

ADOLESCENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment within the school environment. It was considered in the light of actual cases reported on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape where adolescent girls sought counselling after being sexually harassed over a period of time, and were eventually sexually assaulted on their school grounds, by their peers. A qualitative methodological approach was utilised, and the sample was made up of nine adolescent females and one adolescent male between the ages of 15 and 17 years, who were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Their selection followed purposive sampling at two selected high schools on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape. The research instrument used was an unstructured interview with an open-ended question to allow the participant to share openly and freely. Sound ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the study. Phenomenology was used as a theoretical framework and the data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The four key themes, or essence of the adolescents' lived experiences, that emerged for the study were: (1) boys don't respect girls' sexuality, (2) boys demonstrate power over girls, (3) girls who are sexually harassed at school are publicly humiliated, (4) reporting procedures at schools are inadequate. From the themes I concluded that for the girls, key principles relating to human rights within the South African Constitution were being violated; namely, the right to non-discrimination, the right to human dignity and the right to a safe school environment. Recommendations were made that address the role of the national and regional education departments as well as that of social workers.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Adolescents' lived experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment* is my own work; that it has not been submitted before any degrees or examination in any other university; and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Name: Cheryl J. Morilly

Date: May 2012

Signed.....



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Owen and Glenda van der Linde.



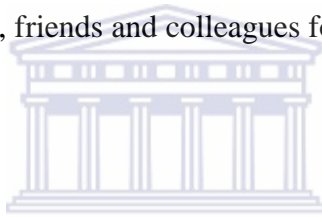
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To my family, Simon, Carlyn and Garth. Thank you for your love and support. I remain amazed and blessed because of you.

Thank you to my extended family, friends and colleagues for your prayers, support and words of encouragement. It meant a lot.



I want to make special mention of the young men and women who shared their experiences with me and the many others in our schools who are often at risk of sexual harassment and sexual violence. I appreciate your honesty and I trust that safety in schools will become a priority in our country.

Last but not least, I thank my God for showing himself to me in so many unexpected ways.

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List of Acronyms

NASW	National Association of Social Workers
MRC	Medical Research Council
DBE	Department of Basic Education
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
HRW	Human Rights Watch
CIET	Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies
UNICEF	United Nations Institute of Children's Funds
SACSSP	South African Council of Social Service Professions



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Numerous cases of sexual harassment in various contexts (mainly among women in the working environment) have been recorded worldwide (McDonald, Backstrom & Dear, 2008; Romito, Ballard & Maton, 2004; Huerta, Cortina, Pange & Torges, 2006; Zake 2001). More recent studies focussing on adolescents found that sexual harassment has become prevalent among younger people, often in schools and among peers, influencing the self-esteem of adolescents. This in turn influenced their body-image, peer relationships, emotional expression and academic achievements (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Ntuli, 2006; Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kliewer & Kilmartin, 2001).

Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lemani and Machakanja (2003) conducted an interdisciplinary study researching the abuse of girls in schools in Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. They found high levels of gender violence which included sexual activity based on sexual harassment. Leach *et al.*, (2003) aimed to raise awareness of this widespread abuse as they explored effective ways of dealing with its impact on the participation of girls in the formal education system. While their study was conducted across different parts of the continent, the findings were very similar to each other and highlighted three key issues: (1) the extent to which abusive behaviour feeds on poverty and ignorance; (2) the ambivalent attitude of some parents, teachers, and girls themselves to gender violence in the school; (3) the problems of male students in the classroom.

South African studies during the last decade on unwanted sexual behaviour of adolescents in schools, found that sexual violence, (in the form of sexual harassment, sexual intimidation,

sexual assault and rape) is prevalent in schools, and is being perpetrated by male adolescents, and to a degree, by male educators (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Hafejee, 2006; Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2001). Girls have described various forms of unwelcome sexual behaviour by their male peers and have reported that some form of sexual harassment usually precedes sexual violence (HRW, 2001).

In the Western Cape, few health studies exist which specifically address the issues of sexual harassment among adolescents, as they focus primarily on the relationship between risk-taking behaviour and HIV/AIDS (Wild, Flischer, Bhana & Lombard, 2003; Flischer, Ziervogel, Chalton, Leger & Robertson, 1996). Mpiana (2010), however, conducted a qualitative study of sexual violence, which included sexual harassment among adolescent girls in the school context, in the Western Cape. This study found that while sexual harassment was prevalent, it was not named as such and was often glossed over as trivial.

Medical practitioners in London, (Berman, McKenna, Arnold, Taylor & MacQuarrie, 2000) investigated sexual harassment and found it to be one of the most insidious, yet pervasive forms of everyday violence that affects all girls, not only those thought to be vulnerable or at risk. A growing number of girls are experiencing various forms of sexual harassment, which now begins at an early age.

Sexual harassment among primary school learners was found to be widespread in a study by Murnen and Smolek (2000). They noted that the majority of children (both boys and girls) in their sample of Grade 3 to Grade 5 learners had equally experienced sexual harassment and that each gender perceived sexual harassment differently. Boys were more likely to think that the victim would be flattered by the behaviour, whereas girls were more likely to think that

the victim would be frightened by the behaviour. Murnen and Smolek (2000) recommended that further research be done regarding sexual harassment among younger children. A point of consideration in this study is that sexual harassment does not seem to be restricted to girls; boys are also affected.

Hand and Sanchez (2000) concur that both boys and girls experience sexual harassment, but girls experience more negative consequences than boys, as well as a far greater frequency and severity of sexual harassment. These findings concur with that of Fineran, Bennet and Sacco (2003) who looked at the role of gender and power in sexual harassment among students aged 16 to 18 years, from a social work perspective. Their results indicated that although both boys and girls experienced sexual violations, girls in particular were seen as being more at risk within a school environment that was described as “hostile”. Shute, Owens and Slee (2008) who conducted a study from the viewpoint of education and psychology, noted that it is commonplace that adolescent boys sexually harass adolescent girls within schools. Whether the victimization was identified as bullying or aggression, it was almost entirely sexualised. Subsequently, Shut *et al.*, (2008) coined the phrase “sexual bullying.” Houston and Hwang (2005) concurred that when considering sexual experiences within high schools, there is an under-perception of sexual harassment in that reports are perceived as objective experiences rather than sexual harassment. These perceptions were reported mainly by those who appeared to have an overprotective mother, or who observed less positive behaviour and interaction between their parents, or who experienced unwanted sexual contact during childhood.

