

Exploring the subjective experiences of educator-targeted bullying (ETB) in secondary schools

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A mini-thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Psychology (Clinical) in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences at the University of the Western Cape

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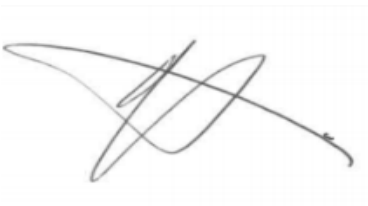
9 July 2020

Keywords: anti-bullying policy, bullying, bullying behaviours, ecological systems theory, educators, educator-targeted bullying, learners, secondary schools, thematic analysis.

DECLARATION

I declare that the current study, “Exploring the subjective experiences of educator-targeted bullying (ETB) in secondary schools”, is my work.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any university, and all the sources I have utilised have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eugene Booyesen', written over a light gray grid background.

Eugene Booyesen (2501405)

9 July 2020

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DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

A few concise fundamental conceptualisations are defined in this section to better comprehend the terminology used in the study.

Bully: In this study, the term “bully” refers to learners who engage in bullying behaviour to have control over their educators and to prove their power. According to Kõiv (2015), in this context, bullies are viewed as learners who are defiant towards adults, antisocial and apt to break the school rules.

Bullying: Bullying is persistent behaviour or repeated attacks, which include physical, psychological, social or verbal abuse by those in a position of power (e.g. owing to their physical appearance) of those who are powerless (e.g. because of the fear of being perceived as physically weak) to resist (De Wet, 2010).

Bullying behaviours: The bullying behaviours can be perceived as recurrent events, within various facets and continuous cycles. Rademeyer (2008) stated that these cycles commence with taunting, which may be followed by testing, threatening, and intimidation, and can eventually result in violence (physical bullying).

Educator-targeted bullying: The concept of “educator-targeted bullying” has been described in literature using a range of terminology, such as “learner-to-teacher bullying” (De Wet, 2010), “educator-targeted bullying” (Pervin & Turner, 1998), “students bullying teachers” (De Wet, 2006), “bullying of teachers” (Terry, 1998), and “learner-educator bullying” (Kõiv, 2015). Carbo and Hughes (2010) define educator-targeted bullying (ETB) as the unwanted, unwelcomed abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a target of their right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the workplace.

Workplace bullying: Similar terms used for this concept include “bullying in the work environment” (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), “workplace harassment” and “generalised workplace bullying” (Richardman et al., 1999). However, according to some scholars, studies tend to interchangeably use the terms “mobbing” (Einarsen, 2000) and “bullying” (Coyne, 2011) to refer to workplace bullying. Therefore, with relation to educator-targeted bullying (ETB), Einarsen et al. (2011) define workplace bullying as “repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or other, at the place of the workplace or in course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s rights to dignity at work” (p. 10).

ABSTRACT

The majority of research on bullying focuses on learner-to-learner bullying, and educators are rarely identified or viewed as victims of bullying. This area of research is largely neglected, despite its serious negative outcomes such as burnout, deterioration in the educator–learner relationship and disintegrated of the educator and learning culture.

Therefore, this study focused on a sample of educators' subjective experiences in secondary schools. The aim was to explore and gain a deeper qualitative conceptual understanding of educator-targeted bullying in the school context. Twelve educators were purposively selected from three secondary schools situated in lower-income communities in the Cape Winelands District (which falls within the jurisdiction of the Western Cape Education Department). Ethics approval was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Western Cape and the Western Cape Education Department. This study adhered to the ethics guidelines as stipulated by both of these bodies.

The findings found that educator-targeted bullying is rampant in the three secondary schools that were included in the study. This study further indicated that educator-targeted bullying may result in negative emotions, disempowerment, and low morale among educators, which would adversely impact on educators' personal and professional lives. Findings also revealed that there appears to be a lack of support from school management and the Education Department. Therefore, in order to critically address and reduce educator-targeted bullying, all stakeholders, including policy makers, Educational Department higher management, academics involved in training educators, and those in the societal and political spheres, should be involved in discussions on prevention and intervention structures for educator-targeted bullying. This study created a platform for educators to voice their subjective experiences of educator-targeted bullying in schools. Moreover, it also provided information that may enhance the understanding of the dynamics of educator-targeted bullying.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	
Acknowledgements	
Definitions of key concepts	
Abstract	
List of tables and figures	
List of acronyms and abbreviations	

1. Introduction

1.1 Background	1
1.2 Rationale for the study	2
1.3 Research questions	4
1.4 Aim of the study	4
1.5 Objectives of the study	4
1.6 Outline of the chapters	4
1.7 Conclusion	5

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 An overview of bullying	6
2.3 The definition of bullying	8
2.4 The facets and impact of bullying	8
2.5 Educator-targeted bullying in the school context	10
2.6 The nature and extent educator-targeted bullying	12
2.7 The impact of educator-targeted bullying in school context	13
2.8 Factors influencing educator-targeted bullying	15
2.8.1 School climate and environment	15
2.8.2 Teaching experiences	15
2.8.3 Gender dynamics	16
2.8.4 Dynamics of family environment	17
2.8.5 The impact of parenting styles	18
2.8.5.1 Permissive parenting style	18
2.8.5.2 Authoritarian parenting style	19

2.8.5.3 Uninvolved parenting style	19
2.8.6 Community context	19
2.8.7 The media	20
2.9 The South African educational sector and policy frameworks	21
2.9.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996	23
2.9.2 South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996	24
2.9.3 Protection for Harrassment Act, Act 17 of 2011	24
2.10. The theoritical framework (Bronfenbrenner)	26
2.10.1 The microsystem	27
2.10.2 The mesosystem	29
2.10.3 The exosystem	29
2.10.4 The macroystem	29
2.10.5 The chronosystem	30
2.11 Conclusion	31
3. Methodology	
3.1 Research design	32
3.2 Research setting	33
3.3 Participants and sampling	33
3.4 Data procedures and collection	35
3.5 Data analysis	37
3.6 Reflexivity	40
3.7 Rigour/trustworthiness	40
3.8 Ethical considerations	42
3.9 Significance of the study	43
3.10 Conclusion	43
4. Presentation of Findings	
4.1 Introduction	44
4.2 Description of main themes and subthemes	44
4.2.1 Incidence and consciousness of educator-targeted bullying	45
4.2.1.1 Unawareness of the term educator-targeted bullying	45
4.2.2 Forms of educator-targeted bullying	46
4.2.2.1 Verbal bullying	46

4.2.2.2 Indirect bullying	47
4.2.3 Impact of educators-targeted bullying on educators	48
4.2.3.1 Impact on educators' professionalism	48
4.2.3.2 Impact on educators' well-being	50
4.2.4 Factors within the school milieu	51
4.2.4.1 Inconsistencies regarding discipline in the school environment	51
4.2.4.2. Educators' perceptions regarding support structures	53
4.2.4.3 Implications for policy and future impacts on school context	54
4.2.5 Factors outside the school milieu	54
4.2.5.1 Gender stereotypes	54
4.2.5.2 Societal and cultural norms	55
4.3 Conclusion	57

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction	58
5.2 Educators' experiences and descriptions of educator-targeted bullying	58
5.3 Educators' experience of bullying on a personal and professional level	59
5.4 Educators' coping mechanisms and impact on their well-being	61
5.5 Support structures of educators and experiences of policies regarding the education system	63
5.6 Formulation and contextualisation of research findings	64
5.7 Conclusion	66

6. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction	67
6.2 Conclusion	67
6.3 Limitations and recommendations	68

Reference List	70
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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information sheet

Appendix B: Inligtingsblad

Appendix C: Consent for audio recording and use of direct quotations

Appendix D: Toestemming vir luisteropname en gebruik van direkte kwotasies

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Appendix F: Onderhoudskedule

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Letter from HSSREC (UWC)

Appendix H: Letter to the WCED

Appendix I: Ethical Clearance Letter from the WCED

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner ecological model	38
Table 1: Demographic profile of participants	45-46
Table 2: The main themes and subthemes	56

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CWD: Cape Winelands District

ETB: Educator-targeted bullying

SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers' Union

SGB: School-governing body

TCA: Thematic content analysis

UWC: University of the Western Cape

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Bullying, as a discourse in the school context, has been highlighted as a major concern owing to the severe consequences it holds for victims, bullies and bystanders. Olweus (1993) viewed bullying as deliberate, harmful behaviours or negative actions that are repeatedly enacted by more powerful groups or individuals against those groups or individuals who are perceived as being unable to defend themselves. Moreover, bullying can occur in various mediums; for instance, learner-to-learner, among staff members, and learner-to-educator. Studies on the topic (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2010; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Pervin & Turner, 1998) suggest that the literature tends to emphasise learner-to-learner or workplace bullying. Consequently, educator-targeted bullying (ETB) has been neglected in the literature, despite it having serious negative outcomes such as burnout and deteriorating educator–learner relationships (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). ETB can be portrayed through various modes; for example, persistent aggression directed towards educators, abuse of educators, ignoring educators, swearing/scoffing at educators, gossiping about educators, and damaging their belongings (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

Despite this kind of aggression towards educators, most school-governing bodies ignore such misbehaviours and do not acknowledge ETB (Smith, 2013). Educators are also viewed as the primary source of information about the conduct of learners and are often regarded as resource to inform prevention programmes in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Consequently, educators are rarely identified or viewed as victims of bullying. A study conducted among educators in London inner-city schools found that 91% of educators at some time in their career had experienced ETB (Pervin & Turner, 1998). This study further showed that 101 educator respondents, which constituted 56.4% of the sample, had been bullied by learners.

Similar studies (Astor et al., 2005; Chen & Astor, 2009) conducted in Taiwan, New Zealand and the USA highlight that learners were involved in at least one aggressive act against their educators. According to these findings, the annual average rate of victimisation (combining theft and physical violence) for educators between 1992 and 1996 was 76 incidents per 1 000 educators. A similar study in South Africa revealed that in Free State and Eastern

Cape schools, 79.7% of educators had been exposed to some form of bullying during their teaching careers (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

South African research on learner bullying has been criticised for ignoring ETB and emphasising notions that bullying of educators in high schools is not the norm (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). However, this study further found that educators frequently experience bullying by learners. Even though educators may be the victims of bullies, the majority would be unlikely to report this, which results in a lowered awareness of this social problem. Increasing awareness may improve educators' morale and reduce the number of bullying incidents (De Wet, 2006; De Vos & Kristen, 2015; Hoffmann, 2013; Woudstra et al., 2018). In South Africa, ETB is more prevalent in low- to middle-income schools owing to exposure to violence and violent behaviours being the norm in these communities (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Smith, 2013). According to the Department of Basic Education (2015), ETB in Western Cape schools is viewed as a social concern.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Educators mostly function in a complex working environment and may be exposed to a high prevalence of aggressive learner behaviours on school grounds (Kõiv, 2015). The latter study showed that educators also daily experience threatening situations and problems both inside and outside their classrooms. Studies (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2009; Munn et al., 2004; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998) found that ETB is often overshadowed by an emphasis on learner bullying and is therefore neglected in both intervention and prevention programmes. Kõiv (2015) posited that ETB has been escalating and may pose a grave concern in schools. A study conducted in schools in the United Kingdom found that 10% of educators who experienced bullying take time off from work (Hartjes, 2007). The latter study showed that 53% of the sample suffered from psychological, health-related or other personal effects (such as irritability, loss of sleep, loss of self-confidence, severe anxiety attacks, loss of appetite, diagnosed depression, and increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other substances). The study further found that many of the educators who remain in their profession either become less dedicated or passive-aggressive (e.g. becoming hostile or deliberately ignoring learners) towards their learners (Hartjes, 2007).

According to Smith (2013), many South African schools may be viewed as the most dangerous schools in the world. Thus, what is happening in South African schools currently is

alarming; ETB incidence has reached unprecedented levels, specifically in low socio-economic status communities (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). A study done in South African schools found that approximately 90.8% of educators experienced ETB while at work (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). According to previous South African literature (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2010; Hoffman, 2013; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018), working conditions for educators have become unbearable. Studies (De Wet, 2010; Espelage, 2013; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Santos & Tin, 2018; Woudstra et al., 2018) found that educators are exposed to disrespectful learners, high levels of community and school violence, economic uncertainty, overload of work responsibilities, and a general feeling of disempowerment. As a result, educators can become less dedicated to their profession, which results in them becoming less productive in classrooms (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). These negative outcomes often result in educators leaving the teaching profession (Daniels & Strauss, 2010).

Moreover, Jacobs and De Wet (2018) reported that in 2013, the South African Education Department was shocked when a video appeared on social media and news bulletins of a learner who attacked an educator. Thereafter, another video was distributed on social media where boys refused to enter a female educator's classroom, thus humiliating her (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Often, research and social media focus on explicit details of violent incidents in schools and capitalise on the sensation these incidents create. Very seldom do they focus on the vulnerability of educators in coping with the violence from society spilling over into South African schools. Consequently, a paucity of South African research exists on educators as the victims of bullying (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Moreover, there should be a shift towards learner-to-educator bullying, as it is rarely described in empirical research and the impact of this social phenomenon is not fully discussed on academic podiums (Chen & Astor, 2009).

Therefore, in order to critically address and reduce ETB, all stakeholders, including policy makers, Educational Department higher management, academics involved in training educators, and those in the societal and political spheres, should be involved in discussions on prevention and intervention structures for ETB. Given this context, the present study focused on a sample of educators' experiences of ETB in Western Cape secondary schools. The aim was to gain a deeper qualitative, subjective understanding of ETB in the school context.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions formulated for this study were:

- What are educators' experiences of ETB and how does it impact educators personally and professionally?
- What can be done by education departments or school governing bodies to support those exposed to ETB?

1.4 Aim of the study

The primary aim of the present study was to explore the subjective experiences of ETB in secondary schools and to understand how this impacts educators both personally and professionally.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

- explore how educators experience and describe ETB in secondary schools;
- examine how educators experience bullying on a personal and professional level;
- understand how educators cope with ETB; and
- identify the support required in coping with ETB.

1.6 Outline of the chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study. It includes the problem statement, research question, primary aim and objectives of the study, followed by an outline of the thesis and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The chapter highlights the research gaps and contextualises this study in terms of previous literature on ETB. It also presents Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework to understand ETB.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter details the methodological procedures of the study. It discusses the research design and the participants, the procedure of data collection and analysis, and the

concepts of reflexivity and trustworthiness. The ethical considerations of the study, as well as its significance, are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

This chapter presents an overview of the research findings, followed by a detailed presentation of the findings according to the main themes and subthemes, using the analytic steps of Braun and Clarke (2013).

Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings

In this chapter, the main themes and subthemes that emerged, which constitute the findings of this study, are discussed against the background of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the research objectives of the study.

The findings are also discussed using the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and the chapter concludes with a formulation and contextualisation of the research findings.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

The last chapter constitutes the concluding section. The chapter summarises the main findings of the study against the background of the aims of the study.

Thereafter, it gives a brief overview of previous chapters. Lastly, it discusses the limitations, makes suggestions for future research and proposes certain interventions.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided the background to the research and presented the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, a definition of key terms as well as an outline of the thesis.

The next chapter will present a comprehensive discussion of related topics based on existing literature as well as the relevance of this subject matter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses research gaps regarding ETB, especially within South African mainstream secondary schools. In response to protestations against bullying, literature has become increasingly focused on learners as the victims (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Subsequently, a paucity of research exists on educators as victims.

2.2 An overview of bullying

In the past, research on bullying has been criticised for neglecting ETB and emphasising that educators cannot be perceived as victims (Brown et al., 2005; De Wet, 2010; Hunter, 2004; Hoffman, 2013; Lynch et al., 2009). Globally, bullying on school premises is identified as having negative consequences for the general school context, as well as for the right of educators to work and of learners to learn in a safe environment without fear (Kõiv, 2015). Previous studies (Banks, 1997; Oliver et al., 1994; Olweus, 1993) found that bullying has negative lifelong consequences for both learners and educators. However, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in bullying and victimisation in schools, especially ETB (Fahie & Devine, 2014; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Smith, 2013). In South African schools, there is a serious dilemma of ongoing violence in the form of bullying experienced by learners as well as educators (Espelage, 2013).

“Learner behaviour problems have, for some years, been a major concern for educators, administrators and parents in South Africa” (Western Cape Education Department, 2007, p. 3)

In South Africa, this dilemma is of major concern to government, education departments, the teaching profession, and civil society (Laas & Boezaart, 2014). The South African education policy is developed at national level, and school-governing bodies are expected to develop school policies that are in line with the Constitution of South Africa and relevant legislation/regulations (Smith, 2013). Therefore, a need may exist for the National Department of Basic Education to develop a policy specifically to prevent and deal with ETB, so that schools can adopt this policy and then adapt it for their own contexts (Department of

Basic Education, 2014). Such a policy, however, needs to be informed and based on trustworthy and relevant information.

Jacobs and De Wet (2018) stated that there is a paucity of research available in South Africa regarding ETB. These researchers found that approximately half of educators are bullied by learners. Moreover, there is public concern regarding bullying in primary (Fahie & Devine, 2014) and secondary schools (Hoffman, 2013). Schools, in general, have been constructed as spaces to which learners can come to acquire knowledge in a safe and protected environment. However, it may be that this is not the case in the majority of schools in South African communities (De Wet, 2010, 2013). Hence, as in other countries, ETB may also be viewed as a serious problem in South Africa, which requires urgent intervention (De Wet, 2010; Espelage, 2013). However, to conceptualise this discourse, it may be pertinent to define and understand what bullying entails, particularly in light of the history of ETB in South African schools.

