachers can identify the problem of the learner with bullying, it may be easy to assist the learner in question;

#### **b) Moral education**

This study recommends an ethical approach by school management. The school management may establish common goals and values to enable amicable behaviour among learners on the one hand and between teachers and learners on the other hand. Hence, the school management, teachers and learners have to act with integrity. The latter may discourage power abuse among learners hence reduce peer bullying at school. The majority (83.33%) of learners during individual interviews who dislike bullying stressed that their family values prohibit negative actions against others. However, some learners do not live with their parents and some parents do not caution their children on bad behaviour. Based on the premise that some parents do not caution their children on bad behaviour, teachers may encourage moral values in learners by teaching learners what is wrong or right. Such teachings may go a long way to reduce bullying at school.

#### **c) Workshops on bullying**

The findings in this study indicate that there is a great need for the three selected schools to organize workshops on bullying. Thus this study recommends workshops on bullying at each of the three selected schools with the following suggested objectives:

- To educate and expose learners to bullying through role plays. This is because some of the learners are not aware of their actions or the consequences of their actions.

- To enable learners who exhibit bullying to sit together and discuss why they bully so that teachers can find the real problem and address it. Encourage victims of bullying to report cases of bullying incidents experienced or witnessed respectively.
- To teach learners to be assertive in order to avoid some of the devastating consequences of bullying.
- To assist both bullies and victims of bullying to be able to talk freely about bullying because some learners may not have someone to talk to.

Hence discussion and negotiation may be the most appropriate responses to bullies and victims. Also, schools may raise the awareness of the entire school community on the types of bullying and the consequences experienced at a school indicating the stance of the school authority on bullying.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for parents/care givers**

The recommendations made for parents are based on the data from learners and teachers at the three selected schools because parents did not take part in the study. The following are recommendations for parents.

- Investigate a bullying incident when reported;
- Provide moral support by listening to children;
- Talk about bullying to children;
- Report cases of bullying to the teachers immediately when discovered or informed by children;
- Be systematic in approaching the teachers about a bullying incident;
- Inquire about those who witnessed an incident and those who were involved;
- Do not confront the perpetrators of bullying;
- Ensure that children participate in the decision taken;
- Cooperate with the school and assist in decision making when required;
- Encourage children to develop problem-solving skills by encouraging him/her to negotiate and solve a difficult situation with peers;
- Meet and discuss with the teachers regarding children's home circumstances so that the teacher can understand how to tackle problems concerning the children; and

- Have frequent discussions with children and caution him/her on the consequences of their decisions and actions.

Thus, it is imperative for each of the three selected schools to set up strategies to control bullying. This may enable learners to concentrate on their studies.

### **5.3.3 Recommendations for future research**

Based on the results of this research some recommendations are made for further research on bullying at South African schools.

Firstly, the research results proved that victims and bystanders do not report cases of bullying. Thus the following is a recommended topic:

**Topic 1: *Breaking the silent code around bullying: Encouraging learners to tell about bullying.***

The main research question could be: What measures can be put in place to encourage learners to tell about bullying at school?

Secondly, due to the fact that victims and bystanders develop a feeling of fear, are insecure and suffer from depression, this researcher recommends further research on the following topic:

**Topic 2: *Improving peer relationships at school.***

The main research question could be: What strategies can be used to encourage acceptable behaviour among learners at school?

Thirdly, based on the suggestion made by participants that workshops on bullying can be used to curb peer bullying, future research can cover this area as well.

**Topic 3: *An evaluation of workshops on bullying as a means to reduce peer bullying at school.***

The possible main research question could be: Can practical sessions with learners reduce peer bullying? In this case the workshops have to be implemented, monitored and measured to assess the level of effectiveness.

Fourthly, this study also discovered that some teachers' attitudes initiate bullying among learners. Hence a recommended research topic in this area could be as follows:

**Topic 4: *A teacher as a cause of peer bullying in the classroom.***

The main research question could be: What do teachers do to initiate bullying in a classroom?

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The conclusions drawn from this study show that bullying at the three selected schools is a serious problem which should no longer be ignored or dismissed. The findings indicate that there is no joint decision making at the three selected schools in respect of peer bullying. Also, aspects of school culture promote patterns of bullying among learners. Responses by teachers indicate that the consequences of bullying on learners are ignored and not given careful thought. However, most learners hold the view that bullying can be addressed at school. Even though a school is not an influential agent to amend the family/community influences on learners' behaviour, a school can establish proactive policies on bullying to prevent the home/community circumstances from leading to an educational disadvantage for learners. On the other hand, victims of bullying could be provided with assertive training which involves standing up for their rights and expressing their thoughts. To conclude, the problem of bullying at the three selected schools needs a timeous intervention. It is assumed that the findings in this study may provide insights to understanding the phenomenon of bullying and developing strategies to combat bullying at the three selected schools.