Leach and Sitaram (2007) explored the experiences of adolescent schoolgirls in Karnataka State, South India, with regard to sexual harassment from an education perspective. They found that sexual matters, particularly in relation to children, are largely not spoken about in

South Asia, and this matter was found to be a hidden aspect of schooling which presents further hindrances to these girls achieving academically. The reluctance of patriarchal societies to address the abuse and related issues, suggested further research as a matter of urgency.

Timmerman (2005) conducted a quantitative survey among students in their 4th year of secondary education and emphasizes that a safe school climate is not sufficient for students to report sexual harassment, and that an atmosphere where sexual matters can be freely discussed would be preferable for disclosure and reporting. This author further advises that if there were a safe environment for girls to openly share their experiences of sexual harassment, it would increase their awareness in this regard. The girls would then develop strategies for dealing with it, and this would eventually contribute to the decrease in incidences of sexual harassment. She adds that perceptions of students' loci of control would become more internal after the intervention and the girls would likely feel they had more control over their lives and bodies. Three years later, Martin (2008) found that when girls had a safe environment in which to share, they seemed to have an internal locus of control, and reporting of sexual harassment increased. During the semester following the intervention, referrals for sexual harassment within the school were reduced by one third, thereby indicating that participants' perceptions of their levels of control over their lives had increased over time.

In Gauteng, South Africa, Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga and Bradshaw (2002) conducted a quantitative study of women who had been raped. They found that a significantly high number of women under the age of 15 years were being raped. Their findings concluded that child rape was becoming more common and they recommended that a qualitative research study of sexual harassment be done in schools in Africa.

Most of the worldwide studies with regard to sexual issues among adolescents were of a quantitative nature, measuring the impact and frequency of the offence (Shute *et al.*, 2008; Fineran *et al.*, 2003; Murnen & Smolek, 2000; Hand & Sanchez, 2000). These studies confirm that sexual violations among adolescents are extensive, and extend across gender and the full range of adolescent ages. Sexual harassment is considered as common and is being experienced by both boys and girls.

During a six-month period in 2008, one counselling centre of Lifeline/Childline Western Cape received four reported cases of adolescent girls who had been allegedly ‘sexually assaulted’ by male peers at their respective schools (Lifeline/Childline Monthly Statistics, 2008). It emerged during counselling, that the alleged sexual assaults had been preceded by a number of sexual harassment incidents over a period of time. The adolescent girls later disclosed that they were unaware of their rights regarding sexual harassment and abuse, and of the procedures required to report the behaviour. They each reported these cases only after the situation of sexual harassment had progressed to sexual assault. They were left feeling angry, humiliated and confused.

The researcher’s own investigation is a response to the latter incidences and the findings that sexual harassment is extensive in schools in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2010; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Hafejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006; HRW, 2001). This study responds to the call to do a qualitative research study from a social work perspective in a school environment.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted using qualitative research and a social work practitioner framework drawing on phenomenology which is concerned with the person's lived experience and seeks to understand the essence or predominant underlying meaning of the experience (Langridge, 2007; Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology is a philosophy as well as a research approach that focuses on exploring the meanings of lived experiences as described by the people who experienced the event themselves (Flood, 2010).

Pascal (2010) defines phenomenology as a qualitative research method that seeks to describe particular phenomena as lived experiences. It is through accessing lived experiences that researchers can gain understanding of the meanings and perceptions of another person's world. Pascal (2010) adds that Heidegger's phenomenology, particularly, considers the social and historical context of individual existence, and adopts a structural, rather than personal perspective. This structural concept has implications for structural social work as it highlights developmental contexts, reminding social workers of the developmental unfolding of life.

Phenomenology was used in this study both as a theoretical framework and as an analytic tool as the researcher attempted to understand the perceptions, perspectives and understandings that adolescents described with regard to their experiences of sexual harassment.

1.3 Definition of key concepts

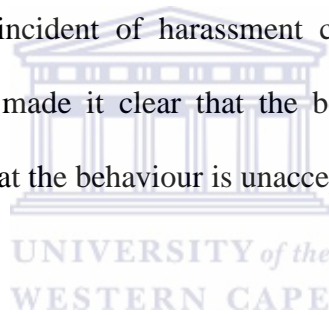
1.3.1 Adolescent:

An adolescent is a person who is going through the transition from childhood to adulthood. Louw and Louw (2007) describe adolescence as a growth process toward adulthood. It is a

stage of development and includes transition in terms of physical, sexual, cognitive and socio-emotional transformations that begins at puberty and ends with the assumption of adult roles (Louw & Louw, 2007; Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003; Owens, 2002). Adolescent theorists differ slightly with regard to the exact age of an adolescent but it is generally viewed as being between the ages of 10 and 19.

1.3.2 Sexual harassment:

Sexual harassment can be broadly defined as unwanted sexual behaviour or attention. The Western Cape education department (WCED), in its policy document '*Abuse No More*' (2001) defines sexual harassment as "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature" (p 9) and emphasizes that even a single incident of harassment can constitute sexual harassment, particularly if the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is considered offensive, and/or if the perpetrator knows that the behaviour is unacceptable.



1.3.3 Sexual violence:

Sexual violence is any violence of a sexual nature and includes sexual harassment, sexual intimidation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape (Wilson, 2008).

1.3.4 Psychosexual development:

Psychosexual development of adolescents refers to the way in which they define their bodies and think about their sexuality when they experience physical changes of puberty. During this time, as adolescents become more aware of their sexuality, they discover their sexual orientation and are often confused and worried about the changes taking place in their bodies (Papalia, Wendkos & Feldman, 2008; Van Dyk, 2008). Adolescents develop a sexual identity and experience a rise in sexual interest. The extent to which they engage in sexual

behaviour and other aspects of sexual development depends on what is acceptable in the society in which they live. This includes religious values, cultural values, gender norms and attitudes of their parents and peers (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2010).