In South African societies, it may be evident that bullying is a social concern for schools across age, gender, race, and school categories (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Importantly, not only learners but also educators are being affected by the high prevalence of bullying in schools. Kõiv (2015) emphasised that learners have increasingly become the perpetrators of the bullying, and educators the victims. Due to learners spending approximately half of their days at school, schools can serve as the second-most important socialising mechanism, after the home environment (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

From a holistic perspective, Burton (2008) also contends that schools are important environments in which learners not only gain knowledge, but also learn about themselves, how to behave as well as how to interact with other learners. As such, learners who are exposed to challenging behaviours towards educators in this context will tend to model this behaviour. Schools, therefore, have the potential of being a negative or a positive reinforcing agent. For example, Smith (2013) argued that learners with poor academic performance, who drop out, who have low standards in terms of educational achievement and who frequently change schools are more likely to take part in challenging behaviour, particularly in terms of ETB. Therefore, schools, educators, education departments, and other governmental bodies may play a vital role in influencing or lowering the prevalence of ETB in South African schools (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

2.3 The definition of bullying

Bullying can be defined as deliberate, harmful behaviours or negative actions that are repeatedly enacted by more powerful groups or individuals against those groups or individuals who are perceived as being unable to defend themselves (Nation et al., 2008; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2004; Smokowski & Holland, 2005). There are a few notable points to be gleaned from this definition. First, bullying is distinguished from normal, day-to-day behaviours that occur among peers, such as light-hearted banter or once-off teasing (Rigby, 2004). Second, it can be conceptualised as an ongoing social type of repetitive dominance and subordination (Olweus, 1995). Third, it can be perceived as not a once-off incident, but an expectable, locally institutionalised pattern. Smith et al. (2002) defined bullying as intentional behaviour that causes physical as well as psychological harm to the recipient. Furthermore, it involves repeated oppression, either physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful one. In a local context, bullying is prevalent in secondary schools, and literature attributes it to, among other things, learners who have been exposed to violence in society, learners' lack of self-esteem, their dislike of school, and several other systemic factors (Espelage, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013).

Olweus (1995), a pioneer in this area of research, defines bullying or victimisation as instances when a child is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other learners. This definition stresses the direct physical nature of the behaviour (hitting, pushing, pulling, etc.) as well as its direct verbal nature (teasing, threatening, calling hurtful names, etc.). In addition, bullying can also sometimes take the form of more indirect behaviours such as social exclusion and rumour spreading. According to researchers (Nation et al., 2008; Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 2004; Smokowski & Holland, 2005), bullying can be viewed as deliberate harmful behaviours that are repeatedly enacted by a more powerful group or individual against groups or individuals who are seen as being unable to defend themselves. Therefore, in general, bullying is conceptualised as a power imbalance, which distinguishes it from normal, day-to-day behaviours that occur among peers (Kõiv, 2015).

2.4 The facets and impact of bullying

Bullying can include physical aggression (assault), verbal aggression (name-calling, rumour spreading), exclusion from groups, gestures, face-pulling, and cyberbullying (Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 2004; Smokowski & Holland, 2005). In general, negative outcomes of bullying for victims can include poor academic achievement (Juvonen et al., 2010), depressive

symptoms and suicidal ideation (Klomek et al., 2008), anxiety (Smokowski & Holland, 2005), and poor psychosocial adjustment (Arseneault et al., 2006). As a result, it has come to be considered by schools as a serious issue requiring intervention (Klomek et al., 2006; Olweus, 1995; Smokowski & Holland, 2005). Moreover, it can be argued that the increased prevalence of bullying inflicted by learners on educators may most likely undermine effective learning and cause teachers to experience schools as unsafe places.

A study conducted on South African school premises showed that an estimated 7.5% of learners in primary schools and 4.3% of learners in high schools reported some form of bullying in their school (Smokowski & Holland, 2005). According to a study by Du Plessis (2008), in secondary schools, 83% of assaults were committed by classmates and 15% by teachers or educators. The latter study found that more than one in ten learners (12%) of the sample had been teased, taunted, or made to feel ashamed at school. Bullying is, therefore, a multidimensional phenomenon that can be seen as sometimes overlapping with violent assault (Kõiv, 2015). However, as bullying is often located in schools and may in many cases be sanctioned by educators, there is a great risk that early experiences of bullying, either as victim or perpetrator, may contribute to later, more excessive involvement in violence. Therefore, in general, this type of behaviour might lay the foundation for later involvement in violence (such as aggressive behaviours and criminal behaviours) (Espelage, 2013).

Bullying is sometimes understood as a distinct form of violence and is often used to refer to violence involving learners at schools or other forms of violence, outside of schools, where both perpetrator (bully) and victim (bullied) are learners (Kõiv, 2015). It can be argued that this violence involves a bully who seeks out vulnerable or weaker learners and repeatedly assaults or otherwise engages in coercive behaviour against them. Although it is often associated with learners, it should not be assumed that bullying exclusively involves learners (Espelage, 2013). It may take place in other environments, such as prisons, as well as workplaces or entertainment establishments, and in these contexts may also involve young people or adults (such as teachers or principals).

Studies (Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 2003; Smokowski & Holland, 2005) found that bullying also has serious emotional consequences, such as low psychological well-being (encompassing a state of the psyche that is in general considered unpleasant, such as general unhappiness), poor social adjustment (encompassing feelings of aversion towards the social environment, i.e.

a dislike of attending school), psychological distress (including high levels of anxiety and depression as well as suicidal ideation), and physical distress (i.e. psychosomatic symptoms experienced by the victims who are bullied). Therefore, regardless of how one views bullying, bullies or victims, for those who are victimised, the experience is painful, embarrassing, and sometimes life-altering (Van der Wal et al., 2003).

What is of grave concern in these instances is that initiation rituals are often socially sanctioned forms of bullying and violence (Espelage, 2013). In South Africa, bullying has been identified as the primary form of school violence affecting learners and educators in schools (Espelage, 2013). It is an issue that has consistently been covered in the media (Ajam et al., 2013) and received increasing attention from the Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Opening a newspaper or scrolling through the most popular online stories of the day, one may stumble upon references to the unfortunate reality of school bullying, in particular ETB (Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b).

2.5 Educator-targeted bullying in the school context

Currently, there is no clear, definitive definition for ETB; however, as it occurs within the school setting, where the educators work, this type of bullying is regarded as a form of workplace bullying. According to Carbo and Hughes (2010), workplace bullying is the unwanted, unwelcome abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a target of their right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the workplace. Also, the terms “ETB” and “learners’ violence against educators” are similar (Espelage, 2013). Specifically, ETB includes learners’ violence against educators. However previous literature, such as that by De Wet (2010), Jacobs and De Wet (2018), Kõiv (2015), Pervin and Turner (1998), and Smith (2013), has highlighted both of these terms in describing negative behaviours against educators. This might be problematic, as that the mixed use of terms in describing ETB behaviour would most likely confuse educators. Educators, therefore, might have trouble understanding ETB or fail to learn how to protect themselves from being bullied. Also, an educator might not even realise that he or she has been bullied by learners until the learners’ behaviour has escalated and changed into severe physical violence with injury. Although there appears to be no consistency or agreement on which term should be used, researchers such as Pervin and Turner (1998), De Wet and Jacobs (2006), De Wet (2010), Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012), and Kõiv (2015) have put much effort into understanding negative behaviours of learners towards educators.

Therefore, despite challenges regarding the definition of this term, it has been specifically described as malicious acts to disempowered educators as professionals and human beings (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Santos & Tin, 2018; Woudstra et. al, 2018). This encompasses aspects of the undermining nature of bullying and the disempowerment as well as the negative impact that ETB has on the mental health of educators. ETB and disruptive behaviour in the classroom can also be categorised under the same umbrella (Kõiv, 2015). Jacobs and De Wet (2018), however, state that ETB is distinguished by the following behaviours: persistent and intentional abuse such as threats of, or actual, physical and sexual harassment, swearing and mocking (verbal abuse), ignoring the educator on purpose, making inappropriate personal comments about the educator, and damaging the educator's property. According to Smith (2013), learners will often use disruptive behaviour to target-bully educators. Subsequently, the disruption and insubordination can evolve into bullying if there is continuance in attempts to challenge educators' authority, which can lead to disempowerment. The main aim of bullying educators is to undermine their confidence and authority (Santos & Tin, 2018). Therefore, the prominent aim of ETB is to undermine the confidence and authority of educators.

Numerous empirical studies (Nation et al., 2008; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2004; Smokowski & Holland, 2005) have been done to understand the generic definition of bullying; however, the concept of educators being bullied by their learners has received limited attention and experiences some level of difficulties (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2010; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; James et al., 2008; Pervin & Turner, 1998). According to Terry (1998), this can be due to general ideologies about power relationships and overly subjective, restrictive perspectives regarding the nature of bullying. Studies conducted in England (Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998), Estonia (Kõiv, 2015), Ireland (James et al., 2008), and Luxenberg (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007) found that bullying is repetitive in nature and that verbal abuse is the most prevalent form of bullying used by learners against their educators.

Pervin and Turner (1998) highlighted that 15% of educators were physically bullied by their learners. A study done in Luxenberg found that 23.9% of educators were verbally victimised by learners (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007). Furthermore, regarding non-verbal bullying, a study done in Estonia found that educators experienced devaluation (4.9%), intimidation (3.1%), and public humiliation (5.4%) from their learners (Kõiv, 2015). In South Africa, educators also had to deal with disrespectful learners, high levels of community and school

violence, economic uncertainty, and a general feeling of disempowerment, which makes ETB more likely and more difficult to deal with (Mncuba & Haber, 2013).

The majority of educational institutions perceived ETB as being “part of the job” and therefore do not acknowledge it as a social concern (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2010; Woudstra et al., 2018). Although more than two decades have passed since the publication of Pervin and Turner’s (1998) report highlighting the failure of schools to acknowledge the existence of ETB and the resulting loss of confidence experienced by educators, ETB may still continue to be largely ignored by both educators and management alike. If recognised and acknowledge, however, the extent and severity may be significantly underestimated. Nevertheless, both researchers and academics are in agreement that adequate teaching and learning simply cannot take place when educators are bullied by their learners (Chen & Astor, 2009; De Wet, 2010; Moon & McCluskey, 2016; Pervin & Turner, 1998).

2.6 The nature and extent of educator-targeted bullying

ETB has reshaped and redefined the history of bullying in the workplace. According to studies conducted in American schools between 1992 and 1996, the average annual rate of ETB victimisation was 76 incidents per 1 000 educators (Astor et. al, 2005). Another study done in the state of Virginia found that 84% of educators had experienced rude and disrespectful behaviour, whereas 43% experienced obscene remarks and gestures. Research conducted in the United Kingdom also reported significant prevalence rates. According to Pervin and Turner (1998), 91% of educators had been exposed to ETB at some point in their teaching careers. The latter study also showed that over 50% had been victims over the past year, and 21% experienced ETB early in their teaching career (Pervin & Turner, 1998). However, research conducted in East Asia found lower prevalence rates, although this may in part be due to differences in the methodological approaches taken in such studies (Chen & Astor, 2009). A study done in Taiwan by Chen and Astor (2009) found that 30% of learners admitted being involved in at least one aggressive act against their educators. However, Moon and McCluskey (2016) did a study in Korea and highlighted that approximately a third of the sample had experienced some form of ETB in the last two years.

South Africa also viewed ETB as problematic on school premises. A study in the Free State Province on ETB found that the most prevalent forms of bullying are verbal abuse (33%), assault (24.8%), and sexual assault (18.1%) (De Vries, 2005a, 2005b). However, a similar South African study done by De Wet and Jacobs (2006) found that 80% of educators had been

experiencing ETB. De Wet (2010) argued, therefore, that the difficulties in addressing ETB in South African schools are related to learners' exposure to a high prevalence of community and school violence and economic uncertainty, as well as a general sense of disempowerment among educators. The study further stated that victims of ETB can be psychologically and physically affected, whereby educators may experience feelings of shame, guilt and lowered assertiveness as well as headaches, sleep deprivation, eating difficulties, stress, and burnout. Moreover, educators reported that they also experienced low self-esteem, embarrassment and withdrawal from colleagues.

De Wet (2013) highlighted that learners not only physically attack their educators, but also use vulgar language against them, abuse them, belittle and spit on them as well as knock them around (reported cases include: a Grade 10 educator reported that a learner spat in her face when she shouted at him because of his poor work – she was traumatised by this experience and never returned to school; another learner kicked a pregnant teacher in the stomach because she accused him of swearing at her; one teacher found a death certificate bearing her name on it in a journal of a learner and she was attacked with a hammer several times until her skull was cracked).

In South Africa, increasing attention has been paid on various media platforms (such as Facebook, television news channels, newspapers, WhatsApp, etc.) to incidents of educators being attacked by learners in their classrooms (reported cases include: a female educator reported being sexually assaulted in her classroom; another female educator said she was held at gunpoint with a pellet gun, unaware that it was not a real gun; a male educator was physically assaulted with a chair in his classroom, and this incident was video-recorded and uploaded to the internet by another learner and went viral) (Ajam et al., 2013; Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b). Researchers (De Vries, 2005a; De Wet, 2013; James et al., 2008; Kõiv, 2015; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Steffgen & Ewen, 2007; Terry, 1998) therefore argue that there seems to be a significant relationship between educators and ETB. Therefore, ongoing studies are needed, as ETB seems to be escalating in schools.

2.7 The impact of educator-targeted bullying in the school context

ETB has consistently been demonstrated to have a considerable detrimental impact on educators' health and well-being (Woudstra et al., 2018) and has been substantially less understood than other forms of bullying. Studies (Chen & Astor, 2009; De Wet, 2010; Pervin

& Turner, 1998) have predominantly investigated ETB in terms of frequency, type, and demographic-related prevalence. However, a paucity of ETB research has explored the subjective experiences of educators, specifically how ETB impacts educators' personal and professional lives.

ETB victims experience a range of adverse mental health (such as increased loneliness, peer rejection, anxiety, depression, and lowered self-esteem) and physical ramifications (Oade, 2009; O'Donnell et al., 2010; Woudstra et al., 2018). It was also found that ETB may lead to increased distress among educators, and those who experience belittlement and disempowerment feel helpless. ETB may lead to "battered teacher syndrome", which is characterised by a series of stress responses such as anxiety, eating disorder, depression, and changes in sleep patterns (Wilson et al., 2011). The classic work on stress by Selye (1950), cited in Kauppi & Pörhölä (2012), indicated that chronic stressors can lead to severe consequences, triggered by the stress response, and may lead to chronic diseases (such as diabetes, hypertension or hypotension, depression, etc). Researchers (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Wilson et al., 2011) stated that stress may also lead to decreased satisfaction with life and work. Educators who have been victims of ETB may therefore become less motivated, and this may, in turn, have an adverse impact on their work performance.

A study done by Pervin and Turner (1998) found that 15% of educators who experienced ETB exhibited lowered career expectations and lowered expectations of learners' performance. This study further found that 6% of the sample left the teaching profession due to ETB behaviours. These findings are consistent with previous studies done by Astor et al. (2005) and De Wet and Jacobs (2010), which suggested the following: (a) ETB had an adverse effect on the learning opportunities of other learners and their overall quality of teaching, and (b) some educators felt forced to leave the teaching profession due to fear for their personal safety. Santos and Tin (2018) highlighted that 41.1% of educators experiencing ETB would tolerate more disruptive behaviours from learners during classes, lower their expectations, and restrict class activities with learners. These findings were also in alignment with previous research (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; James et al., 2008, Pervin & Turner, 1998), indicating the adverse impact of ETB on teaching and learning opportunities. This raises concerns that ETB may affect the performance of schools and, ultimately, the effectiveness of the education system.

2.8 Factors affecting educator-targeted bullying

2.8.1 School climate and environment

Schools not only provide experiences for academic competence and cognitive growth of learners, but also socialise them with the informal curriculum through which they adopt school-related values (such as respect, cooperation, and compliance) as well as learning to become more socially competent individuals (Ajam et al., 2013). While much of the research on bullying has focused on individuals and peers, the broader issues of school climate, such as ETB, have largely been ignored (Mncuba & Haber, 2013). Learners interact with peer groups for the majority of each day in the school setting. The school setting affects the academic, social, and emotional functioning of all learners and is integrally connected to the overall climate of the school system.

School staff members play a vital part in creating either a positive or a negative school climate (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Educators no longer feel safe on the school premises because of the high level of ETB in their schools (Mncuba & Haber, 2013). Within low socioeconomic status schools, the classroom may be viewed as a high-risk zone, and this may become a source of fear for most educators, but a curiosity for learners (De Wet, 2013). According to researchers such as De Vries (2005a, 2005b), De Wet (2013), and Du Plessis (2008), high-risk zones may be places in the school that increase educators' vulnerability to becoming victims of bullying, such as playgrounds, sports fields, parking areas or classrooms, or even the area where the school is located. In addition, other learners who are exposed to the ETB in their classes may tend to model the same behaviours.

2.8.2 Teaching experiences

Teaching experience is another factor relating to ETB behaviour in schools. A study done in England found that 68% of educators with teaching experience of less than three years were bullied, compared to 49% of those with more than three years (Terry, 1998). A similar study done in South African schools found that novice educators may be bullied by learners (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). However, more recent studies done in South African schools (Cornelissen, 2016; De Vos & Kristen, 2015; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018) found that educators with more teaching experience tended to be bullied more frequently than those with less experience. These studies further indicated that educators with 10 to 20 years of teaching experience were more likely to be bullied than those with less experience.

Cornelissen (2016) posited that there seemed to be a general feeling that educators with more experience might handle bullying behaviours more appropriately. This, however, may result in guilt or shame whenever educators had to report ETB incidences. Also, working with learners, serving as an authority figure in the classroom, may make it more difficult for society to believe that educators can possibly be bullied. This makes it even more challenging for educators to protect themselves or report ETB, which may result in an adverse effect on educators' personal and professional lives, self-esteem, and emotional well-being.