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**Appendix 1: Questionnaire for grade 10 learners**

1. Does bullying happen in your school? Please place a tick in the appropriate box.

Yes	No
-----	----

2. How does bullying happen at your school? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

A) Physically

Through kicking	Through punching	Through pushing	Through beating	Learners are smacked on the face.	Pulling hair	Pulling of school uniform

B) Verbally or emotionally

Learners are called hurtful names	Learners shouting at others	Learners are being teased	Learners use vulgar language on others	Learners insult others	Learners laugh at others	Being left out of things on purpose.	Other (please specify)

C) Electronically

Through a social network such as Facebook	Through an email	By use of a photograph	Through a cell phone text	Through a phone call

3. Why do learners bully others at your school? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

Because of a high academic performance	Because of a low academic performance.	Because others come late to school	Because of divorced parents	Because of a poor background.	Because you are a girl	Because you are a boy

Others, please specify.....

4. Where have you noticed bullying going on at your school? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

On the Playground	In my classroom	On the corridor	In the toilets	On the way to and from school	In the school hall

Others, please specify.....



5. Who have you seen bullying other learners at your school? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

A big boy	A small boy	A group of boys	A big girl	A small girl.	A group of girls	Both boys and girls

Others, please specify.....

6. What do learners do when bullied? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

Go to the teacher	Tell a friend	Tell their parents	Bully back	Tell the Principal	Do nothing

Others, please specify.....  
 .....

7. Do you bully other learners at your school? Please place a tick in the appropriate box.

Yes	No
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8. If you answered yes to question 8, please explain why you bully other learners.

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9. What do the teachers do about bullying at your school? Please select from the list below and place a tick in the appropriate box/boxes. You may select more than one.

Punish the bullies according to the classroom rules on bullying	Talk to both bullies and victims	Talk to the parents of both bullies and victims	Send both bullies and victims to the school psychologist	Do not listen to victims of bullying	Do nothing about reported cases of bullying

Others, please specify.....

10. Does bullying affect learners at your school? Please place a tick in the appropriate box.

Yes	No
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11. If you answered yes to question 11, please explain how bullying affects other learners.

.....

.....

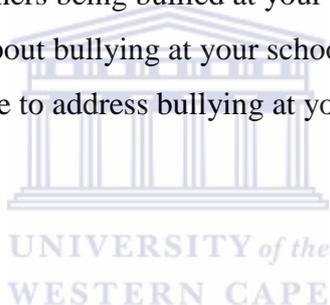


## **Appendix 2: Individual interview questions for learners**

1. Does bullying happen at your school?
2. How does bullying happen at your school?
  - 2.1 Physically?
  - 2.2 Verbally or emotionally?
  - 2.3 Electronically?
3. Why do learners bully others at your school?
4. Where have you noticed bullying going on at your school?
5. Who have you seen bullying other learners at your school?
6. What do learners do when bullied?
7. How often have you seen learners being bullied at your school?
8. Do you bully other learners at your school?
9. Why do you bully other learners at your school?
10. What do the teachers do about bullying at your school?
11. What do the parents/guardians say about bullying at your school?

### **Appendix 3: Focus group interview questions for teachers**

1. Does bullying happen at your school?
2. How does bullying happen at your school?
  - 2.1 Physically?
  - 2.2 Verbally or emotionally?
  - 2.3 Electronically?
3. Why do learners bully others at your school?
4. Where have you noticed bullying going on at your school?
5. Who have you seen bullying learners at your school?
6. What do learners do when bullied?
7. How often have you seen learners being bullied at your school?
8. What do you as teachers do about bullying at your school?
9. Are there any policies in place to address bullying at your school?



#### **Appendix 4: Letter to parents /guardians/care givers**

##### **Dear parents/guardians/care givers**

My name is Constance Memoh. I am a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Faculty of Education studying for a Master's Degree in Education. I am required to conduct a research in three schools as part of the requirements for the completion of the degree. I have already requested and obtained permission from the school administration to conduct the research with the grade 10 learners at your child's school. Your written permission on the consent form is required for your child to participate in the research. The details of the research are as follow:

**Research title:** *An investigation of the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape.*

**Research aims:** the research aims are as follows;

- To understand how bullying happen, among grade 10 learners in the selected three schools;
- To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools;
- To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners in the three selected schools; and
- To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

**Participants:** All the learners who accept to participate will be required to complete a questionnaire. The principal, some grade 10 teachers, and a few learners will be asked to participate in interviews which will be audio recorded

**Ethical considerations:** I hereby guarantee that I would ensure that participation is voluntary and that a learner reserves the right not to answer any question and to withdraw his/her participation in the research at any stage. Furthermore, the names and details of all participants will remain confidential and the information obtained will not be used beyond the scope of the research.