1.3.5 Adolescent identity:

The term “identity” as it relates to adolescents gives reference to Erikson’s adolescent stage of development when adolescents are dealing with the challenge of achieving ego identity and avoiding role confusion. It is a time when adolescents ask difficult questions about themselves in an effort to make sense of issues of character, social identity and own values and ideals (Louw & Louw, 2007; Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003; Owens, 2002).



1.3.6 Gender:

The term “gender” refers to a person’s sense of self as a male or a female (Zucker & Bradley, 1995, cited by Chrisler & McCreary, 2010) within the context of society. Gender serves as a social identity whereby the individual identifies with a social category such as boy or girl and is able to relate to others in that social category (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010).

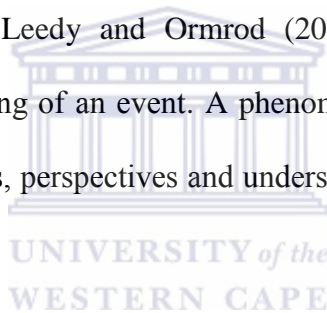
Connell (2009) points out that “gender” is not simply biological differences, but is a social structure which is multi-dimensional in that it is not only about identity, or only about work, or only about sexuality; but all of these things at once. Gender is, therefore, produced socially and not biologically.

1.3.7 Culture:

Culture is a system of beliefs, values, languages and behaviours that vary from one group to another and can have a powerful impact on adolescent development (Chen & Farruggia, 2002). Culture and its defining features create in adolescence a sense of belonging and determines how they will define themselves and how they will be defined by others (Smidt, 2006).

1.3.8 Phenomenology:

Phenomenology is a philosophy and a qualitative research method which seeks to gain a deeper understanding of an experience as explained by the person who experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) define phenomenology as a person's perception of the meaning of an event. A phenomenological study is an attempt to understand a person's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation or event.



1.3.9 Experience:

A phenomenological study tries to answer the question: "What is it like to experience such-and-such?" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Creswell (2007) states that the experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning.

1.3.10 Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA):

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an analytic tool used within the phenomenological research method to discover personal meanings that people ascribe to their experiences, as perceived and reconstructed by them (Lemon & Taylor, 1997 in Tsartsara &

Johnson, 2002). Fade (2004) adds that IPA takes into account the insider's perspective of the lived experience but also acknowledges that of the researcher.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

There is much literature on sexual abuse and sexual violence among adolescents within the school environment in various disciplines, both nationally and internationally. Social work literature on the lived experiences of adolescents regarding sexual harassment in the school environment in the Western Cape, South Africa, is limited. Being informed by the theory of phenomenology, which explores the lived experience of a phenomenon, the focus of the current study was guided by the over-arching research question: "What are adolescents' experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment in the Western Cape?" Further clarity and exploration of issues such as everyday life, thoughts, feelings and meaning-making was sought by probing deeper within the context of this one question. The aim of this study was to understand the essence of adolescents' experiences and perceptions of sexual harassment in the school environment, from the perspective of the people who have experienced the phenomenon.

The objectives of the study were to gain a deeper understanding as to the manner in which sexual harassment is experienced by adolescents and how these adolescents respond to the experiences in a school environment.

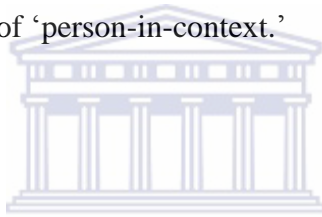
1.5 Research methodology

The qualitative research method of phenomenology was selected as appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to generate qualitative data from adolescents regarding their lived

experiences of sexual harassment. As a social work practitioner, this helped the researcher to understand the phenomenon of being an adolescent who has experienced sexual harassment.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with nine females and one male, between the ages of 15 and 17, from two selected schools in the city of Cape Town in the Western Cape during the third school term in 2010.

Data analysis was guided by the theory of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and this process was underpinned by Heidegger's concept of 'Being-in-the-World' which takes into account the historical contexts of the individual describing the phenomenon, and is in line with the social work concept of 'person-in-context.'



1.6 Reflexivity

Whittaker (2009) quotes Payne and Payne (2004) as defining reflexivity as the practice of researchers having a self-awareness of their own beliefs, values and attitudes, their personal effects on the setting they are studying, and being critical about their research methods. This constant reviewing of the process of study is known to ensure high standards of research.

The researcher was constantly aware of the sensitivity of the phenomena and conscious of not becoming emotionally involved, and was aware that any personal attitude toward the participant should be that of respect, acceptance and of being non-judgmental. The researcher kept a personal journal to record any feelings, thoughts, observations, fears, anticipations and expectations throughout the research process. This, together with regular reflective debriefing with her supervisors assisted her in ensuring that she did not influence the data.

1.7 Significance of the study

South Africa currently has an estimated population of more than 50 million people, of which almost 10 million are youth, between the ages 10 and 19 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Almost 6 million youth, i.e. 70% of South African youth are enrolled at secondary schools (Medical research council (MRC), 2008).

Research shows that sexual violence and sexual harassment among adolescents in schools in South Africa is not uncommon (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Ntuli, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006; HRW, 2001) and that little intervention has been implemented to combat this situation (Ntabong, 2011; Ntuli, 2010; Hafejee, 2006). This has created a school environment that is unsafe for boys and girls and has infringed on the rights of children to respect and dignity (Children's Act 38, 2005; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Studies have been conducted in South Africa and more specifically in the Western Cape on various aspects of adolescents and their sexuality and risk-taking behaviour. None of these studies were conducted from a social work research approach.

The intention of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of sexual harassment experiences in schools and to, thereby, provide more information to the field of social work and other helping professions in the specific area of social protection and prevention services to adolescents. Relevant service providers can then respond appropriately in an integrated manner in dealing with the problem and in being proactive with awareness and prevention programmes, and management of the phenomenon. Adolescents in our cities will then, with improved knowledge and information, be empowered to deal with the issues of sexual harassment, which they will then better understand.

1.7.1 Being-in-the-World: Historical context of family and community of the target population

In keeping with the process of interpretative analysis within the framework of phenomenology, whereby the environment and world of the participant cannot be ignored (Pascal, 2010), the socio-historical context of the schooling population was explored in an effort to give meaning to the descriptions of the lived experiences of sexual harassment as told by the participants.