2.8.3 Gender dynamics

In the school context, gender differences, in terms of aggressive and challenging behaviours of learners, may derive from social postulations. Gender differences of both the bullies and bullying victims were found in past research, such as Banks (1997), Lynch et al. (2009), Oliver et al. (1994) and Olweus (1995). However, previous studies also found some inconsistency regarding which gender tends to bully educators.

A study done in Turkey, however, found that 45.7% of educators were bullied by boys, and 40.3% were bullied by a mixed-gender group (Ozkiliç, 2012). A similar study conducted in Ireland found that 33.9% of boys, compared to 21.9% of girls, bullied their educators (James et al., 2008). Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012) highlighted that in Finland schools, 62.9% of boys were perpetrators of ETB and 31.4% were mixed-gender groups. A study done in the Eastern Cape Province (South Africa) found that there may be a high prevalence of aggressive behaviour among male learners (De Wet, 2010). However, De Wet (2010) further suggested increased aggressive tendencies among female learners, with some girls even going to school armed with firearms and knives. The majority of these learners (both male and female) perceive these behaviours as the norm and lack the opportunity of having someone who can teach them constructive conflict management skills, and therefore they end up resorting to more destructive and violent resolutions (De Wet, 2010).

Notable differences have been identified in the methods or means of bullying used by female and male learners (Burton, 2009). De Wet (2006) suggested that male learners use direct physical and verbal aggression until their late adolescence, when both genders show a decrease to equally low levels of physical aggressiveness and women become more verbally aggressive than men. Furthermore, this study shows that in early adolescence male learners may be more physically aggressive than their female counterparts, and from childhood to late adolescence,

female learners will use indirect and relational aggression more than their male counterparts. A similar study indicated that female learners are more prone to engaging in indirect forms of aggression (such as relational aggression) or challenging behaviours (De Wet, 2010). Therefore, in light of the above arguments, when men tend to become angry or emotional, they may be encouraged by society to physically express their anger; however, women tend to be socialised to internalise their aggression (Burton, 2009). According to Espelage (2013), learners who display relationship aggression in the form of controlling or hurting educators are more prone to forming hostile attribution biases in situations involving relational conflicts than learners who are not aggressive in this way.

In South Africa, male learners' aggressive and violent tendencies, compared to their female counterparts, can be associated with the rigid ideology of gender socialisation, which prescribes their authority and power over women as well as views that their violent actions are synonymous with toughness and manliness (De Wet, 2013). Researchers (Oliver & Candappa, 2003; De Wet, 2010, 2013) have argued that female learners engage in physical, verbal and emotional forms of aggression, and that male learner's resort to more physical aggression (such as fighting) and female learners to more emotional forms (such as social exclusion). Importantly, even though these are the norms in terms of gender dynamics, it does not mean that female learners display less aggressive tendencies regarding ETB. For example, Oliver and Candappa (2003) did a study in low socio-economic status communities and found that both male and female learners engage in aggression of both a physical and a verbal nature.

2.8.4 Dynamics of family environment

While the home environment is supposed to provide warmth, responsiveness, structure, guidance, and the availability of suitable models for learners, it often lacks these key protective factors (Hatter, 2013). According to Olweus (1993), however, primary caregiver(s) or parent(s) of boys who bully may tend to lack involvement and warmth, use "power-assertive" practices such as physical punishment, be prone to violent emotional outbursts, and demonstrate a permissive attitude concerning their child's aggressive behaviour. Similar studies (Bowers et al., 1994; Einarsen et al., 2011; Kõiv, 2015) confirm the above findings and emphasise the prominent need for power demonstrated by bullies' families.

Therefore, any form of challenging behaviour experienced by a child in the home setting is most likely caused by the displacement of parental aggression and usually associated

with factors such as poverty, alcohol and substance abuse, and parental exposure to violence (Hardman, 2012). Barbarin et al. (2001) suggested that aggressive and challenging behaviours in the family system are more prevalent in low socioeconomic status and disorganised communities. Olweus (1993) argued that aggressive behaviour can be interpreted in terms of the socioeconomic status of adolescents and perceives economic inequality as a good predictor of aggression. Therefore, the attributes of a learner's family and home environment may play a pivotal role in their propensity to perpetrate ETB.

According to a report of the South African Council for Educators (2002), parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) play an important role in modelling behaviour to learners as well as in mediating other factors, such as poverty, school truancy, and peer pressure, which may increase the risk of ETB in schools. In general, parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) serve as a support base for learners and therefore should provide a solid foundation for their children. Well-supported learners tend to be less aggressive and do well at school (Hardman, 2012). However, some learners come from dysfunctional families, where the parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) or family member(s) display violent or challenging behaviours daily (Espelage, 2013). For example, the father might beat the mother if he does not get his way or when he wants to control her and the children. In such a situation, children will learn that violence, rather than communication, can be used to settle issues or obtain effective outcomes (Verial, 2013).

2.8.5 The impact of parenting styles

ETB does not take place in a vacuum, but may be influenced and shaped by parenting styles. Hoffman (2013) posited that what transpires in the school context may be a general reflection of what is taking place in the broader social contexts in which schools are located, in particular the home environment. Researchers such as Shaffer (2002) and Allen (2010) identify three types of parenting styles resulting in the learner developing bullying traits, namely permissive, authoritarian, and uninvolved.

2.8.5.1 Permissive parenting style

This refers to “a pattern of parenting in which otherwise accepting adults make few demands of their children and seldom try to control the family environment; as well as no clear guidelines or boundaries for behaviour and monitoring” (Shaffer, 2002, p. 543). This could be problematic, as learners may expect the same behaviours from their educators. Verial (2013) suggested that “learners may learn the bullying behaviour and parent(s) or primary caregiver(s)

are often the educators” (p. 2). However, this could also lead to the reinforcement of ETB behaviours.

2.8.5.2 Authoritarian parenting style

Allen (2010) highlighted that this is a restrictive pattern of parenting in which adults set many rules for their learners, expect strict obedience, therefore relying on power rather than a reason to elicit compliance. Parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) may focus on (a) maintaining control, (b) proper discipline, (c) laying down unilateral rules, and (d) expectations (Carpenter, 2009). Subsequently, there may be insufficient accompanying levels of warmth, love, attention, or affection. Learners, therefore, may perceive love as being conditional on their ability to obey (Smith, 2013). However, this could be problematic, as the learners may become very good at obeying authority figures but fail to develop a strong sense of discipline. Carpenter (2009), therefore, argues that “without a strong sense of discipline, the learner could naturally see the bullying of educators as an acceptable means to an end” (p. 46).

2.8.5.3 Uninvolved parenting style

This parenting style refers to “a pattern of parenting that is both aloof or even hostile and over-permissive, almost as if parents cared neither about their children nor about what they may become” (Shaffer, 2002, p. 544). In general, parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) may sometimes be overwhelmed by their personal problems or stresses, and sometimes not have time to attend to the needs of their children. However, later in the development of the child, this may result in either hostile or delinquent behaviours (such as challenging behaviour towards authority figures), and they may model it in the classroom (Allen, 2010; Eckenrode et al., 1993; Espelage et al., 2012). Verial (2013) argued that learners who are perpetrators of ETB may also look for external rewards (such as peer acceptance and respect).

2.8.6 Community context

In general, what happens in the schools may reflect what is happening in the broader community. Ward et al. (2012) contended that the everyday social contexts in which children learn and grow play a critical role in the socialisation of children. Disorganised and disorderly communities (such as low socioeconomic status communities) in which learners reside may be found to be powerful and influential facilitators of crime and violence (Espelage, 2013). In some instances, learners may have grown up in communities where violent and aggressive

behaviour is modelled by significant individuals in their lives, such as parents, primary caregivers, or close relatives.

According to Hardman (2012), challenging behaviours, as well as violent behaviours, are more likely to be initiated and replicated when the person modelling the behaviour has a close relationship with the child or adolescent, in comparison to when there is no relationship between the individuals. For instance, bullying in the immediate community or family system may take the form of groups fighting or gangs. The child would consciously or unconsciously observe these behaviours, especially in terms of dealing with situations of aggression (Hardman, 2012), and will eventually replicate these bullying acts as they may view them as part of normal behaviour to solve conflicts and problems (Verial, 2013). In addition, when children passively observe the bullying activity (such as ETB), they are most likely learning and encouraging bullying towards educators, as the perpetrators may want to impress the spectators, who are usually their peers.

2.8.7 The media

The media is a powerful tool in influencing learners' behaviours in schools (Ajam et al., 2013). Television, cinemas, and the Internet are full of violent images and language, which are used by fictional characters as a regular way to achieve their aims. Some ETB behaviours in schools are inspired by films, television series, social media, and even animation characters (Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b). Increasingly, learners place videos of educators being bullied on various social media platforms for the fun of it and to humiliate educators' dignity and character as a professional and a person (Ajam et al., 2013). Furthermore, learners may often watch movies that are violent in nature and, more often than not, the violent characters will be victorious and have high status. Therefore, it can be argued that learners likely perceive these behaviours as "cool" acts or the norm and as a means to get their way; they would come to see these behaviours as a solution and will want to emulate them (Espelage et al., 2012).

The media may also serve as an inhibiting factor in the prevention of ETB in schools. According to a study by Bester and Du Plessis (2010), educators were reluctant to report or expose bullying, as most were afraid of being exploited and ending up on the front pages of newspapers. The latter study also found that educators who stand up against troublemakers in classrooms are often regarded in the media as violators of children's rights (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). Sometimes the elevation of children's rights by the media defeats all attempts

to fight against ETB, as any form of discipline is regarded as abuse (Ajam et al., 2013; Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b). Therefore, educators have very few or no alternative methods of disciplining unruly or challenging behaviours in classrooms and on the school premises (Laas & Boezaart, 2014).

Schools are no longer places conducive to teaching and learning, as both educators and learners live in fear while on the school premises, leading to demotivation of learners from their studies and educators from their profession (De Vos & Kristen, 2015). Despite being an inhibiting factor for the prevention of ETB, the media also attests to ETB as a grave concern in South African schools (Ajam et al., 2013). For example, a media report in the *Sunday Times*, a local newspaper, reported on how a learner assaulted his educator (Philp & Laganparsad, 2011). These are always shocking news stories, as schools are supposed to be safe places. However, the ages of the learners who are perpetrators and the frequency of these ETB incidents make it more shocking.

2.9 The South African education sector and policy frameworks

The context of a rapid education transformation formed the background for this study. According to Sayed (2004), since 1994, the South African education system has undergone extensive policy changes, which reflects the desire of the government to restructure and transform a fragmented, conservative, and authoritarian education system into a more inclusive and democratic one. Nonetheless, this must be in line with the values and principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. However, these changes at policy level have led to major challenges for communities, schools, and educators, particularly the reevaluation and changing of established perceptions and convictions.

Moonsammy and Hasset (1997) stated that any process of change will be challenging and complex; however, it is experienced as being more challenging when there is a huge expectation for the individual to change their perceptions and ideology that have a direct impact on their own behaviour and that of others. Currently, there are demands on educators to cope with policy changes, rationalisation, decentralisation, a new curriculum, and the abolition of corporal punishment. However, these demands inevitably affect what happens in schools and classrooms daily and may negatively influence the relationship between educators and learners in schools. As Smith (2013) indicated, educators might experience bullying on different levels; therefore, the education departments, school-governing bodies (SGBs), and principals need to

take the necessary steps to curb this dilemma. Nevertheless, a paucity of ETB cases has been reported and presented in the judicial system. Although there has not been a court ruling on ETB, there were two particular cases, discussed below, that shed light on the subject matter, and has had implications for those who bully educators (Deacon et al., 2016).

The first case was *Le Roux and Others versus Dey (Freedom of Expression Institute and Restorative Justice Centre as Amici Curiae) 2011 (3) SA 274 (CC)*, which dealt with the case of three school boys who edited and constructed an image using the heads of the deputy principal (DP) and the principal on two naked men, in a sexual position. The image was shared both electronically and in hard copy. A copy was placed on the school notice board. Although the school disciplined the learners, the DP issued a summons for compensation for injury to his dignity, good name, and reputation (Deacon et al., 2016). The case was heard in the High Court (HC), the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) and the Constitutional Court (CC), which ruled in favour of the defamatory claim by the DP, and that damages be paid, as the pupil was found to have “subjectively wounded his feelings” (Deacon et al., 2016). However, Deacon et al. (2016) highlighted the following important points. First, images such as cartoons, caricatures, and, as in this case, an obviously edited photo, can be defamatory. Therefore, while it was clear to a reasonable person that this was an edited image, the intention was interpreted as tarnishing the reputation and authority of the two educators. This could, therefore, be viewed as defamatory. Second, although the learners claimed that it was intended as a joke, the court ruled that, even as a joke, it could be viewed as belittling, ridiculing, and disrespecting the two educators. Therefore, the line of what is acceptable was crossed. Educators are also entitled to the protection of their dignity and reputation. Lastly, it was noted that the subjective feelings of dignity should be valued and protected. Learners and colleagues who pester educators by means of jokes, and defamatory jokes in particular, are bullying the victims and should take note of the principles established in this case.

The second case is that of *Jacobs’s versus Chairman, Governing Body, Rhodes High School, and Others 2011 (1) SA 160 (WCC)*. This case refers to an incident in which an educator was physically attacked by a learner. The learner assaulted the educator with a hammer in class in front of other learners. However, prior to the incident, there was a confrontation between the learner and the educator. Thereafter, the educator reported the incident to her Head of Department (HOD). The HOD took the learner to the principal, who left the learner sitting outside his office. The learner subsequently left this space, returned to

the class, and attacked the educator. As a result, the educator left the teaching profession. According to the ruling of the court, there was a legal duty on the part of the principal and the Minister of the Executive Council (MEC), as well as their employees, to act fairly in order to ensure the safety and security of both learners and educators. Furthermore, when evidence points to a learner probably injuring another, the school should take steps to prevent this, which the HOD did not do in this case. Incidents like these result in difficulty for educators to stand up against learners if there are no formal platforms or guidelines (such as policies) available. However, the South African education policy is developed at the national level; therefore, concerning their functions, there appear to be expectations for SGBs to develop policies that are aligned with the South African Constitution as well as relevant legislation and regulations (Deacon et al., 2016). However, anti-bullying legislation is not the only response to ETB, as the time between the occurrence of bullying and redress, if formal procedures such as court trials take place, could be very long. Currently, there appear to be no specific laws in place in South Africa that explicitly protect educators from ETB. However, drawing from the Constitution, legislation in South Africa may provide a legal framework within which ETB can be considered. This will be discussed below.

2.9.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

In the Constitution, a number of stipulations describe the values and behaviours that are directly opposed to bullying behaviour. For example, in the Preamble to and the first section of the Constitution, the following are noted: (a) the values of justice, (b) freedom, (c) equality, (d) accountability, (e) openness and (f) human dignity. Moreover, it is emphasised that neither the state, nor an organ of state, nor an individual may unfairly discriminate against a person based on his/her race, sex, gender, ethnicity, social origin, or colour, to name but a few (sec. 9; 3–4). However, just like everyone else, educators have the right to dignity and “to have their dignity respected and protected” (sec. 10). According to the Constitution of South Africa, freedom and security are basic human rights, and this includes freedom from all forms of violence from private or public sources and that everybody has the right not to be treated in a “cruel, inhuman or degrading way” (section 12).

This, however, highlights the fact that the privacy of an individual must be protected. Moreover, this includes that “the privacy of their communications” may not be infringed upon (sec. 14). Furthermore, all individuals have the right to just administrative action (sec. 33). All of the above may be indicative of how people should act towards others, including towards

educators at schools. The Constitution further stipulates that everybody has the right to basic education (sec. 29). Laas and Boezaart (2014) posited this as a fundamental human right. However, when educators experience ETB, it may affect their work functioning, creating a ripple effect and adversely affecting the right to education for the learners in the class.

2.9.2 South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996

The South African Schools Act (hereafter SASA) stipulates that the SGB has to adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school, after consultation with learners, educators, and parents. They are also responsible for conducting disciplinary hearings if necessary. As far as learner ETB behaviours are concerned, the SGB's role is to curb ETB, and the codes of conduct for learners must acknowledge the problem as well as include this as a transgression of the code. The functions of the SGBs mostly do not include matters pertaining to staff and management, yet at some schools, they do employ additional educators, in which case the SGB becomes the employee. Furthermore, the SGB is in a position of trust towards the school.

Therefore, the SGB must promote the best interests of the school and support the principal, educators and other staff in the performance of their professional functions. As such, SGBs must support efforts to curb ETB. Some stipulations in regulations related to SASA also guide role-players. Sec. 4.2 of the Regulations to Prohibit Initiation Practices in Schools states that there should be a relationship of mutual trust and respect between learners, and between learners and educators. Victimisation of one by the other is unacceptable, and peer pressure cannot be regarded as a justification for engaging in acts of victimisation. The Act, therefore, can contribute to guidelines for anti-ETB policy in schools.

2.9.3 Protection from Harassment Act, Act 17 of 2011

The Protection from Harassment Act does not refer to bullying, but many of the points used to explain harassment correlate with acts of bullying, and should be incorporated in an anti-ETB policy framework:

- (a) Harassment means directly or indirectly engaging in conduct that the respondent knows or ought to know-
- (b) Causes harm or inspires the reasonable belief that harm may be caused to the complainant or a related person by unreasonably

- (c) Following, watching, pursuing or accosting of the complainant or a related person, or loitering outside of or near the building or place where the complainant or a related person resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be;
- (d) Engaging in verbal, electronic or any other communication aimed at the complainant or a related person, by any means, whether or not conversation ensues; or
- (e) Sending, delivering or causing the delivery of letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or other objects to the complainant or a related person or leaving them where they will be found by, given to or brought to the attention of, the complainant or a related person; or
- (f) Amounts to sexual harassment of the complainant or a related person.