I will very much appreciate it if you could contact me on 0787224667 or Email: [2921562@uwc.ac.za](mailto:2921562@uwc.ac.za) at any stage of the research should you have any questions.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Constance Memoh

## Appendix 5: Letter to learners

**Dear learner,**

My name is Constance Memoh. I am a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Faculty of Education studying for a Master's Degree in Education. I am required to conduct a research in three schools as part of the requirements for the completion of the degree. I have already requested and obtained permission from the school administration to conduct the research with the grade 10 learners at your school. Your written permission on the consent form is required to enable you to participate in the research. The details of the research are as follow:

**Research title:** *An investigation of the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape.*

**Research aims:** the research aims are as follows;

- To understand how bullying happen, among grade 10 learners in the selected three schools;
- To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools;
- To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners in the three selected schools; and
- To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

**Participants:** All the learners who accept to participate will be required to complete a questionnaire. Some grade 10 teachers, and a few learners will be asked to participate in individual interviews and focus group interviews respectively which will be audio recorded

**Ethical considerations:**

I hereby guarantee that I would ensure that participation is voluntary and that a learner reserves the right not to answer any question and to withdraw his/her participation in the research at any stage. Furthermore, the names and details of all participants will remain confidential and the information obtained will not be used beyond the scope of the research.

I will very much appreciate it if you could contact me on 0787224667 or Email: [2921562@uwc.ac.za](mailto:2921562@uwc.ac.za) at any stage of the research should you have any questions.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Constance Memoh

**Appendix 6: Consent form for parents/gaurdians/care givers**

I have read and understood the purpose of the research on the different forms of bullying to be conducted in my child's school by Constance Memoh. I hereby agree that my child .....may participate in the research as follows;

My child may complete the questionnaire.

Yes	No
-----	----

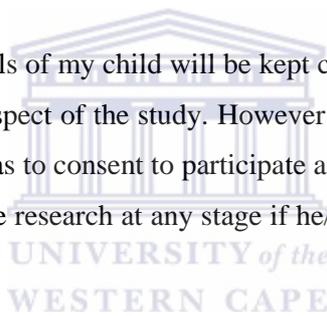
My child may be interviewed

Yes	No
-----	----

My child may be audio recorded

Yes	No
-----	----

I have been guaranteed that the details of my child will be kept confidential and that my child will not be identified with or linked to any aspect of the study. However I also acknowledge that participation in the study is voluntary; my child has to consent to participate and may refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw completely from the research at any stage if he/she desires to do so and there will be no negative effects.



Signature of parent .....

Date .....

**Appendix 7: Consent form for learners**

The researcher; Constance Memoh, has explained to me the purpose of the research on the different forms of bullying. She has also said that all information received as part of the study will be used for the research purposes only and not beyond.

I....., have also read and understood the purpose of the research on the different forms of bullying and I hereby agree to participate in the research as follows:

To complete the questionnaire

Yes	No
-----	----

To be interviewed

Yes	No
-----	----

To be audio recorded

Yes	No
-----	----

I have been guaranteed that my details will remain confidential and will not be identified or linked to any aspect of the study. I have also been informed that participation for the study is voluntary; I may refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw completely from the research at any stage without incurring any negative effects.

Signature of learner .....

Date .....

Place.....

## Appendix 8: Letter to teachers

Dear teachers,

My name is Constance Memoh. I am a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Faculty of Education studying for a Master's Degree in Education. I am required to conduct a research on bullying as part of the requirements for the completion of the degree. I have already requested and obtained permission from the school administration to conduct the research with the grade 10 learners at your school. Your written permission on the consent form is required to enable you to participate in the research. The details of the research are as follow:

**Research title:** *An investigation of the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape.*

**Research aims:** the research aims are as follows;

- To understand how bullying happen, among grade 10 learners in the selected three schools;
- To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools;
- To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners in the three selected schools; and
- To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

**Participants:** All the learners who accept to participate will be required to complete a questionnaire. Some grade 10 teachers, and a few learners will be asked to participate in focus group interviews and individual interviews respectively, which will be audio recorded

**Ethical considerations:** I hereby guarantee that I would adhere to the following; ensure that participation will be voluntary; a learner reserves the right not to answer any question and to withdraw his/her participation in the research at any stage. Besides, learners who refuse to participate or withdraw from the study will not suffer any consequences. Furthermore, the names and details of all participants will remain confidential and the information obtained will not be used beyond the scope of the research.

I will very much appreciate it if you could contact me on 0787224667 or Email: [2921562@uwc.ac.za](mailto:2921562@uwc.ac.za) at any stage of the research should you have any questions.