The participants of this study, including the greater population of the study live in low socio-economic areas on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape. Family structures on the Cape Flats often include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings and parents. These large families mostly occupy small township houses, and backyard wooden houses or shacks, so that privacy is very limited (Oldfield, 2000).

Sylvester (2010) adds that in many instances fathers and other male relatives are absent, either in prison or somewhere unknown, and children grow up in female-headed households run by either the mother or grandmother. Social issues of gangsterism, substance abuse, drug abuse and domestic violence add to the strife on the Cape Flats (Leoschut & Burton, 2006), and law officials and social workers engage constantly in these areas to ensure a relative measure of peace and child protection.

Children and adolescents who grow up in poverty amid social problems without a father-figure face many challenges in their development (Sylvester, 2010). Dobson (2002, cited by Sylvester, 2010) states that a strong male role model who can provide guidance and love to boys at puberty can help these boys through this challenging stage of development when they

will establish a sense of belonging and determine how they will define themselves and be defined by others (Smidt, 2006). Boys with an absent strong father-figure are likely to be violent and get into trouble (Biddulp, 2004 cited by Sylvester, 2010) which can lead to serious social and adolescent behavioural problems (Stacy, 1993 cited by Sylvester, 2010). The school environment provides a playground where this behaviour is often manifested.

Women on the Cape Flats play an important role in caring for the family, yet for years have been marginalised (Van Schalkwyk, 1997) and subjected to male-female power discrepancies which manifest themselves in regular acts of domestic violence (Ford-Gilboe, Varcoe, Wuest & Merritt-Gray in Humphreys & Campbell, 2011). At a briefing by the South African Police Services (SAPS) on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (1998), held in June 2011, statistics for the financial year 2009/2010 show that 197 877 women in South Africa were victims of crime, 18.2% of which were for sexual assault, 47.6% for common assault and 31.4% for grievous bodily harm. In the Western Cape, crimes of violence against women had increased by 12.5%. Dr De Kock, head of Crime Statistics and Research Division of the South African Police Service (SAPS), confirmed that women were often in some kind of relationship, and common assault was recurrent in domestic relationships.

Fouten (2006) found that violence is a common way of dealing with interpersonal conflict in informal urban areas among young males on the Cape Flats as it is one way of demonstrating power.

It is in this socio-historical context that the data is interpreted and discussed in an effort to better understand the perceptions and meanings of the phenomena of sexual harassment, as described by adolescents who had experienced it.

1.8 Outline of the study

Chapter 1 has provided a brief introduction and rationale for the study. Chapter 2 gives a more detailed description of adolescents and their development. Chapter 3 explains sexual harassment and provides a review of literature pertaining to sexual harassment of adolescent boys and girls. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research method of phenomenology and how it was applied in the study, and includes reflexivity and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the results of the study. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the study and recommendations for future research.

The following is the proposed chapter outline for the final research report:

Chapter 1: Introduction

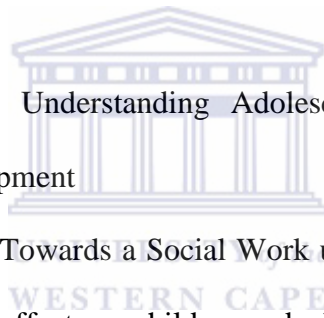
Chapter 2: Literature review. Understanding Adolescence: Review of Theories and Adolescent development

Chapter 3: Literature review. Towards a Social Work understanding: Sexual harassment, legislation and the effects on children and adolescents

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 5: Findings and discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations



CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENCE: REVIEW OF THEORIES AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

The current study aimed to explore the lived experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school context. This chapter explains the theoretical framework which justifies the aim of the study and which guides the research method, namely, phenomenology. This chapter also provides an overview of literature that gives insight into some relevant theories of human development relating to adolescents, their behaviour and identity formation. The significance and impact of gender, psychosexual development and cultural values are investigated from a perspective of adolescent development with the aim of providing understanding of adolescents in the social context. The objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of adolescents' lived experiences and perceptions of sexual harassment, and is presented within a social work context.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with human existence and experience and the way in which phenomena are revealed in consciousness and lived experiences (Terre' Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). It focuses on how one might come to understand what the individuals' experiences in the world are like, and provides a rich source of ideas as to how lived experiences can be examined and understood (Creswell, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010).

Donalek (2004) points out that ontologically, phenomenologists commonly believe that “Perception is original awareness of the appearance of phenomena in experience. It is defined as access to truth, the foundation of all knowledge. Perception gives one access to experience of the world as it is given prior to any analysis of it. Phenomenology recognises that meanings are given in perception and modified in analysis...” (Boyd, 2001 in Donalek, 2004)

According to Flood (2010) the epistemology of phenomenology focuses on revealing meaning instead of arguing a point or developing an abstract theory. Van Manen (1997) in Flood (2010) offers two types of meaning: (1) cognitive meaning that is concerned with the designative, informal, conceptual and expository aspects of a text, which is the semantic and linguistic meaning that makes social understanding possible, and (2) non-cognitive meaning of the text such as the evocative, expressive, transcendent and poetic elements, which result in the phenomenological information that enriches our understanding of everyday life.

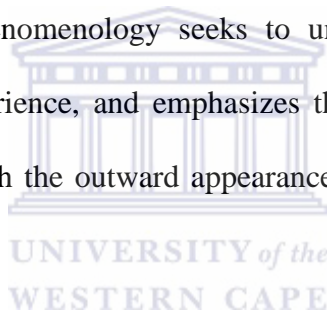
Together, both cognitive and non-cognitive meanings may be experienced as an epiphany or transformative effect, where one experiences an instinctive grasp of what is in the written text (van Manen, 1997 in Flood, 2010).

Phenomenology is broad and has historically branched into various schools of thought. The current study is based on Heidegger’s phenomenology which was developed from that of Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology.