It also explains the term ‘harm’ and indicates that it “means any mental, psychological, physical or economic harm” and specifically demarcates sexual harassment as:

- (a) Unwelcome sexual attention from a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwelcome;
- (b) Unwelcome explicit or implicit behaviour, suggestions, messages or remarks of a sexual nature that have the effect of offending, intimidating or humiliating the complainant or a related person in circumstances, which a reasonable person having regard to all the circumstances would have anticipated that the complainant or related person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.
- (c) Implied or expressed promise of reward for complying with a sexually-oriented request; or
- (d) Implied or expressed threat of reprisal or actual reprisal for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request;

The Act further explains how it can be used to apply for a protection order and other steps that might be taken to protect against harassment, and can thus be used to enforce the rights of the victims of bullying. Laas and Boezaart (2014) argued that the Act may pose an immediate form of relief and be used as guidelines for anti-ETB policy in schools, by preventing learners from engaging in any kind of abusive behaviour towards educators.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa compels the state to protect its citizens, which should include educators at schools (Laas & Boezaart, 2014). In order to do

this, clear policy to prevent and manage ETB in schools is needed at the national level. Such a policy should clearly demarcate the phenomenon and provide clarity on the different dimensions of ETB.

2.10 Theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner)

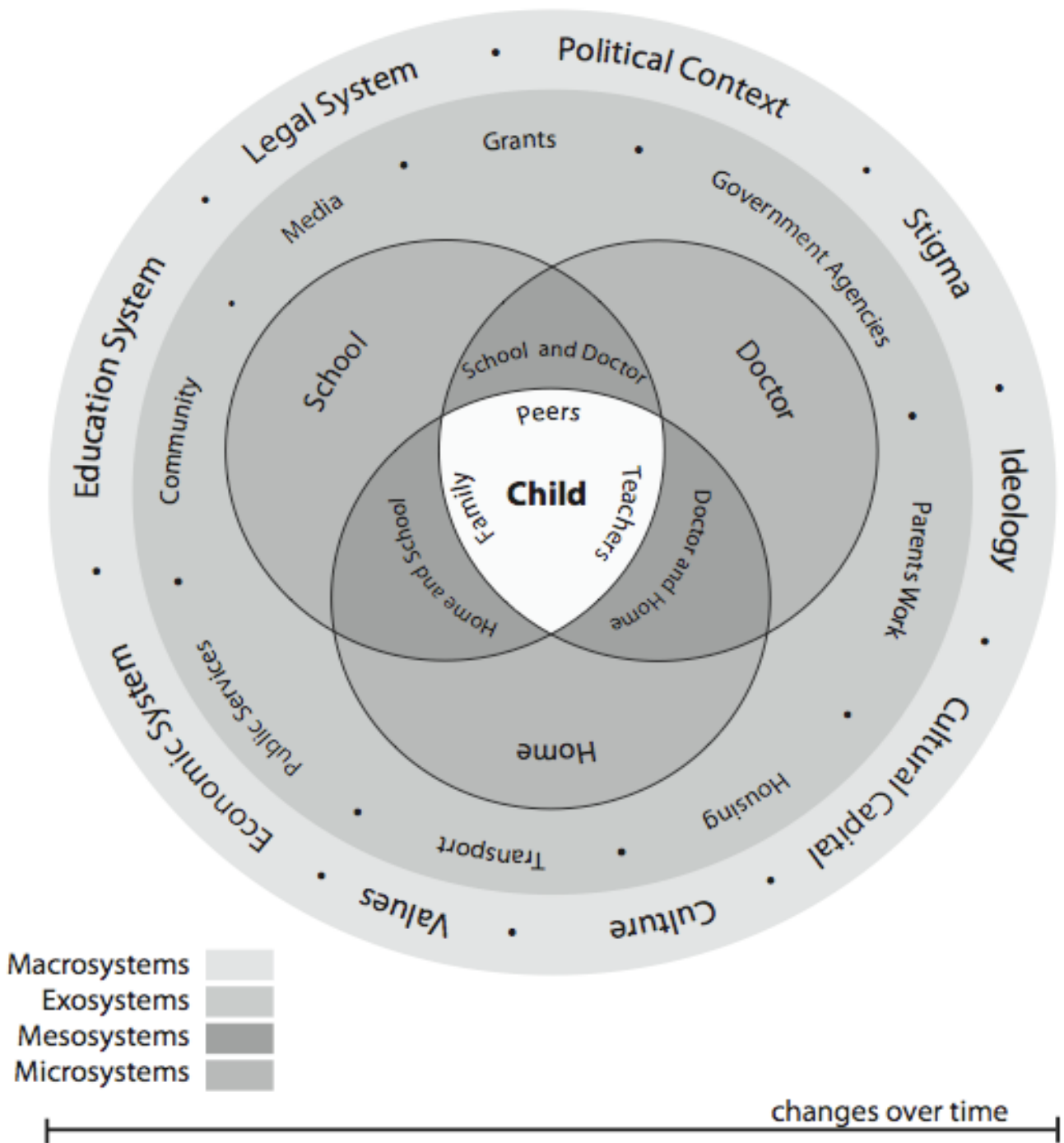
In this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was used to understand ETB. This theory understands a person and environment to be independent units that dynamically interact and influence each other (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The systems theory draws on a constructivist worldview, which emphasises the need to take a holistic perspective and values personal meaning and subjectivity.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the behaviours of children are the product of multiple interactions that take place in multiple settings. This is evident with regard to ETB, as it takes place in various facets and a broad range of contexts. Therefore, it is imperative to consider a comprehensive view of interrelated factors, influencing both the perpetrator and the victim of bullying.

This paradigm also depicts four interacting levels that need to be considered when attempting to understand the development of learners in context. These include individual factors (temperament of adolescent or parent), process factors (such as forms of interaction that occur within the family system), contexts (families or neighbourhoods), and time (changes over time in the characteristics of the individual or the environment). According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), it is the proximal interaction processes that are the most essential in shaping stable aspects of these developments.

These processes refer to direct interactions between learners and other individuals, such as their educators. However, as illustrated in Figure 1, these interactions may be affected by the characteristics of learners and other individuals involved in the interaction, as well as by the nature of the contexts within which they occur.

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner ecological model (adapted from Espelage & Swearer, 2010)



In light of these arguments, this section unpacks the ecological contexts (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that individually and collectively lay the foundation for and perpetuate and increase incidents of bullying, specifically ETB.

2.10.1 The microsystem

The microsystem constitutes the innermost layer and the structures within this system. These include family, caregivers, day care, school, and the neighbourhood that contributes to the psychological make-up of the individual. According to Berk (2000), this system encompasses all the relationships and face-to-face interactions a child has with their immediate surroundings, as well as experiences of their maturing body. Relationships in the microsystem are bidirectional. Therefore, the parental or primary caregivers' ideology system or behaviour significantly influences the child's behaviour or belief system. While the bidirectional relationship significantly influences the child within the microsystem layer, the interactions between outer layers also have a significant impact on this innermost layer (Espealge & Swearer, 2010).

According to McPhee and Craig (2009), inconsistent parenting style and methods of discipline can also exacerbate challenging learner behaviours, including ETB. Donald et al. (2009) also argued that sometimes the parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) may fail to provide their children with emotional support or the opportunity to develop optimally. Emotional neglect may contribute to difficulties in learners' psychological development, which in turn may lead to a lack of understanding of social norms (McPhee & Craig, 2009). Moreover, the absence of a bond between the learner and his or her parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) may also play an integral function in the development of learners' challenging behaviour towards educators. Also, learners who are neglected at home may find it challenging to adjust or adhere to societal norms.

Donald et al. (2009), however, also stated that learners with harsh, unsupportive backgrounds may display (a) psychological difficulties, (b) lack of empathy, and (c) use deviant behaviour to release their inner conflicts. Taking all the above into consideration, if learners are exposed to this constant disrespectful behaviour at home, they may potentially exhibit the same behaviour in other social settings (such as a classroom) towards others (such as educators).

2.10.2 The mesosystem

The mesosystem is the second layer within the ecological system. Berk (2000) highlighted that this system provides the connections between the structures within the child's microsystem. These include the connections between the child's parents or primary caregivers, parents, and educators, or between the school and the neighbourhood. Within this layer, the structures of learners' microsystems interact with one another. Therefore, it will connect the different microsystems that form part of a learner's life.

2.10.3 The exosystem

The exosystem refers to those contexts in which the child is not directly involved. It may, however, influence the people with whom the child has proximal relationships. In other words, the exosystem includes the people and places with which the child does not interact directly, but that still have a significant effect on the child's life, such as the parents' workplaces, extended family members, the neighbourhood, and so forth (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Donald et al. (2009) posited that every family may live in a particular neighbourhood with physical and social characteristics that may affect the development of learners. Therefore, the socioeconomic status of the community may have a bearing on the behaviour of learners. For instance, a low socio-economic status may result in a lack of support, which in turn could lead to increased challenging behaviour among learners towards educators (Donald et al., 2009).

2.10.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is considered the outermost level in the child's environment. This layer encompasses the dominant social and economic structures, and attitudes, beliefs, values as well as ideologies inherent in the system of a particular society and culture (Berk, 2000; Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The effects of broader principles and values, as defined by this system, have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other levels. The macrosystem is the least proximal to the learner, but could indirectly impact learners' behaviour in the classroom. According to Tudge et al. (2009), cultural and societal values shared within a certain context could also have an impact on the development of an individual. It may not only be cultural differences that influence challenging behaviours of learners towards educators on a macro-level; the curriculum and educational policies could also have an impact.

2.10.5 The chronosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), if a breakdown occurs in an immediate microsystem, the individual will not have acquired skills to explore other parts of the environment. The microsystem alters each time the individual acquires a new life experience. The experiences and changes that may take place progressively over time are known as the chronosystem. In order to understand the complexities of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) model, we therefore need to examine the chronosystem and how it may impact the behaviour of learners. According to Swart and Pettipher (2011), the chronosystem relates to the following: (a) the time factor, (b) the impact it has on the various systems mentioned above, and (c) how these influences the development of the learners.

The chronosystem is made up of the environmental events and changes which occur throughout a child's life, including any socio-historical events. On the level of macro-time in South Africa, examples could include the impact and the implementation of the previous as well as the new curriculum in the South African education system. During this period, some educators may have lacked the skills to adjust to these changes, which may have resulted in self-doubt and failure of confidence (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The latter study further showed that educators were faced with an ever-changing adolescent learner population and challenging learner behaviours that may have posed many new challenges, both in the classroom and in the school at large (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) believed that the ecological system is dynamic and continuously developing. In general, there is a relationship of interdependence and associations between individuals and their physical environment. These associations can be viewed holistically, while each part is equally pertinent to sustaining the cycle. Moreover, this perception of balance is a fundamental ecological concept. Marais and Meier (2010) argued that it encompasses interrelated, interdependent and interacting elements within a group of systems that form a coherent whole. When a major discord occurs within these systems, the relationships, as well as interdependence, may experience distortion, thereby threatening the recovery processes.

According to Berk (2000), most of life's changes are imposed by external forces, as well as internally. Internal changes occur because individuals choose to construct and modify their environment perceptions. Much of this understanding is based on individuals' age, surroundings, behaviour, ability to rationalise, and physical characteristics. Berk (2000)

therefore found that people and the environment share a reciprocal relationship. Drawing on the paradigm of ecological systems theory, Swearer and Espelage (2004) argued that bullying has to be understood across individual, family, peer, school, and community contexts, creating the assumption that relationships between learners and educators in classrooms are reciprocal and interconnected. Therefore, the actions of all members of the classroom affect the behaviours of everyone in that environment, creating a dynamic context and culture.

Most of South African society is structured by power relations, and people are defined according to class, race, age, and gender (Lynch et al., 2009). Power is pervasive and filters through the entire spectrum of human relationships. Socialisation is not simply about the acquisition of roles, but rather about the exerting of power by one group over another. Power can also be applied from the microlevels (such as relationships between individuals) through to macrolevels (such as policy development regarding ETB) (Espelage & Swearer, 2010). The theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner (2005) presented the way in which the systems interact with one another in the physical environment and social context. Every learner, therefore, would develop within the context of various ecological systems, and a change in one system may affect every other level of systemic functioning.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on ETB, as research on bullying has been criticised for ignoring ETB and emphasising that educators cannot be perceived as victims. This chapter also presented and discussed the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner. The next chapter discusses the methodology research design used to investigate the subjective experiences of educators regarding ETB.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative methodological framework as it sought to explore the participants' subjective experiences as to how they understand and experience ETB. Miles et al. (2014) argued that qualitative methodology encompasses rich, thick, and detailed descriptions of the research phenomena. Furthermore, the researcher sought to understand how these experiences impact educators on both a personal and a professional level. According to Punch and Oancea (2014), qualitative research will use a holistic methodological framework to gather in-depth, subjective information with the aim of gathering the participants' points of view or the insider perspective.

Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviour, and social concerns of the particular study population (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, the strength of this research methodology is the ability to provide a complex textual description of how people experience a given research phenomena.

3.1 Research design

The research design is viewed as a road map with which the researcher intends to achieve their research goal and objectives (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). This study used an exploratory research design by exploring the subjective experiences of ETB in secondary schools. De Wet (2010) stated that literature is often overshadowed by learner-to-learner bullying and that educators are in general viewed as the perpetrators. Therefore, for this study, an exploratory research design was deemed appropriate, as it explored and answered questions about the complex nature of ETB in the context of the school environment. Exploratory research was conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community, or individual. The primary aim of this design was able to explore a new area about which little is known, thereby generating new insights and hypotheses regarding the topic (De Wet, 2010).

This design was chosen because ETB can be considered as a complex phenomenon and therefore requires an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural environment in which it occurs. By collecting qualitative data, the researcher was able to provide thick and rich descriptions of the study topic. This form of data collection furthermore allowed the

participants to share their own experiences, which in turn assisted the researcher to explore and understand the meaning of these experiences. This was done through the process of describing and understanding bullying from the perspective of educators.

3.2 Research setting

The researcher was guided by the Western Cape Education Department's categorisation for the selection of the three secondary schools (Hall & Giese, 2009). The study was conducted in three secondary schools, which are located within the Cape Winelands District (CWD). According to Marias (2001), South African schools have been categorised into five different categories (also known as quintiles) determined by the poverty level of a learner's parent(s) or caregiver(s). Furthermore, as stipulated by Hall and Giese (2009), disadvantaged schools are found in quintile one and the more affluent schools are found in quintile five. This enables the Department of Basic Education to divide schools into high- and low-income schools.

More specifically, the three secondary schools are situated in low socio-economic status communities. Savahl (2010) stipulated that low socio-economic status communities are prone to various challenges such as poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, poor infrastructure, violence behaviours and low levels of skills and education, which may be due to the inequalities stemming from South Africa's socio-political past. Exposure to these contextual factors may have adverse consequences for the development of learners and their interaction with others (such as educators).

3.3 Participants and sampling

In qualitative research, the precision and rigour of a sample are defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics (Ritchie et al., 2013). The sample size was decided on before the data collection, which was dependent on the resources and time available as well as the study objectives. It was also determined based on theoretical saturation, meaning the point in data collection when the new data no longer generate additional insights in terms of the research aim and objectives of the study (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Dworkin (2012) argued that to get rich and in-depth information, a range between 5 and 50 participants will be a sufficient sample size. For this study, non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Purposive sampling is a sampling method used when participants need to be selected to meet certain criteria (Neuman, 2002). Schools were

selected based on low socioeconomic status, teaching experience of educators, and their accessibility to the researcher.

The inclusion criteria for participation in this study were that participants had to be educators for at least four years in secondary schools that are situated in low socioeconomic status communities. Having these experiences and backgrounds allowed educators to share their experience of educator bullying in the classroom setting. It is also consistent with researchers such as Cornelissen (2016), De Vos and Kristen (2015), and Jacobs and De Wet (2018), who highlighted that educators with more teaching experience tend to be bullied more frequently by learners.

A total of 12 educators from three secondary schools participated in this study, of which five were men and seven were women. The educators were also predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, between the ages of 28 and 53, and taught learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12. The educators had between 4 and 37 years of teaching experiences. Also, all of the educators have a post-graduate qualification. Most of these educators taught in classrooms of between 25 and 50 learners. Access to and availability of other educators were limited due to the preparation for upcoming final examinations. Refer to table 4.1 (below) for the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of participants

P	Gender	Age	Experience	Degree	Subjects	No. of learners
1	M	28	4 years	BA (Early Development), PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education): Stellenbosch University	Life Orientation, Geography, and History	35–40
2	M	52	37 years	Higher Diploma in Education: Bellville Education College	Afrikaans First and Additional Language and Visual Arts	35–42
3	F	51	36 years	BSc, Higher Diploma in Education	Life and Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Tourism	38–43
4	M	48	22 years	Diploma in Education: Bellville Education College, BA: University of the Western Cape	Afrikaans First and Additional Language	42–45
5	F	47	27 years	BSc.: Stellenbosch University; Diploma in Education: Bellville Education College, B.Ed. and Honours in Management	Mathematics	25–41
6	M	28	4½ years	B.Ed. (Honours): Stellenbosch University	English First Language	30–39
7	F	53	29 years	BA, HED (Higher Education Diploma): UWC	Afrikaans First and Additional Language and Social Science	24–37
8	F	28	5 years	B.Ed. (English & Afrikaans): Stellenbosch University	English First and Additional Language, History and Life Orientation	±30
9	F	28	6 years	BA, PGCE: University of the Western Cape	English First and Additional Language, History and Life Orientation	±40
10	M	51	30 years	BA, Higher Diploma in Education, Advanced Certificate in Life Orientation: UWC	Life Orientation and Visual Arts	±50
11	F	51	28 years	Higher Diploma in Education, Honours in Special Education Support: UWC	Economy Business Sciences: Economy, Business Science and Accounting)	±40
12	F	49	20 years	Higher Diploma in Education: Bellville Education College, BA: University of Cape Town	Life Orientation and English First and Additional Language	42–45

3.4 Data procedure and collection

Permission to conduct the study was granted from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Western Cape (Reference Number: HS18/7/19) (refer to Appendix G) and the Western Cape Education Department (Reference Number: 20190424-3967) (refer to Appendix I). Thereafter, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the school principals and specific educators from three secondary schools and discussed recruiting and selecting participants for the study. The researcher left an information sheet (refer to Appendix A: English and B: Afrikaans) and contact details with the principals and potential participants.