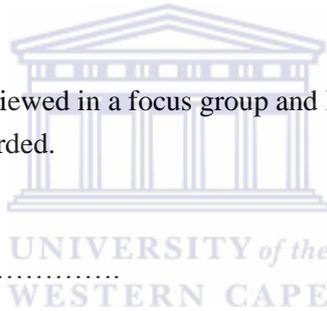
Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Constance Memoh

**Appendix 9: Consent form for teachers**

As a teacher, I hereby acknowledge the following:

1. The researcher, Constance Memoh, has explained to me the purpose of the research. She has also guaranteed me that my details will be kept confidential and all information received as part of the study will be used for the research purposes only and not beyond.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw completely from the research at any stage without incurring any negative effects.
3. I also pledge that as a member of a focus group interview I will keep the content of the discussions very confidential and will not under any circumstances discuss outside of the group what was discussed in the focus group interview.
4. I have consented to be interviewed in a focus group and I have also consented that the interview may be audio recorded.



Name .....

Signature .....

Date: .....

Place .....

## Appendix 10: Letter to principals

My name is Constance Memoh. I am a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Faculty of Education studying for a Master's Degree in Education. I am required to conduct a research at three selected schools as part of the requirements for the completion of the degree. The details of the research are as follow:

**Research title:** *An investigation of the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape.*

**Research aims:** The research aims are as follows;

- To understand how bullying happen, among grade 10 learners in the selected three schools;
- To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools;
- To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners in the three selected schools; and
- To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

**Participants:** All the learners who accept to participate will be required to complete a questionnaire. The principal, some grade 10 teachers, and a few learners will be asked to participate in interviews which will be audio recorded.

**Ethical considerations:** I hereby guarantee that I would adhere to the following; ensure that participation will be voluntary; a learner reserves the right not to answer any question and to withdraw his/her participation in the research at any stage. Besides, learners who refuse to participate or withdraw from the study will not suffer any consequences. Furthermore, the names and details of all participants will remain confidential and the information obtained will not be used beyond the scope of the research.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would permit me to conduct my research project in your school. I have attached the consent forms. You could contact me on 0787224667 or Email: [2921562@uwc.ac.za](mailto:2921562@uwc.ac.za) at any stage of the research should you have any questions.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation

Yours sincerely

Constance Memoh

May 2013

**Appendix 11: Consent form for principals**

As a Principal, I hereby acknowledge the following:

1. The researcher, Constance Memoh, has explained to me the purpose of the research. She has also said that all information received as part of the study will be used for the research purposes only and not beyond.
  
2. I understand that all the participants reserve their rights to privacy, participation is voluntary and that any participant may withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative effects.
  
3. I understand that the school and all participants in the study will remain anonymous
4. I have given permission for her to conduct the research at my school through the use of questionnaires and interviews, and to use audio recorders during interviews.

Signature of principal.....

Date: .....

Place: .....



## Appendix 12: Application to WCED for permission to do research



### University of the Western Cape

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Private Bag X17 Bellville 7530 South Africa

Tel. 021 9592962

Fax: 021 9593943/2647

### Faculty of Education

21 July 2012

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr. Audrey Wyngaard

Dear Madam,

**RE: RESEARCH AT THREE SELECTED SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE.**

My name is Constance Memoh. I am a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Faculty of Education studying for a Master's Degree in Education. I am required to conduct a research in three schools as part of the requirements for the completion of the degree.

I hereby request permission to conduct research at three selected schools in the Western Cape. Two of the schools will be selected from working class areas while one will be located in the middle class area. This aims to get data that can be compared, therefore the schools will not all belong to the same Educational District.

The research title is: *An investigation of the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in South African schools: A case study of three schools in the Western Cape.* **Research aims:** the research aims are as follows;

- To understand how bullying happen, among grade 10 learners in the selected three schools;
- To investigate the factors which influence the different forms of bullying among grade 10 learners in the three selected schools;

- To determine the consequences of bullying on grade 10 learners in the three selected schools; and
- To establish what policies the schools have in place to address the occurrence of bullying.

The study aims to investigate the different forms of bullying that happen in schools in a specific social context, develop an understanding of how bullying can be managed in schools, contribute to the existing knowledge on bullying in South African schools and lastly to fulfill the requirements for the completion of the degree.

The study will be conducted with grade 10 learners. All learners who accept to participate will be required to complete a questionnaire. The principal, some grade 10 teachers and a few learners will be asked for interviews which will be audio recorded to verify some of the information provided on the questionnaires.

I hereby guarantee that I would adhere to the following; ensure that participation will be voluntary; all learners reserve the right not to answer all the questions and to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research. Besides, the names and details of all participants will remain confidential and the information obtained will not be used beyond the scope of the research.

I will very much appreciate it if you could contact me on: [2921562@uwc.ac.za](mailto:2921562@uwc.ac.za) should you have any questions about the research.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Constance Memoh

July 2012