2.2.1 Husserl's phenomenology

Phenomenology was initiated by the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), in the 20th century. According to Husserl, the conscious lived experience of phenomena was explored, as perceived in everyday life (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl was interested in finding a way in which an individual might come to know their own experience within a particular phenomenon in such a way that would allow them to identify the essence of that experience. He was concerned with understanding the individual's life world (*lebenswelt*) and famously declared that the way to knowledge was “back to the things themselves” (*Su den Sachen*) (Smith *et al.*, 2010), i.e. back to the experiences of everyday life.

Creswell (2007) states that phenomenology seeks to understand the *essence* or central underlying meaning of the experience, and emphasizes the *intentionality of consciousness* whereby experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning.



An important aspect of Husserl's phenomenology was 'bracketing' or the *Epoche*, a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain (Moustakas, 1994), i.e. keeping a distance from one's own subjectivity. Valle (1998) explained the *Epoche* as “an attempt to put into abeyance one's assumptions about the matter being studied.” Valle added that this is an important step as it means being conscious of not applying one's own judgments of the experiences and thereby causing biases regarding various preconceptions, desires, wishes, values, motives and other influences (Valle, 1998). Researchers do not describe something in terms of what is already known or presumed to be known, but rather in terms of the exact way in which it is presented. This process corresponds with Husserl's claim of “Back to the things themselves!” (Valle, 1998)

2.2.2 Heidegger's phenomenology

Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), a German philosopher, worked alongside Husserl, and felt differently in this regard. He challenged the assumption that the researcher could, and should, separate knowledge from experience. He claimed that a person, as a Being-in-the-World, could not be separated from the world, as meaning is co-developed through our shared humanness and life experiences (Pascal, 2010; Flood, 2010).

Heidegger agreed that there is an awareness of consciousness and that consciousness gives meaning to experiences, but he added that man cannot give meaning to experiences apart from the world because man's being (*Sein*) is only experienced as being in the world. Man is not separated or isolated from his own subjectivity but is there (*da*) where things are, in the midst of (*bei*) the things that make up the world. His being is then a *being there, Dasein*, and this is the name by which Heidegger chooses to identify the human being (McCall, 1983). He, therefore, believed that it was not possible to bracket experiences, but rather, through reflection, we could become aware of our assumptions. Furthermore, to bracket our experiences would mean that we must shed our experiences and thereby lose our capacity to understand through shared experience and meaning (Pascal, 2010; Flood, 2010).

Heidegger asserted that humans are so absorbed and involved in their world, to the extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked with social, cultural and socio-economic contexts (Leonard, 1999, in Flood, 2010; Eatough & Smith, 2008). Heidegger claimed that in order to understand the lived experience of individuals, the account or text must be objectified so that understanding becomes the moment when 'life understands itself' (Dilthey, 1976 in Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Heidegger's phenomenology has many parallels to the practice of social work and for that reason was considered as being an appropriate research approach in gaining a deeper understanding of experiences of sexual harassment.

2.2.3 Phenomenology within a social work context

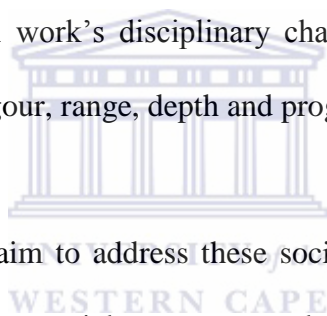
Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology emphasizes that truth cannot be established by separating oneself from what is known; he refers to this inseparability from the world as 'Being-in-the-World' (*Dasein*) and claims that a person could, therefore, not be separated from the world and that it is impossible to bracket experiences. We should rather, through reflection, become aware of our assumptions so that we do not lose our capacity to understand through shared experiences and meaning (Cohn, 2002; Heidegger, 1996, 2001; Guignin, 1999, as cited by Pascal, 2010).

Pascal (2010), a social work researcher, explored the adoption of Heidegger's phenomenology in relation to social work. She found that Heidegger's central concerns are humanistic, locating the individual in the context of their life-worlds, which Pascal agrees are constantly changing, and which have much in common with social work. She concurs that this approach allows for reflection and understanding through shared experiences and meaning which is very much in keeping with the social work concept of person-in-context, and the systems theories more broadly (Pascal, 2010). The fundamental notion of systems theories refers to behaviour of people being understood within the systems in which they live (Slife & Williams, 1995).

The International Federation of Social Workers, (IFSW, 2000) defines social work as a profession that promotes the social well-being of all people, and takes into consideration

relationships, empowerment and liberation. It adds that social work interventions are guided by theories of human behaviour and social systems, and are applied at a place “where people interact with their environments.” Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex situations *between people and their environments*, and recognizes the value of relationships which make up the social context of people’s lives. Social work draws on the concept of person-in-context, which corresponds with Heidegger’s concept of ‘Being-in-the world.’

Shaw and Gould (2001:3) state that ultimately research in social work should contribute to the development and evaluation of social work practice and services; enhance social work’s moral purpose; strengthen social work’s disciplinary character and location; and promote social work inquiry marked by rigour, range, depth and progression.



The current research study will aim to address these social work research expectations by focusing on a phenomenon within a social context, namely experiences of sexual harassment among adolescents within a school environment. The qualitative research method of phenomenology corresponds to these expectations by seeking to capture a more holistic view of the adolescents’ human experience, with an emphasis on the meaning that social behaviour has for the individual (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae, Wright & Hoffman, 2010).

In light of the above, The researcher feels justified in applying Heidegger’s interpretive phenomenology, and hope to take into account the life world of the participants and not only to describe but also to interpret their stories. The researcher has chosen phenomenology because it allows the researcher to access lived experiences and to gain understanding of the meanings and perceptions of another person’s world (Pascal, 2010), which is very similar to

the social work concept of people-in-context; in order to better understand the lived experiences described by participants, and in line with phenomenology, historical context must be taken into account. The participants in the current study were adolescents, which require the consideration of adolescent development and theories of development.

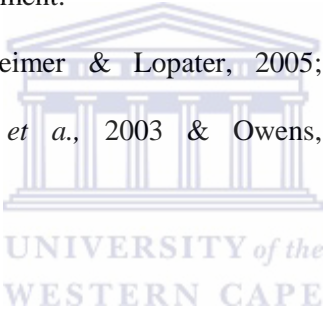
2.3 Theoretical approaches to human development

Theories of development describe the development of human beings based on a particular viewpoint of humankind (Louw, Van Eede & Louw, 1998). Each theory provides a significant influence on our view of human development (Owens, 2002) and offers an understanding to individuals in planning their lives and coping with problems (Owens, 2002; Louw *et al.*, 1998).