The potential participants were identified, and the researcher scheduled individual meetings with these educators and explained the purpose of the study, the rights of the research participants, and how the findings were to be disseminated. The first step was for participants to sign the consent form (refer to Appendix C: English and D: Afrikaans) to participate in semi-structured individual interviews, for which an interview schedule (refer to Appendix E: English and F: Afrikaans) with open-ended questions was drawn up to facilitate the aims and objectives of the study. This method of semi-structured interviews provides more flexibility than structured interviews, questionnaires, or survey methods (Ritchie et al., 2013). It also assists with immediate verification of answers and creates a space for participants to express their ideas in their own words.

Miles et al. (2014) stipulated that semi-structured interviews involve a list of questions that must be flexible in order and must contain contextually appropriate wording. However, before commencing with the interviews, the researcher psychologically prepared the participants through individual debriefing sessions regarding the sensitivity of the interview questions. The participants were perceived as the experts of their social world, and therefore a safe space was created to tell their narratives. This was done through interviewing the participants in their classrooms, which were separated from the staff rooms. Prior to data collection, individual debriefing sessions with the participants were scheduled to discuss the purpose of the study, and the researcher also gave a brief background of himself. The researcher thereby ensured that he established a rapport with the participants so that the participants would feel at ease and safe while sharing their experiences.

The questions were constructed from the literature on ETB, guided by the overall research question of the study, and facilitated the interview process by first directing attention to the ETB narrative. This allowed the participants the space to reflect on their subjective experiences and to share their innermost thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the researcher. This method was interactive and sensitive to the language of participants, and concepts (used both by the researcher and the participants) therefore had to be flexible (Britten et al., 1995). Sample questions included: In your own words, how would you describe your understanding of ETB? Briefly describe how your quality of life as a teacher has been affected by ETB (either personally or professionally or both). What do you think can be done by the Education Department or SGB to support those who were exposed to ETB?

The duration of the interviews was between 30 and 45 minutes, and they were conducted in classrooms on the secondary schools' grounds. The classrooms were separated from the staff rooms, thereby creating a private, undisturbed, and secure space. The interview questions were translated into Afrikaans to meet the needs of the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking educators. The researcher conducted one interview in English and the rest in Afrikaans, but thereafter translated the interviews into English for the purpose of reporting on the findings. The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants (refer to Appendix C: English and D: Afrikaans). Upon completion of the interviews, the audio-recorded data were transcribed. The data were stored on the personal computer of the researcher, which was password-protected.

Moreover, the interviews created an opportunity for insight into the constructs of the participants' answers and reflections on their comments. This qualitative method enabled the themes that emerged to be captured by the researcher. Creswell (2003) argues that the primary aim of the qualitative data collection method is to obtain rich data to build theories that describe a phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher cautiously listened for underlying concepts and themes that explained how the educators experienced bullying from learners and how bullying impacted the educators in a personal and professional manner.

3.5 Data analysis

According to Miles et al. (2014), data analysis is a process of creating order, structure, and meaning of the data collected. The researcher systematically read through the data and analysed them utilising thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides “a flexible and useful

research tool which potentially provides a rich, detailed and complex account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data through identification and integration of main themes that emerge in the responses provided by participants (Creswell, 2003). The researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of these themes and continually refined participants’ comments (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is suitable for exploratory and descriptive studies. Studies (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Tuckett, 2005) found that thematic analysis is an effective method for analysing interview data, as it does not subscribe to any pre-existing philosophical framework.

The researcher integrated the steps from Braun and Clarke (2013) for data analysis, which are detailed below. These phases were closely followed. However, it should be noted that this process was not linear, but rather a process of continuous meaning-making between the different phases whilst trying to make sense of the data.

1. **Familiarisation with the data** by immersing oneself in the data through reading and rereading the transcripts: The researcher should be “familiar with the depth and breadth of the data” collected, including all the field notes, and carefully read through them (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16). Furthermore, after reading through the data a few times, the researcher checked the transcripts against the actual recordings for accuracy. Once the researcher had a good sense of what the data entailed, he made notes which assisted and facilitated with the next step of analysis, which is generating initial codes.
2. **Systematically generating initial codes** across the entire data set: Initial codes were produced from the data. The researcher read the transcripts and each extract considered of interest was coded. Thereafter, the data were organised into more meaningful groups through coding. Tuckett (2005) stated that codes are features of the data that appear interesting to the researcher to assess in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. When the researcher had a sense of what the data entailed, he could then make initial notes of ideas as to what is in the data and what was interesting. Following this process permitted the researcher to sharpen some of the characteristics of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). After homing in on certain ideas and features, the researcher manually coded the data by highlighting texts to indicate potential patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3. **Searching for primary themes and sorting data** began only once all the data were initially coded and a list of codes formulated across the data set into coding categories, thereby giving significance to the data. Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that different codes need to be combined into broader potential themes, which essentially entails starting to analyse the codes, trying to get an understanding of them. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 10), a theme captures an important element of the data with regard to the research question and “represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. Themes were derived inductively as the identified themes directly emerged out of the data, and were therefore not predetermined or imposed by the researcher as is done in a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, themes were identified on a semantic level, as they were identified on the surface meanings of the data, as the researcher was not interested in anything beyond what the participants had said, such as underlying ideas and assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The codes identified by the researcher were combined to form overarching potential themes by combining relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher named the codes and briefly described what each code entailed. Thereafter, some of the different codes were combined to form one overarching theme by considering their descriptions and whether there was a relationship between codes. At this point, the researcher assigned overarching themes preliminary names.

4. **Refinement of the themes identified** in the previous phase of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) advise that during this phase, the researcher should determine whether themes are coherent and meaningfully formed as a unified whole and ensure that there are clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. Part of this process entailed reviewing all extracts for each theme to determine whether they appear to form a coherent pattern. Thereafter, the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set was considered and whether the themes reflect the meanings that are evident in the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This was accomplished by re-reading the entire data set to determine whether the themes are meaningful in relation to the data set as a whole and to code any additional data within themes that was missed in the earlier coding stages (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once this phase was completed, the researcher had a good sense of what the different themes were, how they piece together, and the overall story they convey about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

5. This phase commenced once **the researcher had an adequate and satisfactory thematic map of the data set**. At this stage, it is essential to ensure that each theme contained important information that would answer the research questions. During this phase the researcher identified the essence of what each theme means as well as determining every aspect of what each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Part of the analysis in this phase involved the researcher identifying whether or not themes contained any sub-themes (themes within themes). The identified sub-themes gave structure to the larger and more complex themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This phase ended when the researcher was able to define what the themes were and generated the names of the themes that would be used in the final write-up and report.

6. **Producing the report**

This phase began once the researcher fully understood the themes, and it involved the final write-up. Braun and Clarke (2013) noted that the major task of this phase is to present the complex story of the data in a manner which assures the reader of the quality and trustworthiness of the researcher's analysis. The analysis provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the participants' stories, not only within themes but across themes. The presented results (in the following chapter) provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data as evidenced by the provision of ample data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.6 Rigour/trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher integrated the guidelines from Creswell (2014). These guidelines consist of the following four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

- Credibility involves the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena it refers to (Creswell, 2014). This was guaranteed by frequent debriefing with the supervisor, examining previous research findings to evaluate the degree to which the results are congruent with previous studies, engaging in iterative questioning during the interviews (Shenton, 2004) and regular peer debriefing (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

- Transferability refers to the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group of researchers to another group. This refers to transfer of findings to other settings or groups (Harrison et al., 2001), which was ensured by providing information about the researcher as an instrument, the research context, procedures, and participants (Morrow, 2005), as well as employing purposive sampling (Cresswell, 2014).
- Dependability refers to whether similar results, findings, or outcomes would be obtained should the research or study be repeated. This was achieved by providing an audit trail (a detailed account of research activities and processes) and the examination of analytic memos by the supervisor (Morrow, 2005).
- Conformability refers to objectivity, that is, the congruence of the perspectives of several people regarding the accuracy, relevance, and meaning of the data (Morrow, 2005). This was ensured with the use of an audit trail. This process also ensured a true reflection of the participants' information, in that it was not influenced by the researcher's preconceptions, interpretation, and biases. The researcher attempted to enhance conformability by adhering to the above guidelines.

3.7 Reflexivity

In qualitative research, quality relates to the credibility of the study, which is dependent on the method the researcher uses. Therefore, for a study to be perceived as valid, it should be credible, transferable, and trustworthy (Golafshani, 2003). The researcher maintained the quality of the study by initiating the following steps: (a) participation was voluntary; (b) the semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, which facilitated the data analysis process; and (c) the study was subjected to continuous inspection by the supervisor to check for flaws, ethical dilemmas due to the sensitivity of the research topic, and any problem in the design of the study. In addition, the direct quotations of the words of the participants are used to illustrate each emerged theme. Moreover, to ensure that the nuances of the participants' expressions were not lost in translation, both the original and the translated texts are presented in this thesis.

The primary objective of this study developed from the aspiration to create a platform and voice for educators. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1996), participants disclose more easily to a researcher with whom they can identify or have some similarities. The researcher is Afrikaans-speaking, and from the study community, corresponding with

some of the participants; therefore, this dynamic was conducive to the research process and rapport-building with the participants.

On a personal level, ETB is of great concern for the researcher as a professional, because it negatively impacts the future of education in South Africa. Therefore, the researcher adopted a self-critical stance towards the participants, their roles, and assumptions regarding their constructions of ETB. The researcher made notes of any feelings, preconceptions, conflicts, and assumptions that he had regarding the study. This enabled self-monitoring to mitigate bias, and the process was done through debriefing and supervision sessions with the research supervisor.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines stipulated by both the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), in order to promote confidentiality, anonymity, and reliability of research findings. The rights, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants and protection of schools against harm were implemented, as discussed below.

Permission to conduct the study was granted from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the UWC (Reference Number: HS18/7/19) (refer to Appendix G). The study took place at secondary schools in the CWD, which fall within the jurisdiction of the WCED. Therefore, the researcher also applied for ethics clearance (refer to Appendix H) from the WCED Ethics Committee to receive permission to conduct the study and access participants at the schools (Reference Number: 20190424-3967). Upon approval (refer to Appendix I), the researcher presented the ethics clearance letter to the principal of each secondary school. Following the recruitment procedures, potential participants were screened and informed about the study.

The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that interviews would be audio-recorded with their approval. Also, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the rights of the research participants, and how the findings would be disseminated. Furthermore, before the commencement of each interview, the participant was asked to sign an informed consent form regarding participation and audio recordings (refer to

Appendix C: English and D: Afrikaans). The researcher assured the participants that the information gathered was confidential and that all identifying details would be removed.

The participants were made aware that direct quotations (refer to Appendix C: English and D: Afrikaans) would be used in the writing-up process; however, no direct identifying details would be revealed. The ethics guidelines ensure confidentiality, whereby all information collected was held private and not divulged to anyone. Anonymity was further ensured by removing all identifying details of the participants. The researcher ensured anonymity and protection of participants' identity by using pseudonyms (i.e. P1 to P12). Moreover, the researcher kept the data in a secure place (his personal computer), which was password-protected. The participants were informed that audio recordings and transcriptions would be kept for a minimum period of five years in a secure location by arrangement with the research supervisor. After five years, all data will be disposed of in such a manner that it cannot be retrieved.

The participants were made aware and it was reiterated that they could withdraw at any point during the study should they feel discomfort or distress. It was also made clear that the research might pose a minimal risk of psychological distress and discomfort to the participants due to the sensitivity of the topic. Therefore, the researcher made referrals to mental health support workers or counselling centres in Cape Town for psychological support.

3.9 Significance of the study

In South Africa, as in other countries, limited research has been done on ETB in low socioeconomic status secondary schools. Research predominantly depicts learners' perspective of educators as the perpetrators, and shifts in this regard need to take place (De Wet, 2010). Therefore, despite the increasing awareness of bullying in South African schools, there is still a gap in research on educators being bullied.

The study, therefore, created a platform for educators to voice their subjective experiences with regard to ETB. Moreover, this study provided information that will enhance the understanding of the dynamics of ETB. The study highlights assistance strategies for interventions and draws conclusions on how these might impact on training programmes and policy formulation.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design of the study as well as the study sample, data collection procedure and data analysis, ethical considerations, and the significance of the study.

The following chapter provides a concise discussion of the study findings based on the analysis process. The main and subthemes are also identified.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this study. The themes that emerged from the data collection procedure (semi-structured interviews) are presented. Themes and subthemes extracted from the data reflect the experiences of the selected educators who were exposed to ETB in their classrooms, specifically seeking to understand how educators experience bullying from learners and how bullying affects educators on a personal and professional level. Educators were asked questions relating to the study's objectives, namely to:

- explore how educators experience and describe ETB in secondary schools;
- examine how educators experience bullying on a personal and professional level;
- understand how educators cope with ETB;
- identify the support required in coping with ETB.

Taking into consideration the above objectives, the themes and subthemes that emerged are presented in this chapter. Twelve educators from three different secondary schools were interviewed. The interviews took place during school hours, depending on the educators' availability. The findings were analysed according to the thematic analysis steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013).

Five main themes and ten subthemes emerged from the data. Relevant direct quotations in the words of the participants are used to illustrate each theme. Both the original and the translated texts are provided, thereby ensuring that the nuances of participants' expressions were not lost in translation.

4.2 Description of main themes and subthemes

Based on the purpose and aims of this research, the following themes emerged from the collected data: (a) incidence and consciousness of ETB, (b) forms of ETB, (c) impact of ETB on educators, (d) factors within the school milieu and (e) factors outside the school milieu. Refer to table 4.2 for the main themes and subthemes of the findings.

Table 4.2: Main themes and subthemes

Main theme	Subthemes
Incidence and consciousness of ETB	Unawareness of the term “educator-targeted bullying”
Forms of ETB	Verbal bullying Indirect bullying
Impact of ETB on educators	Impact on educators’ professionalism Impact on educators’ well-being
Factors within the school milieu	Inconsistency regarding discipline in the school environment Educators’ perception regarding support structures Implications for policy and future impact on the school
Factors outside the school milieu	Gender stereotypes Societal and cultural norms

In the following section, each theme listed above is discussed in more detail.

4.2.1 Incidence and consciousness of ETB

4.2.1.1 Unawareness of the term “educator-targeted bullying”

The first theme that emerged was that the educators were unaware of the term “educator-targeted bullying”, but some had a vague idea about it existing in schools.

“Ek het nog nooit so daaraan gedink nie, as ’n mens sê mos jy is ouer as die leerders. Jy as opvoeder moet mos ’n voorbeeld stel vir die kinders. Jy as opvoeder dink nie dat jy geboelie kan word nie. Ek kan sê ja, definitief was of is ek geboelie.” (*I have never thought about it, one says that you are older than the learners. As an educator, you must be an example to the learners. As an educator, one does not think that one can be bullied. I can say yes, I have been or am definitely bullied.*) (P1, School 1)

During the interviews, educators admitted to being exposed to ETB. However, they also admitted to the immense guilt they feel, as educators, about reporting such behaviour.

“Yes...definitely more verbally. Kids say something to you that reaches you on a personal level. I had a case last year when a child pushed me out of the way

and I went to the police to open up a case of assault. I was terrified, I couldn't sleep. When I got the summons, I felt bad because I didn't want a child to have a bad record. He had to know that you can't get away with such behaviour.” (P9, School 2)

In summary, it can be concluded that bullying is occurring in these schools, but the interviews also brought to light that the educators were not always aware of the term ETB. Added to their responses to being unaware of ETB, educators also felt guilty and shameful whenever they had to report incidences of this nature because they felt that the learners were receiving a criminal record at such a young age. On the other hand, they felt that there needed to be consequences for their actions.

4.2.2 Forms of ETB

The most prominent forms of bullying across schools in South Africa is verbal bullying, where educators are called hurtful names, experience threats, are on the receiving end of sexual comments, and have belongings stolen or damaged.

4.2.2.1 Verbal bullying

The various types of verbal bullying found in the study are consistent with the types of verbal bullying reported by researchers such as Sullivan et al. (2004), Rigby (2004), and Olweus (1993). The majority of educators interviewed reported that verbal bullying was the most frequent facet of ETB.

“Meeste van die kinders raak voor op die wa of hulle raak persoonlik. Omdat ek jonger is teenoor my kollegas voel ek wanneer ek die leerders dissiplineer raak hulle persoonlik deur my name te noem of my sleg te sê, dis tye wanneer ek kwaad word en hulle te lyf wil gaan.” (*The majority of the children are “forward” or get personal. Because I am younger compared to my colleagues, I feel that when I want to discipline the learners, they get personal and call me names or insult me, that is when I get angry and want to strike out at them.*) (P8, School 3).

Another educator reported during the interview that verbal bullying was more prevalent in the school where she taught:

“Meer verbale geboelie en houdings van leerders, juffrouens tel dit veral op met seuns. In baie gevalle is hul moeders te jonk en die ouma is die primêre versorger. Daar was een seun wat my baie getreiter het en veral houdings gehad het teenoor my, hy het in ’n houer geürineer en dit het op my uitgeval net omdat ek nie wou hê hy moes uit die klas gaan nie.” (*More verbal bullying and attitudes of learners, specifically by boys towards female educators. In many, cases their mothers are too young and the grandmother is the primary caregiver. There was one boy who pestered me a lot and he had an attitude towards me, he urinated in a container and it fell over me because I did not want him to leave the classroom.*) (P3, School 1)

Educators reported that name-calling is one of the most common forms of ETB in school. Verbal bullying is one of the main forms of ETB (Woudstra et al., 2018). A study conducted in Luxembourg found that 23.9% of educators experienced strong verbal attacks several times a year (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007).

4.2.2.2 Indirect bullying

Another type of bullying identified during the interviews with the educators was indirect bullying; this entails the educator’s authority being challenged in the classroom.

“Nie direkte geboelie nie maar wel minagtende houdings, kinders wat nie wil werk nie en kinders wat aan jou woorde gee en uit jou klas loop. Ek sal sê dat die leerders my boelie dat ek my sak wil neem en loop. Meer verbale geboelie en houdings teenoor my”. (*Not direct bullying but disrespectful attitudes, children who refuse to work at all and back-chat you and walk out of class. I will say that the learners bully me to the point that I want to take my bag and walk out of my class. I experience more verbal bullying and challenging attitudes towards me.*) (P6, School 2)

It can be argued that the majority of learners who challenge the authority of educators want to impress their friends or peers and wish to be regarded as powerful in the classroom.

According to Radtke and Stam (1994), the exercise of power is a voluntary form of behaviour by an individual. Learners do it wilfully, and they may be satisfied when inflicting pain on educators. However, this is consistent with the definition of bullying by Suckling and Temple (2002), who stated that bullying, happens when a perpetrator enjoys having power over the victim and hurts the victim with words and actions, and when the action is done repeatedly and occurs without provocation from the victim.

4.2.3 Impact of ETB on educators

4.2.3.1 Impact on educators' professionalism

ETB enacted by learners was regarded as unwarranted challenges to educators' abilities and professionalism (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; Santos & Tin, 2018). Several educators highlighted that the ongoing, and at times relentless, behaviours by learners compromised their ability to manage poor learner behaviour, leading to them not wanting to come to work. This was experienced as humiliation and disempowerment.

“... baie negatief ... ek dink dis waar die afwesigheid van onderwysers inkom ... baie onderwysers besluit sekere oggende dat hulle nie inkom nie as gevolg van dit. Dit breek jou moraal af. Onderwysers raak moeg van baklei met leerders ... jou gesondheid ly daaronder ... baie moeg wanneer ek by die huis kom ... en gee nie 100% van jouself by die huis nie.” (*... very negative ... I think this is the cause of absenteeism among educators ... many educators decide on some mornings that they are not going to school due to this. It breaks your morale. Educators get tired of fighting with the learners ... one's health suffers. I am very tired when I get home and don't give 100% of myself at home.*) (P12, School 3)

A proportion of the participants said that they took sick leave to avoid the ongoing bullying by learners, but also expressed that when they are at school, they feel unmotivated to teach.

“Die meerderheid van leerders doen nie hul deel nie en jy as opvoeder voel dan jy kan nie meer ... jy as opvoeder doen dan ook net die minimum ... jy gaan nie meer om ekstra te doen nie. Jou lewe word daardeur beïnvloed as jy magteloos voel teenoor die kinders, want ek kan dan niks doen vir die kinders nie. Dit laat

jou voel om van beroep te verander waar hulle jou gaan waardeer”. (*The majority of learners do not do their part and you as an educator then feel you cannot deal with this anymore ... as an educator you then also do only the minimum yourself and don't do anything extra. Your life is being influenced when you feel powerless towards learners because you cannot do anything for the children. It makes you want to change your career, where you will feel appreciated.*) (P2, School 1)

The above response relates to the disappointment of how the teaching profession is currently experienced. The career path for teachers in South Africa has become extremely taxing due to a lack of resources, fear of violence, overcrowded classes, and a high prevalence of substance abuse among learners.

“... aantal leerders wissel van 25 tot 45 in 'n klas. Hulle is altesaam 99 leerders vir wie ek klas gee.” (*... average learners in the class range between 25 and 45. Altogether I teach 99 learners.*) (P5, School 1)

“I give class to Grade 10, 11, 12 ... average learners in a class are 40.” (P9, School 2)

“... daar is tot ongeveer 50 leerders in my klas ...” (*... there are approximately 50 learners in my class ...*) (P10, School 3)

Other factors that might adversely impact mainstream schools in South Africa are the shortage of skilled personnel, high workloads, limited promotion opportunities, insufficient colleague support, inadequate financial support, learner behaviour problems and violence among learners and towards educators (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; Jackson & Rothmann, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). This would suggest that the challenges faced by educators are beyond individual educators' professional ability to control, but are part of a much wider and intricate set of societal issues.

Research (Oade, 2009; O'Donnell et al., 2010) found a significant relationship between workplace bullying, stress symptoms, and health risks. Therefore, it might impact the psychological health of employees who are the targets of victimisation (Hogh et al., 2011).

Documented research (Nielsen et al., 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2010) also suggests that workplace bullying damages morale and motivation among employees.

4.2.3.2 Impact on educators' well-being

The participants reported that sometimes they experienced some anxious and depressive symptoms due to the thought of having to come to school.

“... ek dink dieselfde soos 'n kind dit sou ervaar as jy 'n kind sou aansê voor mense gaan die kind in verleentheid voel en dis hoe kinders sal vloek op onderwysers ... en die onderwyser nie die volgende dag miskien wil terugkom nie. Dis hoe onderwysers ook maar voel ... die leerders het my in die verleentheid gesit, my swak gemaak voor leerders. Die vrees van die opvoeder omdat ek niks aan die leerder kan doen nie sal 'n volgende leerder ook dit aan my doen. 'n Gevoel van magteloosheid kom oor jou, want jy kan niks doen op daardie oomblik nie.” (*... I think in the same way children feel when you scold them in front of others and they may feel embarrassed and that is why children swear at educators ... and then the educator doesn't want to come to school the next day. This is how educators also feel ... the learners embarrassed me in front of the other learners, made me look powerless. The fear developed that the other learners will do the same to me because nothing was done to the learner that was disrespectful. There is a feeling of powerlessness that comes over you because you can do nothing at that moment.*) (P2, School 1)

Educators also reported that ETB has an adverse ripple effect on their personal life, self-esteem, and emotional well-being.

“... iets wat ek agter gekom het, dit kan jou persoonlike en sosiale lewe beïnvloed want jy gaan terug huis toe ... en jy dra die woede saam en haal dit op jou huismense en vriende uit. Dit kan jou vriendskappe, persoonlike lewe en professionele lewe beïnvloed ... dit het 'n impak op my emosionele toestand.” (*... something that I have realised is that your personal and social life is influenced because you go home ... and you carry that anger and take it out on your family and friends. This can have an impact on your friendships, personal life, and professional life ... it also has an impact on my emotional well-being.*) (P1, School 1)

It was also noted that there is an increase in the distress level of educators, which can manifest in somatic symptoms. There was a general feeling of hopelessness among educators.

“Ek sou sê die stresvlakke van onderwysers is geweldig hoog. Hulle selfbeeld word aangetas ... daar is ook ’n gevoel dat niemand hulle help nie ... hulle staan alleen in ’n situasie. Daar is nie ondersteuning nie, min word gedoen ... en dat leerders baie meer regte het as die onderwysers of hulle is nie bewus van die regte wat hulle het nie en tot watter mate hulle dit kan toepas nie, en dit dra by tot stres.” (*I would say that the stress levels of educators are very high. Their self-image is also affected ... there is a feeling that no-one helps them ... that they are alone in the situation. There is no support and very little is being done ... and that learners have more rights than the educators or they are not aware of their rights as teachers and to which extent they can apply them, and this contributes to stress.*) (P5, School 1)

“...onderwyser ontwikkel hoë bloeddruk ...” (*... educator develops high blood pressure ...*) (P10, School 3)

Therefore, ETB can result in educators having poor mental health. Consequently, educators might appear less productive (Santos & Tin, 2018), less dedicated to their profession or passive-aggressive towards learners, which could affect the educators on a professional as well as a personal level (Woudstra et al., 2018).

4.2.4 Factors within the school milieu

4.2.4.1 Inconsistency regarding discipline in the school environment

Educators from all three schools highlighted feelings of frustration regarding the process of discipline in the schools (Smith, 2013).

To reduce or prevent ETB, three of the educators suggested that immediate action needs to take place, beyond the verbal reprimands. The following segments from the interviews illustrate these concerns about the inconsistencies regarding discipline in their schools.

“Onmiddellike aandag moet gegee word aan sulke probleme. Die kind moet besef ek het iets verkeerd gedoen. Daar is gevolge daaraan en die kind moet

verantwoordelikheid neem vir sy of haar optrede. Leer leerders van die begin af daar is gevolge vir enigiets negatief.” (*Immediate attention needs to be given to these problems. The child must realise that he or she did something wrong and that there are consequences for his or her behaviour. Learners need to be taught from the beginning that there are consequences for negative behaviour.*) (P2, School 1)

“Leerders sien hulle kan daarmee wegkom, so hoekom sou hulle stop met hul gedrag, want hulle weet net daar word gepraat met hulle en dis hoekom doen hulle weer net dieselfde ding.” (*Learners see that they can get away with it, so why then stop with their behaviour, because they already know that there will only be talk and that is why they do the same thing again.*) (P3, School 2)

According to the majority of the educators interviewed, in order to eradicate and prevent the social problem of ETB and ill-discipline, the WCED must create a full-time position or reinstate a person of authority at schools who can immediately and effectively deal with challenging behaviour of learners.

“Ek weet nie of ons die bronne daarvoor het nie maar ek sal fisies sê dat iemand met ’n gesagsfiguur moet teenwoordig wees wanneer ’n kind handuit ruk, byvoorbeeld die hoof of persoon wat die dissipline van die skool hanteer, maar ons hoof gee klas. So as jy ’n persoon kan kry wat elke dag daar is en beskikbaar is dan kan jy net die kind stuur na daardie persoon toe en word daar dadelik opgetree teenoor die leerder. Onderwysers kan nie altyd onmiddellik aandag gee aan sulke gedrag nie, so die kinders word nie onmiddellik aangespreek nie.” (*I don't think we have the necessary resources, but I would say that an authority figure needs to be present when a child gets out of control, for example, the principal or someone who handles discipline at the school; however, our principal also teaches classes. So, if one can find a person who is there and available every day, then you can send the child to that person, and immediate action against the learner will be taken. Unfortunately, educators cannot always immediately give their attention to such behaviour, so the children are not immediately reprimanded.*) (P1, School 1)

4.2.4.2. Educators' perception regarding support structures

Educators reported a lack of support structures and described feelings of not being heard.

“Daar moet ’n opvoedersondersteuningsgroep wees, want ons ondersteun mekaar akademies maar nie emosioneel nie. Daar moet professionele hulp wees by die skool, iemand wat nie gaan uitpraat as jy met hom of haar gaan praat nie. Ons het Community Keepers by die skool, maar dis meer op kinders gemik.”
(There must be a support group for educators, because we support one another academically, but not emotionally. There must be professional support in the schools, someone who will keep things confidential when you disclose things to him or her. We do have the Community Keepers at our school, but it's more directed towards the needs of learners.) (P2, School 2)

Another educator highlighted her resentment towards the lack of support and resources available to them as educators:

“We as teachers never get that time, a platform to say or to share our experiences of what is happening in our schools. We don't get that type of session; we have meetings with our subject advisors and we talk about the curriculum workshops, but we don't share the real problems. They try and minimise what we are going through.” (P4, School 2)

Educators reported a perceived lack of support from management and the WCED, which displays a pivotal challenge regarding resolving the incidences of ETB. According to the educators, effective interventions for educators, such as support groups or psychologists, should be implemented.

This may result in an enhanced ability to cope, possibly leading to increased well-being and giving insights into improved handling of emotional as well as social interaction with learners in the classrooms.

4.2.4.3 Implications for policy and future impacts on school context

Educators highlighted that there was no policy framework to protect educators and that there was an urgent need to review and amend existing policies to manage and eradicate the adverse impact of ETB in South African schools.

“... die departement se kant af moet daar beter riglyne wees om onderwysers te beskerm. Daar moet min gehamer word op die regte van leerders.” (... *the department must develop better guidelines to protect educators. There should be less emphasis on the rights of learners.*) (P2, School 1)

Another educator voiced similar sentiments regarding the implications of policy and protection of educators.

“... strenger maatreëls moet ingestel word om die onderwyser te beskerm, goed moet in plek wees by skole. In plaas van die kind net skors, laat die kind fisies werk doen vir sy straf ... die departement kan meer ondersteuning gee sodat onderwysers meer sê kan hê ... daar is niks ondersteuning van die departement se kant vir die onderwyser nie.” (... *stronger measures must be incorporated to protect educators; things must be put in place in schools. Instead of suspending a learner, he/she must do physical work as punishment ... the department should give more support so that educators have more say ... there is no support for educators from the department.*) (P12, School 3)

4.2.5 Factors outside the school milieu

4.2.5.1 Gender stereotypes

There was a general feeling among the educators, specifically women, that gender stereotypes are influencing the way learners interact with them. The extracts from the interviews substantiate these comments.

“... want in my klasse is dit enkele kinders wat kans vat. Die meerderheid kinders het ek ’n goeie verhouding mee. Ek hoor gereeld hoe hulle van ander onderwysers praat in die klas. So ek dink dit gebeur gereeld by die skool. Hier was ’n juffrou, maar ek kan nie sê of dit deur ’n geboelie is nie, maar sy het gereeld gehuil. In my praktiese jaar [het ek] gesien, daar was ’n juffrou wat hier

toevallig was in my pos, die kinders het my vertel hoe hulle met haar aangegaan het. Sy het gehuil en die helfte van die jaar was sy nie by die skool nie. Een van die leerders het gesê die juffrou het vir hulle middelvinger gewys, sy kon fisies nie meer nie. Hulle het haar te vêr gedryf'. (... *because in my classes there are few learners who do take chances. I have a good relationship with most of them. I often hear how they gossip about other educators in my class. So, I think it often happens at school. There was a teacher here, I cannot say she was being bullied, but she cried often. In my practical year I saw, there was a female educator who was in my position at the time, as it happens, and the learners told me how they treated her. She cried and didn't come to school for half of the year. One of the learners told me that she showed them the middle finger; she could not handle their behaviour anymore. They pushed her too far ...*) (P1, School 1).

Stressful conditions may generally be exacerbated by interrelated factors of gender stereotypes and societal or cultural norms.

4.2.5.2 Societal and cultural norms

The participants reported that bullying and negative behaviour of learners directed towards educators may result from a failure to bond with a parental figure, as well as from the home environment in which learners grow up (Hardman, 2012).

The participants also communicated the notion that learners may have internalised gender role stereotypes, particularly the socially ingrained cultural prescriptions and prohibitions regarding female expected roles.

“Ek dink dit het alles te doen met huishoudings. Daar is nie orde in die huis nie, daar is nie vaderstrukture nie, ma moet beide rolle speel. Sommige moeders kan nie alles volstaan nie en kinders raak dan gefrustreerd en kwaad vir hulle. Dis meer juffrouens wat dan deurloop met geteikende geboelie. Die meeste is dit 'n kind wat uit enkelhuishoudings kom. Hulle sien gesagstrukture wat hulle nie aan gewoond was nie, en nie ken nie. Leerders moet gewoond raak aan reëls.”
(I think it all comes down to the home environment. There is no order in the

house, there is no father structure, and the mother must play both roles. Some of the mothers cannot fulfil all these roles and their children become frustrated and angry with them. It is more female educators who then suffer from targeted bullying. Mostly these are children from single-parent households. They are exposed to authority figures they are not used to and with which they are not familiar. Learners should get used to rules.) (P2, School 1)

This has become the norm in the majority of these communities (Verial, 2013). Many learners exposed to these home environment dynamics model such behaviour at school because it is culturally and socially acceptable in their communities.

“Parents are absent in the children’s lives. Most of the female teachers are bullied, cause in the houses of the children they mothers doesn’t stand up for themselves and when a female teacher approaches a learner, and then they target her because they are not used to it.” (P9, School 2)

Insecure or ambivalent parental style, for instance, may lead to misattributions of the intentions of others and lack of empathy towards educators as adults (Brozak, 2013; Carpenter, 2009; Hardman, 2012; Shaffer, 2002; Verial, 2013).

“Dis vir my kommerwekkend dat die optrede teenoor onderwysers aan die toeneem is want ons onderwysers was tradisioneel gesien as mense wat kredietwaardig was in die gemeenskap. Ek dink die gebrek aan dissipline by die huis is ’n groot oorsaak dat kinders so optree. Kinders se sosiale probleme wat hulle het, hulle kan dit nie goed hanteer nie.” (*It is of great concern to me that these behaviours towards educators are increasing, as traditionally educators had credibility in the community. I think the lack of discipline at home is the main reason why children behave like this. The social problems that children experience ... they do not know how to handle them.*) (P7, School 2)

The perceived negative effects (such as perceived lack of emotional support and understanding) and inadequate communication patterns (such as lack of positive, effective communication) were significantly associated with the tendency to engage in bullying behaviour towards educators. Research showed that there is a significant association between

parenting, parental behaviour, and problematic childhood behaviour (Haggerty et al., 2002) and the societal and cultural norms of a community. In addition, families with strong hierarchical power structures that lack familial cohesion and monitoring predispose children to aggressive behaviour (Espelage et al., 2012; Espelage, 2013; Hardman, 2012; Verial, 2013).

4.3 Conclusion

In summary, it can be concluded that the educators felt guilty and shameful whenever they had to report incidences of this nature because they felt that the learners were receiving a criminal record at such a young age. However, on the other hand, the educators' authority may be challenged in the classroom and they may feel embarrassed to face the other learners the next day because their authority was challenged.