Being interested in the development of adolescents and their challenges with social problems such as sexual harassment, I have chosen to use Erikson's Psychosocial Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Marcia's Identity Status Theory to support adolescent behaviour as it applies to this study. The mentioned theories of development and experiences of adolescents are relevant to this study as they give clarity to the challenges which overwhelm adolescents as they move through a transition period from childhood into adulthood and still attempt to be 'normal.' The theories provide guidance in respect of adolescent issues of identity formation, value systems and sexuality in the light of social and cultural contexts and will be considered throughout this study as they will influence the way in which adolescents respond to the issues of sexuality and, in this case, sexual harassment.

Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory, Bandura’s Social Learning Theory and Marcia’s Identity Status Theory are briefly presented in Table 2.1 in order to provide an overview of the theories and the way that they links with the current study.

Table 2.1 Some Theoretical Approaches that link to this study

Theoretical approach	Description of theoretical approach	Link to current study
<p>Psychosocial Theory – Erik Erikson</p>	<p>Psychosocial theory emphasizes the impact of the social environment on human growth and development. (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer <i>et a.</i>, 2003 & Owens, 2002).</p> 	<p>Adolescents are faced with development challenges. Their social environment determines how they will respond to a social issue such as sexual harassment and how this will affect their identity formation.</p>
<p>Social Learning Theory Albert Bandura</p>	<p>We learn by watching others and by noticing the consequences they experience because of their actions. (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer <i>et al.</i>, 2003; Owens 2002).</p>	<p>Adolescent behaviour is often established through observing the behaviour of others. If social behaviour such as sexual harassment is observed and admired, it will be imitated. If not, it will be discarded.</p>
<p>Identity Status – James Marcia</p>	<p>Adolescent development is determined by the degree to which the adolescent has explored and committed to an identity in a variety of life spheres such as</p>	<p>When faced with a crisis like being sexually harassed, the adolescents’ choices and values are reevaluated and a commitment is made as to how to respond; this could be to</p>

	vocation, religion, relational choices, etc. (Marcia, 1966).	either report the behaviour and ensure that it stops, or to accept it.
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The information presented in this Table highlights the manner in which adolescents will likely respond to a particular phenomenon in relation to the theoretical approaches.

These theories are further expounded upon with particular reference to understanding adolescent development, behaviour and identity formation as it relates to the study.

2.3.1 Psychosocial theory

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a Danish-German-American psychologist and psychoanalyst who proposed that development occurs over a lifespan as people confront challenges as they age. The way in which people resolve or fail to resolve these challenges at a particular stage may or may not affect the way they will handle challenges later in life. People could change, for better or for worse, at any stage of their development, whenever motivated to do so (Louw & Louw, 2007; Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002; Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000).

Erikson posited that all humans go through eight stages of development from birth to death, and each stage is associated with specific developmental challenges. Psychological development is, therefore, a life-long process. Having problems in development at one stage does not necessarily mean having problems at a later stage. Similarly, positive experiences at one stage does not necessarily determine positive experiences at a later stage (Louw & Louw, 2007; Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002; Gouws *et al.*, 2000). These stages are briefly explained in Table 2.2 below.

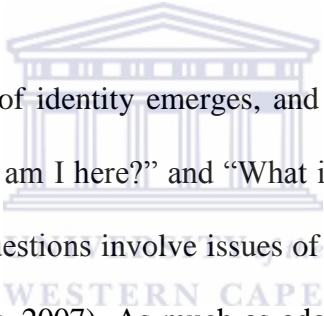
Table 2.2 Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages of Development

Psychosocial Stage	Approximate Ages	Developmental Task
Basic Trust vs. Mistrust	Birth – 1 year	Coming to realise that the world is safe with predictable rewards and pleasures, or unsafe and inattentive.
Autonomy vs. Doubt	1 – 3 years	The child is becoming independent, able to make choices and decisions. Overly restrictive carers could hinder this.
Initiative vs. Guilt	3 – 6 years	The child manifests ambition, and learns about future roles and larger social institutions.
Industry vs. Inferiority	6 – 12 years	The child learns productive work and capacity to finish tasks at home and school.
Identity vs. Identity Confusion	Adolescence	Develops a sense of self. Understands the need for conformity yet has a desire for independence at the same time.
Intimacy vs. Isolation	Young adulthood	Develops the ability to love and work while keeping perspective. Will not change self just to please others.
Generativity vs. Stagnation	Adulthood	Desires to make important family and social contributions as part of life.
Integrity vs. Despair	Old age	To be able to look back on one’s life and be satisfied that one has done well.

Source: (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Louw & Louw, 2007)

The information in this Table illuminates the essential factors that accompany the different stages of development. It shows how the adolescent stage of development is allocated within the overall stages of human development and highlights the implications for this study.

The adolescent stage of development is referred to as “Identity versus Role Confusion.” This stage involves achieving ego identity and avoiding role confusion. It is about getting to know oneself and how one fits into society. When children reach adolescence they often become preoccupied with a new psychological challenge: “Who am I?” indicating the task of acquiring a feeling of identity (Louw & Louw, 2007). These authors cite Erikson, (1968) who states that issues of identity are the central problems at this stage of development.



It is the first time that the issue of identity emerges, and it is often accompanied by other difficult questions such as: “Why am I here?” and “What is my purpose in life?” and “What is the meaning of life?” These questions involve issues of character, social identity and own values and ideals (Louw & Louw, 2007). As much as adolescents may ask these questions, they are not likely to find the answers at this young age.

At this stage, adolescents often have to deal with the conflict of having to be dependent, yet wanting to be independent, and this can make things difficult in the home. Good adult role models and open lines of communication are, therefore, important at this stage. This is often the time when adolescents perceive the need to change some aspect of themselves in order to be liked, loved, or cared for. The issue of sexual identity also becomes a pre-occupation. Issues of sexual orientation, sexual self-confidence and early feelings of love and intimacy are important during this stage (Louw & Louw, 2007; Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002; Gouws *et al.*, 2000).

Erikson's psychosocial theory links with the current study as it gives insight into the relevance of exploring the social environment of the victim and perpetrator of sexual harassment. The theory emphasizes the unique challenges that adolescents face in both of these positions and articulates an understanding of the behaviour, even though the behaviour may not be considered acceptable.

2.3.2 Social learning theory

Albert Bandura (born 1925) is a Canadian-American psychologist who finds that people learn by watching others and by noticing the consequences they experience because of their actions. People, therefore, learn by observing others, as they are wondering and thinking about what others must be thinking and feeling (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Owens, 2002).

Bandura enhanced the concept of *modelling*, where one purposefully tries to behave like someone else. People do this because they would like to experience the same pleasure and enjoyment that they have seen others enjoy as a positive consequence of their actions. Individuals also sometimes unconsciously try to be like someone else: this is called *identification* (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003).

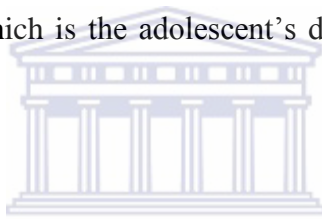
Social learning theory is important for how one learns sex roles in society; by modelling actions after competent role models. By early childhood, this process is usually well under way. Social learning theory emphasizes the family, peer group, and other well-known figures with whom youth identify (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002).

This theory applies to the current study by highlighting the importance of the behaviour of adolescent peers. When unwanted sexual behaviour is observed and admired by peers of the

perpetrators, despite the behaviour being unacceptable, it may nevertheless be imitated. In the same way, reporting the behaviour will likely be imitated if authorities address it in a positive manner which leads to the behaviour being stopped.

2.3.3 Identity status theory

James Marcia (1902–1994), a Canadian developmental psychologist, differs from Erikson regarding the adolescent stage of development. He states that this stage involves choices adolescents make regarding different aspects of their lives, and it is this that formulates identity. He claims that two distinct parts make up the adolescent's identity. These are: a *crisis*, which is a time of upheaval, when the adolescent's values and choices are being re-evaluated, and a *commitment*, which is the adolescent's decision to accept a certain role or value.



Marcia's proposed "Identity Status of psychological identity development" is made up of four identity statuses: (1) *Identity Diffusion*, when the adolescent does not have an awareness of having choices and has made no commitment; (2) *Identity Foreclosure*, when the adolescent has not experienced an identity crisis and is inclined to conform to the expectations of others regarding their future, without having explored their own options; (3) *Identity Moratorium*, when the adolescent experiences a crisis and as a result has to explore various commitments in order to make choices, but has not yet made a commitment to these choices; (4) *Identity Achievement*, when the adolescent has gone through a crisis and has made a commitment to a sense of identity that he or she has chosen (Marcia, 1966).

Marcia (1966) claims that identity involves the adoption of a sexual orientation, a set of values and ideals and a vocational direction. A well-developed identity, therefore, gives

adolescents a sense of their strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A person with a less, well-developed identity is not able to define his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, and does not have a well-articulated sense of self.

This theory is relevant to this study as it gives insight to the situation and possible dilemma in which the adolescent finds him-/her-self in relation to the experience of sexual harassment as a crisis. The adolescent has to re-evaluate choices and values to decide which role or value to accept. It could be that the adolescent will determine to report the behaviour and ensure that it is addressed, or accept it without making any effort to stop it.

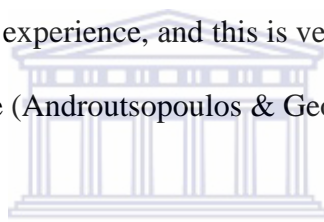
2.3.4 Further thoughts on human development

Skott-Myhre (2008) challenges the idea of youth having a '*core-identity*', as this would mean that behaviours were understood through the narrow confines of an identity comprised of "qualities, habitual responses and predictable psychic structures." He believes that this core identity should not be limited by boundaries of knowledge and experience as it is also guided by clusters of personality types, such as the type A personality, the artistic temperament, the obsessive compulsive, the compliant child, and so on.

Skott-Myhre (2008) is inferring that personality types shape identity formation and should be considered in conjunction with environmental, social and cultural factors. This would mean that adolescents' responses to a phenomenon such as sexual harassment would also be determined by the personality of that adolescent. Personality theories require in-depth discussion which is not covered in this study, other than to consider that Erikson's psychosocial theory includes development of personality as part of identity formation. This concept of personality type also has a place in social learning theory as the adolescent's

decision to imitate a behaviour that has been observed would be based on whether the adolescent admires the behaviour or not, and whether it fits with his or her identity which includes the personality.

Another position regarding identity is described by Androutsopoulos and Georgakapoulou (2003). They posit that identities do not constitute categorical properties and are not fixed, but are rather “emergent within sequential discourse”, particularly through interaction. They add that identity can be reconstructed and reframed, because although young people may share a common age, economic, cultural and social significance are far from common. Concepts such as ‘*adolescence*’ and ‘*teenage years*’ are, therefore, misleading as they suggest a homogenous social and cultural experience, and this is very unlike the richness and range of real-life diversity of young people (Androutsopoulos & Georgakapoulou, 2003).

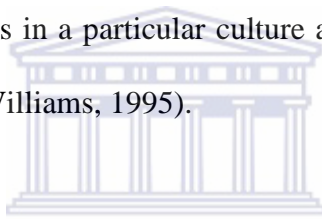


This idea is not unlike the main theories already mentioned as they all acknowledge that social and cultural experiences are unique; that development is a process based on those unique experiences; and that the adolescent stage of development recognizes the rich diversity of young people.

There are many other schools of thought that address theories of adolescent development, including social constructionism and postmodern feminism. Social constructionism is a sociological theory of knowledge which has its roots in phenomenology and which became prominent with Berger and Luckman (1967). Shutz, a social phenomenologist, was instrumental in shaping Berger’s thought about social constructionism, which is concerned with meaning and understanding of elements of human activities. These shared ways of understanding provide structure to what is being understood (Lock & Strong, 2010:21).