Consequently, educators might appear less productive or less dedicated to their profession, which could affect them on a professional as well as a personal level. However, there appeared to be a perceived lack of policy framework to protect educators and that there was an urgent need to review and amend existing policies to manage and eradicate the adverse impact of ETB in schools.

In Chapter 5, the research objectives are integrated and discussed based on the literature on ETB in the education sector. In addition, the findings are discussed using the theoretical underpinning of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The discussion will be located within the broader South African context and the local education sector.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Although ETB has been studied since the late nineties (Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998), this type of bullying has received minimal research attention in the national and international arena (De Wet, 2010; De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). Moreover, Garrett (2014) stated that ETB has been virtually absent from both public and political discourse in most countries, resulting in a chaotic, piecemeal response from schools and governments. Therefore, educators who have been victims may feel isolated and shameful.

To address this social problem, the pivotal aim would be to acknowledge ETB as an international social problem that requires global commitment. This chapter discusses these antecedents, facets, and experiences of ETB in schools, encompassing the research objectives of the study. Moreover, the objectives were firstly to explore how educators experience and describe ETB in secondary schools, secondly to examine how educators experience bullying on a personal and professional level, thirdly to understand how educators cope with ETB, and lastly to identify the support required in coping with ETB. In addition, the theoretical framework is integrated into the discussion on understanding ETB in secondary schools.

5.2 Educators' experiences and descriptions of educator-targeted bullying

Through exploring educators' experiences and descriptions of ETB, the current study found that the educators have experienced ETB. However, educators identified verbal bullying as the most common type of ETB in their schools. Findings of this study were consistent with previous studies such as those by De Wet (2013), Hoffman (2013), Kõiv (2015), McMahon et al. (2014), Pervin and Turner (1998), and Terry (1998), which indicated that verbal bullying may be the most prevalent form of bullying used by learners against their educators. Furthermore, the current study shared some similarities with South African research highlighting that ETB may be a considerable problem for educators (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2018; De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). Also, De Wet (2010) posited that educators experience other forms of bullying, such as being ridiculed, ignored and disregarded (emotional bullying), shown indecent signs or laughed at (indirect bullying).

This current study further found that a proportionate number of educators have also experienced indirect bullying, whereby their authority was challenged. Therefore, learners exhibited ETB behaviours and undermined their educator's confidence. This seemed consistent with the previous studies (Einarsen et al., 2011; Kõiv, 2015), which revealed that bullying happens when the perpetrator enjoys having power over the victim and hurts the victim with words and actions, and when the action is done repeatedly and occurs without provocation from the victim.

Findings from this study seem to suggest that educators define bullying-related terminology according to their personal experience and knowledge. The majority of educators were unaware of the term, “educator-targeted bullying”. This might be problematic, as if it is not ongoing but rather an occasional occurrence; educators are likely to overlook it, miss it, and downplay it, meaning that they are not aware that they are being bullied. However, it is only when these behaviours are persistent and more regular that the realisation takes place that educators are in fact being bullied. These findings align with previous studies (De Wet, 2010; Espelage, 2013) that suggested there is no clear, definitive definition of ETB. However, as it occurs within the school setting, where the educators work, this type of bullying is regarded as a form of workplace bullying (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; Einarsen et al., 2011).

The facets of ETB may be regarded as disempowering and dehumanising to educators in the school environment. Since there appeared to be a paucity of research conducted about ETB behaviours (De Vos & Kristen, 2015; De Wet, 2010; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018, Pervin & Turner, 1998), it would be useful for future studies to focus more on different forms ETB in secondary schools.

5.3 Educators’ experience of bullying on a personal and professional level

Through the exploration of educators’ experience of bullying on a personal and professional level, this study found that the working conditions of educators in the secondary schools may become more demanding and multifaceted. The findings of this study concurred with previous studies (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Espelage, 2013; Hoffman, 2013), which indicated that the teaching profession could be regarded as highly stressful due to a lack of resources, fear of violence, and overcrowding of classes.

Furthermore, studies such as those by De Vos and Kristen (2015), Jacobs and De Wet (2018), Jackson and Rothmann (2006), and Jackson et al. (2000) found that the South African public schools had faced various challenges, such as (a) a shortage of skilled personnel, (b) high workloads, (c) limited promotion opportunities, (d) insufficient colleague support, (e) inadequate financial support, (f) learner behaviour problems, and (g) violence among learners and towards educators. These factors may influence educators' mental health (Santos & Tin, 2018) and contribute to low morale (Hendricks, 2009).

Moreover, educators reported feeling demoralised and that the relentless behaviours of learners compromised their ability to manage poor learner behaviour (Santos & Tin, 2018). This may result in educators not wanting to return to school to teach. Studies (Oade, 2009; O'Donnell et al., 2010) highlighted a significant association between ETB, stress symptoms, and health risks, threatening the psychological health of employees. Moreover, researchers (Hendricks, 2009; Nielsen et al., 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2010) argued that this could harm the morale and motivation of educators. Subsequently, educators may be less productive, less dedicated to their teaching profession, or passive-aggressive towards learners (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Therefore, ETB may affect the educators themselves, as well as the school system and the profession as a whole.

Furthermore, this study found that educators' personal lives were adversely affected by ETB (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). These findings shared some similarities with the study done by Johnson (2013), which highlighted that the mental health difficulties of educators could affect other areas of their lives outside the school system, such as family members, friends, neighbours, and their community.

Concerning societal and cultural roles and their relations with experiences of ETB, this study found that the forms of bullying towards female educators were different to the forms of bullying towards male educators. However, this may be due to the perception that men have superior power and strength; therefore, it mirrors the power that learners see exhibited by other men in their daily lives (Hunter, 2004; Lynch et al., 2009; Mncube & Harber, 2013). Findings further revealed that learners may have internalised gender role stereotypes, particularly the socially ingrained cultural prescriptions and prohibitions regarding the expected roles of women. Many learners exposed to these family environment dynamics model such behaviour at school because it is culturally and socially acceptable in their communities (Mncube &

Harber, 2013). However, Verial (2013) posited that this may have become the norm in the majority of low socioeconomic status communities.

Furthermore, this study found that insecure or ambivalent parental style, for instance, may lead to misattributions of the intentions of others and lack of empathy towards educators as adults, particularly women (Brozak, 2013; Carpenter, 2009; Shaffer, 2002; Verial, 2013). Within low socio-economic status communities in South Africa, as noted in this study, a majority of learners are brought up in homes with single parents (mostly mothers) or no parent at all, and such circumstances may have a significant impact on the learner's well-being and behavioural development (McMahon et.al., 2013).

According to De Wet (2010), educators in South African schools may also be exposed to factors such as disrespectful learners, high levels of community and school violence, economic uncertainty, and a general feeling of disempowerment. This may make ETB more prevalent and more difficult to deal with, and result in victims of ETB being affected psychologically and physically (Woudstra et al., 2018). Educators in this study experienced feelings of shame, guilt, and lowered assertiveness, as well as headaches, sleep deprivation, eating difficulties, stress, and burnout. This study further found that educators may suffer from low self-esteem, embarrassment, and withdrawal from other colleagues. Findings seemed to be consistent with previous studies, such as those by Garrett (2014), Kõiv (2015), and Woudstra et al. (2018), which indicated that learners may purposely set out to disrupt the lives of their educators on a professional as well as a personal level.

5.4 Educators' coping mechanisms and impact on their well-being

Jones (2011) highlighted that there appeared to be a decline in the quality of education in Western Cape communities and that educators may feel that they are not supported by their unions when cases of misconduct are committed against them. This study further suggested that the South African school system needed educator performance contracts. However, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) (2010) was vehemently opposed to the idea that educators are hard-working individuals, and advocated that those who do not adhere to their professional obligations should be dealt with by the government.

In the National Wellness Survey, the elements of stress and burnout were identified as major concerns due to learners' challenging behaviours (SADTU, 2010). Despite these

concerns in the South African education sector and schools having an immense need for educators, a large proportion of educators may experience stress and leave the teaching profession (Johnson, 2013). Findings from this study concur with those of previous studies (Brand, 2007; Gold & Roth, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007) that educators, compared to other professionals (such as medical doctors, nurses, and police officers) may be more predisposed to suffering from stress and burnout.

This study further found that educators may view their distress as an imbalance between the demands at school and the accessibility of resources for coping with them. In addition, distress and dissatisfaction in their workplace and personal lives may result in adverse lifestyle behaviours, such as depression and difficulties with health (Woudstra et al., 2018). Over a prolonged period, this may negatively impact their well-being, as indicated by educators in this study.

Moreover, educators may experience symptoms such as poor performance, frustration, and anxiety as well as disrupted interpersonal communication over an extended period (Woudstra et al., 2018). Findings from this study found that educators did not feel supported by the WCED. Educators who are unsupported by their environment (such as the participants in this study) may lack the necessary skills and commitment to manage their challenges in the classroom. According to Ungar (2012), educators' teaching skills may be determined by the capacity of their social and physical ecologies.

As noted in this study, educators who are facing constant exposure to negative experiences, together with a lack of support, may present with low self-concepts characterised by feelings of helplessness (Johnson, 2013). It also became apparent in this study that educators found learners' challenging behaviours difficult, which ultimately may affect their self-efficacy, well-being, and resilience. These findings concur with studies by Smith (2013), Santoro (2016), and Santos and Tin (2018), which highlighted that learners' challenging behaviours may be a contributing factor to educators' discontent and tendency to leave the teaching profession. This study further revealed that there appears to be a need for educators to be supported and feel safe. Therefore, to reduce the dissatisfaction of educators in the system and enhance teaching quality, the education departments should enhance coping mechanisms to promote the resilience and wellness of educators (Cornelissen, 2016).

5.5 Support structures of educators and experiences of policies in the education system

The South African Council for Educators (2002) highlighted that educators may feel alone in the education system and unsupported by the Department of Basic Education as well as the school management. A proportion of educators in this study revealed that, during their bullying experiences, there appeared to be a lack of support from management and the WCED. This may represent a pivotal challenge regarding resolving the incidences of ETB in school.

Furthermore, this study found that educators felt that they were not being heard, which lead to inconsistency with may regard the discipline of learners, especially when they are disruptive in the classroom. The findings of this study concurred with previous studies (Garrett, 2014; Hoffman, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Kõiv, 2015). Saunders et al. (2007) highlighted that expectations placed on educators include coping with changes in policy, rationalisation, decentralisation, a new curriculum, and the abolition of corporal punishment as well as an improved educator–learner relationship. Inevitably, as also reflected in this study, these expectations would affect the outcomes on a day-to-day basis in terms of what happens in schools and classrooms and may therefore adversely impact the educator–learner relationship (Kõiv, 2015).

In 1994, the South African education system underwent extensive changes in policies, based on the South African government’s need for restructuring and transforming a fragmented, conservative, and authoritarian education system into a more inclusive and democratic one (Department of Basic Education, 2014). This process was in line with the ethos and principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). However, these changes presented huge challenges for educators, schools, and communities. The aim of the policies was to reconsider and change established perceptions and convictions at schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014). In general, as reflected in this study and by Smith (2013), any process of change may be viewed as challenging and complex. However, it may be more adverse when there is an expectation projected onto learners to change their perceptions and beliefs, which may directly impact their own and others’ behaviours (Kõiv, 2015). Smith (2013) indicated that there appeared to be an increase in learners’ challenging behaviours, and literature started to focus on the management of behaviour in schools. This may be indicative of the concern that educators in this study did not feel supported in incidents of disrespect and ill-disciplined learners in the classroom, but also

feeling unheard, ignored, undervalued, and disrespected by the DoE and WCED, which may result in high levels of distress among educators.

This study also found that there appeared to be no policy framework to protect educators from learners' challenging behaviours. An urgent need, therefore, arose to review and amend existing policies to manage and eradicate the adverse impacts of ETB in South African schools (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Laas & Boezaart, 2014). However, owing to the disruptive and challenging behaviours in the form of ETB, also indicated in this study, educators may find it challenging to ensure and support the quality of learning in classrooms (Kõiv, 2015). This may in turn contribute to educators annually leaving their profession. However, as also stipulated in this study, educators who remain in the education profession reported being less motivated and sometimes view themselves as day-to-day survivors (Kõiv, 2015). Corrie (2002) referred to this as a continuous struggle of educators to manage difficult learner behaviour, which takes up much of their time and energy and may lead to high levels of frustration and to them questioning their efficacy.

Despite the South African Constitution's emphasis on human rights, the pervasiveness of ETB, and its adverse outcomes on educators, no distinct definition of this term exists in the South African labour legislation or in the South African Council for Educators (2002) Code of Professional Ethics (Deacon et. al., 2016; Laas & Boezaart, 2014). These omissions may contribute to the vulnerability of educators to ETB behaviours in schools. ETB should be prevented from happening rather than waiting until it has repercussions. While legislation should certainly be a guideline, schools can take other steps towards curbing and managing the bullying of teachers.

5.6 Formulation and contextualisation of research findings

In the section that follows, the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner are utilised as a framework for formulating a comprehensive discussion of the research findings presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 4). This discussion is situated within the research context of the three secondary schools located in the CWD, which fall within the jurisdiction of the Western Cape Education Department. In order to understand the reason for such high rates of challenging learner behaviour in schools, specifically in the form of ETB, one needs to explore the dilemma from multiple perspectives, considering the many different dynamics that have influenced this phenomenon.

The development of learners should be understood by exploring the environment in which they are raised and function, using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The ecological paradigm depicts that a break in relationships within the microsystem could deny a learner a stable, shared relationship with key adults, which is necessary for development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This, however, may be viewed as detrimental to the development of the learner. Therefore, such experiences may result in learners not attaining the tools necessary for exploring other situations. This is likely to be displayed later in childhood in the form of discipline problems, disrespect of authority figures, and challenging behaviours such as ETB. Within this paradigm, as the current study indicates, the relationship between learners and their parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) may be viewed as a model for learners' interactions with others (such as educators) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

According to Burton (2008), there is no single cause of exhibited challenging learner behaviours, but rather a series of interrelated factors that may impact learners in different ways, one of which will be in the perpetrating of challenging behaviours against educators and society in general. McPhee and Craig (2009) highlighted that inconsistent parenting style, as indicated in the current study, and methods of discipline can also exacerbate challenging learner behaviours in schools. However, this confirmed the implication of the ecological system by Bronfenbrenner (2005), in explaining bullying behaviours towards educators. The theorist argued that the immediate microsystem environment of learners and their parent(s) may have a major impact on learners' behaviours. Bronfenbrenner (2005) mentioned that individuals are interrelated to the social system they are in, and relationships in the microsystem are bidirectional. Therefore, the parental or primary caregivers' ideology system or behaviour may significantly influence learners' behaviour or belief system.

In light of above arguments, ETB incidences may be due to underlying factors, as presented (Chapter 4) and discussed (Chapter 5) in the current study, such as socioeconomic status of the community, dysfunctional families, parenting styles, societal and cultural norms, and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, these factors are in alignment with previous studies, such as those by Brozak (2013), Hardman (2012), McMahon et. al. (2013), Mncube and Harber (2013), and Verial (2013). Therefore, for one to gain a sense of the causes of these behaviours of learners in schools, one needs to examine and attempt to understand the broader context in which the school is located (such as socioeconomic status), the home (family, parents) and the

larger community (such as education departments, SGBs, government), as all of these factors fall within the various ecological systems, which are interrelated and bidirectional.

Studies such as those by Espelage (2013) and Espelage and Swearer (2010) supported the notion that ETB may also be influenced reciprocally by the individual, family, school, community, and society. In other words, there is a reciprocal influence between the different systems of the ecological model. As shown in Figure 1 (Chapter 2), an illustration was provided of this reciprocity between the systems related to ETB. This way of understanding may, therefore, minimise the possibility of ETB incidences being reduced to the level of the individual, whereby the particular parties involved in these challenging behaviours are viewed as the sole problem.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided a discussion of the research findings on ETB in secondary schools. The discussion integrated the objectives of this study and its theoretical underpinning as highlighted in Chapter 1. According to De Wet (2010), educators in South African schools are exposed to disrespectful learners, high levels of community and school violence, economic uncertainty and a general feeling of disempowerment. This may make ETB more prevalent and more difficult to deal with, and educators are affected psychologically and physically (Woudstra et al., 2018). This has the consequence that educators' ability to manage poor learner behaviour is compromised, and may result in them becoming less productive, less dedicated, or leaving the teaching profession.

Therefore, to reduce the dissatisfaction of educators in the system and enhance teaching quality, the education departments should (a) enhance coping mechanisms to promote the resilience and wellness of educators (Cornelissen, 2016), and (b) review and amend existing policies to manage and eradicate the adverse impacts of ETB in South African schools (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Laas & Boezaart, 2014). The following chapter discusses the conclusion and limitations. It also provides feasible recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The objective of the present study was to explore the subjective experiences of ETB in secondary schools. Specifically, this study sought to understand how educators experience bullying from learners and how bullying affects educators on a personal and professional level. This chapter provides the conclusions of the study, followed by its limitations and recommendations. This evaluation will result in general conclusions being drawn so that guidelines can be developed for this specific school context.

6.2 Conclusions

Although an extensive body of research on learner-to-learner bullying and discipline was highlighted, only a portion of literature focuses on ETB in South Africa, specifically secondary schools located in the CWD. According to Jackson et al. (2006, p. 270),

“the voices of teachers, the questions and the problems they pose, the frameworks they use to interpret and improve their practice, and the ways they define and understand their work lives are absent from the literature of research on teaching ... this void must be filled with teachers’ voices”.

De Wet (2013) highlighted that what needs to be examined are educators’ thoughts and personal and behavioural experiences in the education sector. Based on this concern, the following research question was formulated: What are educators’ experiences of ETB and how does it impact educators personally and professionally?

Research shows that ETB in the education sector is of great concern and affects educators’ personal and professional wellness (De Wet, 2013). However, the socialisation of learners is dependent on both their levels of exposure to bullying and their socialised gender roles in the family, school, and broader community (Hardman, 2012). Due to the high levels of challenging behaviours and violent tendencies among learners in the South African education sector, it is essential to understand how this affects the lives of educators.

However, Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm can be viewed as more holistic and prone to enabling support and understanding of learners as perpetrators of ETB (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The ecological framework is cognisant of the broader social context in which ETB manifests, which may adversely affect educators in classrooms. ETB, whether associated with intrinsic or extrinsic factors, is examined from a broader social setting and offers a more complex and holistic understanding of situations and behaviours.

6.3 Limitations and recommendations

Although this phenomenon is a relatively new field of study within South African academia, some researchers, such as De Wet (2013), Du Plessis (2008), and Jacobs and De Wet (2018), have theorised about the concept of ETB in schools and the work environment, and have applied these concepts towards developing a deeper understanding of this subject matter to assist in the development of support and prevention programmes encompassing all the different stakeholders in the South African education sector. The study identified a significant relationship between ETB experiences and adverse impacts on educators' professional and personal lives. Forming part of existing studies, the aim of this study was therefore to gain a greater understanding of ETB in South African schools. This study also created a platform for educators and other stakeholders (such as principals, community members, families, the media, SGBs and the schools) to continue dialogues regarding ETB in South African schools.

However, this study encountered a few limitations. The limitations of this study do not only relate to the data collection process, but also to several gaps identified in the review of the literature provided in the chapters. Limited sampling may be a limitation, and future research may use larger representative sampling. De Wet (2013) advocated for more South African studies regarding ETB. According to Jacobs and De Wet (2018), studies should focus more on bullying behaviour in classrooms to understand the dynamics of why learners exhibit these challenging behaviours. My theoretical underpinning of the ETB study was greatly shaped by Western literature and theory, and therefore possibly failed to take into consideration the diverse cultural backgrounds and understanding of South African adolescents. Further research is therefore needed to rectify this. Only three schools participated in the study. From these schools, overall, 12 participants were voluntarily recruited to take part in the study. This has the potential to be a limitation in terms of viewing the participating educators as representative

of all educators in this age group, across geographical borders in the whole Western Cape Province.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher acknowledged from the start the significance of his subjectivity as a researcher, as well as the possible effects on the process of data analysis. Therefore, his understanding of the participants and his values and perceptions regarding the subject matter dealt with in this study were essential to his construction of the analytical interpretation. Overall, ETB is a problem in schools and can harm educators and the broader education sector. The bullying behaviours are very harmful and hurtful to victims (educators), and therefore cannot be ignored. Schools can adopt and implement various strategies (such as anti-ETB policies, training or workshops, support groups, and psychological services) and measures in an effort to reduce the incidences of ETB in secondary schools.

An active anti-bullying policy should be developed and incorporated in South African secondary schools to assist with relevant procedures followed when dealing with ETB. Given the context of ETB, from the ecological perspective, the primary caregiver(s) or parent(s) and learners should be involved in drawing up such policies because the existing literature indicates that family history is an antecedent of bullying, as it contributes to the bullying behaviour of some learners towards educators or peers in schools. Espelange (2013) stated that in drawing up an anti-bullying policy, the following concepts, therefore, need to be taken into consideration by the relevant stakeholders in the education sector: the principles and aims of ETB policy, the definition of ETB, basic rules, and investigating and reporting of ETB. However, the school curriculum also needs to be designed such that social skills, self-esteem, respect, and human rights are emphasised through the process of teaching and learning in schools.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET



UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-9592825, Fax: 27 21-9593515

E-mail: 2501405@myuwc.ac.za

Project Title: Exploring the subjective experience of educators targeted bullying (ETB) in secondary schools.

Invitation:

This is an invitation to participate in a research study. The researcher is currently registered for a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. The researcher's name is Eugene Booysen.

What is this research study about?

The primary aim of this study is to explore the subjective experiences of bullying on educators by learners in secondary schools. More specifically, the researcher will explore how educators experience and describe educators target bullying. Secondly, examine the nature and extent of the educator's target bullying in secondary schools. Thirdly, to understand how educators cope with the educator's target bullying. Lastly, to identify the support required in coping with the educator's targeted bullying.

What can you expect?

The researcher will schedule a meeting with the school principal to discuss accessing participants. Thereafter, he will then leave an information sheet and will schedule individual meetings as well as explaining the purpose of the study. Once you agree to participate, I will be asked to provide informed consent. At this meeting, the researcher will see if you meet the study requirements. If you meet the requirements then a convenient time and venue for the interview will be arranged. You will take part in an interview that will last about an hour. The interview will be held in one of the private rooms at the school. Your responsibility will be to answer the questions honestly during the interview.

Participation is voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. Should you decline, it will not have any consequences for you whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point if you feel discomfort or distress, even if you agree to take part at first. Moreover, no money or reward is offered if you agree to participate. All information will be kept safely stored and protected on a personal computer. The only persons who will have access to your information will be me (Eugene Booysen) and my study supervisor (Dr. A. Pedro).

Does your participation in this research pose any risks?

The research might also pose a minimal risk of psychological distress and discomfort because of talking about sensitive and personal issues. You will get referral numbers for any further psychological support. Please feel free to ask any questions about any part of this project you do not fully understand. It is very important that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could become involved.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Psychology, Dr. Maria Florence,
University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17
Bellville, 7535
Email: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

Research Supervisor: Department of Psychology, Dr. Athena Pedro
University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17
Bellville, 7535
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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: HS18/7/19) and the Western Cape Education Department (Reference Number: 20190424-3967).



BYLAAG B: INLIGTINGSBLAD
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Projek Titel: Verkenning van die subjektiewe ervarings van opvoeder geteikende boelie gedrag in sekondêre skole.

Uitnodiging:

Dit is 'n uitnodiging om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsstudie. Die navorser is tans geregistreer vir 'n Meestergraad in Kliniese Sielkunde aan die Universiteit van Wes Kaap. Die navorser se naam is Eugene Booysen.

Waaroor gaan hierdie navorsingstudie?

Die primêre doelwit vir hierdie navorsingstudie is om u subjektiewe ervaring te verkry van opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag in sekondêre skole. Meer spesifiek, die navorser sal ondersoek hoe opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag ervaar en beskryf word. Tweedens, die navorser sal evalueering doen i.v.m die aard en omvang van opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag in sekondêre skole.

Daarna om te identifiseer hoe opvoeders in sekondêre skole opvoeder geteikende boelie gedrag hanteer. Laastens, om ondersteuning strukture in sekondere skole te identifiseer vir opvoeders wat deur geteikende boelie gedrag blootgestel word.

Wat kan u verwag?

Die navorser sal 'n vergadering met die skoolhoof skeduleer om toegang tot deelnemers te verkry. Daarna sal die navorser 'n inligtingsblad agterlaat en ook vergadering skeduleer met opvoeders en die doelwitte van die navorsingsstudie te verduidelik. Sodra u as opvoeder ingestem het om deel te neem aan hierdie navorsingsstudie, sal u gevra word om 'n toestemming bylaag te teken. As u as opvoeder toestemming gegee het en ook aan die vereistes voldoen, sal 'n gerieflike tyd en plek vir die onderhoud gereël word.

Die onderhoud sal ongeveer 'n uur duur in een van die privaatkamers by u skool. As deelnemer van hierdie navorsingsstudie word verwag om die vrae eerlik te beantwoord tydens die onderhoud. Deelname aan hierdie navorsingsstudie is vrywillig en as opvoerder is u vry om te weier om deel te neem, en daar sal geen enige nagevolge wees nie.

As deelnemer, kan u ook op enige stadium van die studie onttrek indien daar enige ongemak of nood ervaar, selfs al het u toestemming gegee. Daarbenewens word geen geld of beloning aangebied vir navorsingsstudie. Alle inligting sal veilig gestoor en beskerm word op die narvoser se persoonlike rekenaar. Die enigste persone wat toegang sal verkry tot hierdie inligting is die navorser (Eugene Booysen) en die navorser se toesighouer (Dr. A. Pedro).

Behoort u deelname aan hierdie navorsing enige risiko's?

As gevolg van die sensitiewe en persoonlike inligting kan hierdie navorsingsstudie ook 'n minimale risiko van sielkundige nood en ongemak inhou. Daarom, sal die navorser verwysingsnommers beskikbaar stel vir enige verdere sielkundige ondersteuning.

Die deelnemer kry ook vrye keuse om navrae oor enige deel van hierdie navorsingsstudie te vrae. As deelnemer is dit belangrik dat u duidelikheid het oor hierdie navorsingsstudie se primêre doelwitte. Byvoorbaat baie dankie vir die tyd om hierdie inligtingblad te lees. Indien daar enige vrae oor hierdie navorsingsstudie is of enige probleme wat u ondervind het, voel vry om dit te rapporteer aan die volgende kontak persone:

Departementshoof: Departement van Sielkunde, Dr. Maria Florence
Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap, Privaatsak X17
Bellville, 7535, Epos: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

Navorsing Toesighouer: Departement van Sielkunde, Dr. Athena Pedro
Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, Privaatsak X17, Bellville, 7535
Epos: aspedro@uwc.ac.za

Hierdide navorsing is deur die Universiteit van Wes-Kaap se Menslike en Sosiale Wetenskappe en Navorsing Etieke Komitee (Verwysing Nommer: HS18/7/19) en Wes-Kaap Onderwys Departement (Verwysing Nommer: 20190424-3967) goedgekeur.



**APPENDIX C: CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING AND USE OF
DIRECT QUOTATIONS**

**UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-9592825, Fax: 27 21-9593515

E-mail: 2501405@myuwc.ac.za

Title of Research Project: Exploring the subjective experiences of educators-targeted bullying (ETB) in secondary schools.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate in my own choice and free will. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcriptions will be kept for a minimum period of at least five years in a secure location by arrangement with my research supervisor. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone and direct quotations will be used. However, no identification will be used in the transcripts or the research report I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Head of Department: Psychology, Dr Maria Florence, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535, Email: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

Research Supervisor: Department of Psychology, Dr Athena Pedro, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535, Email: apedro@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: HS18/7/19) and the Western Cape Education Department (Reference Number: 20190424-3967).



BYLAAG D: TOESTEMMING VIR LUISTEROPNAME EN GEBRUIK

VAN DIREKTE KWOTASIES

UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE WES-KAAPLAND

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Tel: +27 21-9592825, Faks: 27 21-9593515

E-pos: 2501405@myuwc.ac.za

Titel van Navorsingsprojek: Verkenning van die subjektiewe ervarings van opvoeder geteikende boelie gedrag in sekondêre skole.

Die navorsingsstudie is in 'n taal wat ek kan verstaan en die my navrae oor die navorsingsstudie is/was beantwoord. Ek verstaan wat my deelname behels en ek stem in om deel te neem opgrond van eie vry keuse. Ek is ook in kennis gestel deur navorser dat hierdie onderhoud sal opgeneem word deur klankopnemer. Daarna sal die transkripsies vir 'n minimum tydperk van vyf jaar op 'n veilige plek in ooreenstemming met my navorsing toesighouer (Dr. A. Pedro) bewaar word. Ek verstaan ook dat my identiteit nie aan enigiemand bekend gemaak sal word nie en direkte aanhalings sal gebruik word. Geen identifisering sal egter in die transkripsies of die navorsingsverslag gebruik word nie. Ek verstaan ook dat ek enige tyd van die studie kan onttrek sonder om 'n rede en sonder vrees vir negatiewe gevolge of verlies.

Deelnemer se naam

Deelnemer se handtekening.....

Datum

Departementshoof: Departement van Sielkunde, Dr Maria Florence, Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap, Privaatsak X17, Bellville, 7535, Epos: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

Navorsing toesighouer: Departement van Sielkunde, Dr. Athena Pedro, Universiteit van die Wes-Kaapland. Privaatsak X17, Bellville, 7535, Email: aspedro@uwc.ac.za

Hierdide navorsing is deur die Universiteit van Wes-Kaap se Menslike en Sosiale Wetenskappe en Navorsing Etieke Komitee (Verwysing Nommer: HS18/7/19) en Wes-Kaap Onderwys Departement (Verwysing Nommer: 20190424-3967) goedgekeur.



APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-9592825, Fax: 27 21-9593515

E-mail: 2501405@myuwc.ac.za

Good day, my name is Eugene Booysen (student no. 2501405) and currently doing my Masters in Clinical Psychology (Full Time) at the University of the Western Cape. I would also like to remind you that confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed and you can speak openly as you like to.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Can you briefly tell me more about you? (Probe: age, qualifications, teaching experiences, etc.)

Section B.

2. **Exploring educators' experience and describe educators' targeted bullying.**

- During your teaching career, have you ever been subjected to ETB? Please elaborate.
- In your own words, describe your experiences with regards to ETB as an educator.
- In your own words, how would you describe your understanding of ETB?

3. **Examine the nature and extent of the educator's target bullying in secondary schools.**

- In your opinion, can you explain why ETB happens in school?
- How often do you think does ETB happen in your school? Please elaborate.
- What type of ETB happens in schools?
- How do you perceive the effects of ETB incidents in schools and among your colleagues?

4. **Understanding how educators cope with the educator's targeted bullying.**

- Briefly describe how your quality of life as a teacher has been affected by ETB (either personally or professionally or both).
- In your experience as an educator/teacher, what can be done to preventing and address ETB in the school environment?

5. To identify the support required in coping with the educator's targeted bullying

- What do you think can be done by the education department or SGB to support those who were exposed to ETB?

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: HS18/7/19) and the Western Cape Education Department (Reference Number: 20190424-3967).



BYLAAG F: ONDERHOUDSKEDULE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN *DIE* WES-KAAPLAND

DEPARTEMENT VAN SIELKUNDE

Privaatsak X 17, Bellville 7535, Suid-Afrika

Tel: +27 21-9592825, Faks: 27 21-9593515

E-pos: 2501405@myuwc.ac.za

Goeie dag my naam is Eugene Booyen (studentnr. 2501405) en doen tans my Meestergraad in Kliniese Sielkunde (Voltyds) aan die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland. Ek wil u ook herinner dat vertroulikheid en outonomieit gewaarborg sal word en u kan vrylik praat.

Afdeling A: Demografiese Inligting

- 1. Kan u my kortliks meer van jou vertel? (bv. ouderdom, kwalifikasies, onderrigervarings, ens.)**

Afdeling B

- 2. Onderzoek opvoeders ervarings en beskryf opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag in sekondêre.**

- Tydens u loopbaan in die onderwyser veld, was u ooit onderhewig aan geteikende boelie gedrag?
- In u eie woorde, beskryf u ervarings met betrekking as 'n opvoeder in 'n sekondêre.
- In u eie woorde wat verstaan u aangaande opvoeder geteikenende boelie gedrag.

- 3. Onderzoek die aard en omvang van opvoeder se teikenpesteel in sekondêre skole.**

- Kan u verduidelik waarom opvoeders geteikenende boelie gedrag in skole plaasvind?
- Hoe dikwels dink u gebeur opvoeders geteikenende boelie gedrag in sekondêre skole, veral die sekondêre skool wat u as opvoeder is?
- Watter tipe opvoeders teiken geteikende boelie gedrag gebeur in skole?
- Beskryf die nagevolge van voorvalle in skole en onder u kollegas i.v.m geteikende boelie gedrag vanaf leerders na opvoeders?

4. Verstaan hoe opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag vanaf leerders na opvoeders in sekondêre skole.

- Beskryf kortliks hoe u lewensgehalte as opvoeder deur geteikende boelie gedrag geraak was/is (beide persoonlik en professioneel).
- In u ervaring as 'n opvoeder, wat kan gedoen word om opvoeder geteikende boelie gedrag in skoolomgewing te voorkom en aantespreek?

5. Om ondersteuning strukture te identifiseer wat benodig word om opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag te hanteer.

- Wat dink u kan gedoen word deur die onderwysdepartement van Weskaap/skoolbeheerliggaam om diegene wat blootgestel is aan opvoeders geteikende boelie gedrag te ondersteun.

Hierdide navorsing is deur die Universiteit van Wes-Kaap se Menslike en Sosiale Wetenskappe en Navorsing Etieke Kommittee (Verwysing Nommer: HS18/7/19) en Wes-Kaap Onderwys Departement (Verwysing Nommer: 20190424-3967) goedgekeur.

APPENDIX G: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FROM THE HSSREC (UWC)



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
T: +27 21 959 4111/2948
F: +27 21 959 3170
E: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
www.uwc.ac.za

17 October 2018

Mr EP Booysen
Psychology
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS18/7/19

Project Title: Exploring the subjective experiences of educator targeted bullying (ETB) in secondary schools.

Approval Period: 10 October 2018 – 10 October 2019

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

APPENDIX H: LETTER TO THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2283 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

08 November 2018

To Whom it May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Eugene Boovsen: Student No: – Masters in Clinical Psychology

This letter serves to inform you that Mr Eugene Boovsen, is a registered student within the Department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. He is currently completing a Masters' degree in Clinical Psychology. As part of his degree requirements he is required to complete a thesis. He has registered a research project titled "Exploring the subjective experiences of educator targeted bullying in secondary schools".

The research project has received ethics clearance (Ref No.: HS18/7/19) from the Senate Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.

Please feel free to contact the details below should you have any queries in this regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Athena Pedro', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Dr Athena Pedro
Thesis Supervisor
Department of Psychology,
University of the Western Cape
Tel: 021 959 2825
Cell: 073 8399524
Email: aspedro@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FROM WCED



Education

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20190424-3967

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Eugene Booyesen
26 Petunia Street
Kylemore
Stellenbosch
7600

Dear Mr Eugene Booyesen

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATOR TARGETED BULLYING (ETB) IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **02 May 2019 till 31 July 2019**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 25 April 2019