Social constructionists believe that local and personal understandings decrease stereotyping and advance a first-hand understanding of perceived social reality and personal meanings. New thoughts and values develop through interaction and discourse in daily life experiences (Gergen & Gergen, 2006 cited by Greene & Kropf, 2009).

One of the central ideas of postmodern feminism is that there are no fundamental abstract truths, laws or principles that concludes what the world is like and what happens in it. Human behaviour is, therefore, not caused by absolute laws or principles that operate independently from human beings themselves (Slife & Williams, 1995). Postmodern feminism articulates an understanding of the behaviour in the world in which the behaviour occurs. It relates to specific issues in a particular culture and society and takes into account actions of other people (Slife & Williams, 1995).

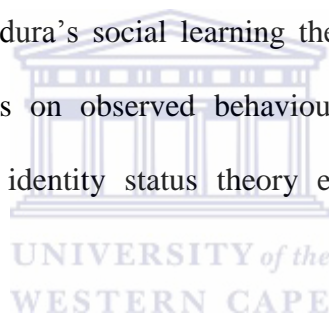


The significance of postmodern feminism and adolescent development is emphasized through the concepts of identity and gender. Identity and gender are formulated through experiences, interaction and language that have relevance to the world (Slife & Williams, 1995). Research into postmodern feminism by Savin-Williams (2005) with contemporary adolescents in the UK suggests that some youth reject cultural categorisation of themselves and their sexuality in terms of their sexual behaviour, identity and orientation (Lloyd, Few & Allen, 2009). Savin-Williams further claims that youth are increasingly redefining, renegotiating and reinterpreting their sexuality so that sexual diversity is becoming normal. These findings suggest that adolescents do not necessarily subscribe to the cultural values with which they were raised, but are negotiating their own identity based on their perceptions of their own values.

These further thoughts on human development relate to Erikson, Bandura and Marcia's theories as adolescents are forming and growing their identity and sexual orientation based on their experiences and interactions; they are re-evaluating their values and choices and are choosing roles and making commitments that define who they are as people. The latter may, however, not be the same as those roles of their parents or significant others with whom they have been raised.

2.3.5 Summary of theoretical approaches relevant to this study

Erikson's psychosocial theory examines the way that human growth and development depends on the relationship between behaviour and the social response toward the individual because of that behaviour. Bandura's social learning theory is an extension of Erikson's psychosocial theory and focuses on observed behaviour and its consequences that are subsequently learned. Marcia's identity status theory explores choices made based on experiences.



Although Marcia disagrees with Erikson's adolescent stage of development, in the researcher's opinion he has merely refined and extended it. His identity status theory focuses on choices that adolescents must make, not entirely unlike the challenges that Erikson states adolescents must face as they consider their place in society. Marcia's theory does, however, provide more explicit elements regarding choices adolescents may make based on their experiences. These are worthy of consideration for social workers as they give further insight into adolescents' thoughts, perceptions and behaviour.

Erikson's and Marcia's respective theories of adolescents' experiences of identity and Bandura's theory of social learning give powerful insight into the individual's psychological

transition into adulthood as the theories cover various perspectives including the important aspect of social context.

In the researcher's opinion environment and social context are crucial in considering identity and development at any life stage, and Erikson's, Bandura's and Marcia's theories are appropriate in this regard. Since these selected theories consider social context, they support the social work theoretical idea of person-in-context, which focuses on the person's interaction with their environment, including relationships with significant others. The social context is forever changing, which means that growth and development are not stagnant, but are in a constant state of flux. It is for this reason that the researcher has not included Freud's psychosexual theory of development. Freud focused primarily on sexual development and claimed that personalities and sexuality were firmly established by the age of 6 years, making it extremely difficult to change in any meaningful way (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005). At the same time it is acknowledged that Freud was among the first explorers of the mind to demonstrate that infant and childhood experiences can profoundly affect later adult thought, feelings and actions (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002). This aspect of Freud's theory ties in with Erikson's and Bandura's theories regarding the relationship between behaviour and social responses to that behaviour.

Erikson's, Bandura's and Marcia's theories illuminate the current study by providing insight into the way adolescents discover their own identity while formulating their own values. These theories address the challenges faced by adolescents as they attempt to steer themselves through this eventful stage of their lives. The manner in which adolescents go through life is influenced by environmental, social and cultural factors and these theories provide rich insight into adolescent behaviour and identity formation.

In summary, the main components of the theories discussed above show that in order to understand the development stages and impact on adolescent behaviour, environmental, social and cultural factors must be considered, with emphasis on experiences and interactions. For the purposes of this study, the researcher has chosen to make use of all three theoretical approaches to adolescent development.

2.4 Definition of adolescence

The term “adolescence” is defined in the South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2000) as “the process of developing from a child into an adult.” The adolescent is, therefore, seen as neither a child nor an adult, but rather in a transition period between childhood and adulthood. The adolescent must move from the secure dependent life in the family home to the independent life in a particular society (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988).

Adolescence is the period of development marked by the onset of puberty and ending once physiological and psychological maturity has been attained (Sigelman, 1999; Reber, 1985). Adolescents become more aware of their sexuality during puberty, and this may play a large role in their interpersonal relationships (Van Dyk, 2008). This is also the stage when adolescents discover their sexual orientation and are often confused and worried about the changes taking place in their body (Papalia *et al.*, 2008; Van Dyk, 2008).

Adolescent theorists differ slightly in the exact age allocation for adolescence, but generally, they agree that adolescence begins at puberty and ends when the individual is independent and self-reliant and begins to fulfil adult roles such as following a career, marrying and starting a family (Gouws, 2000; Louw *et al.*, 1998). The age at which adolescence begins and ends should be considered in terms of individual and cultural differences, and could vary

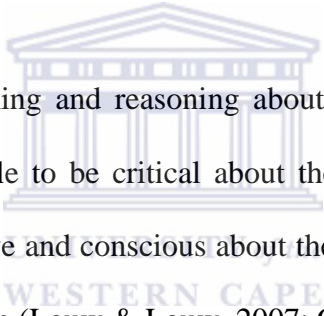
between 11 and 21 years (Louw, 1993). From a psychological perspective, termination of this period can be identified when the individual becomes emotionally independent of his/her parents, is reasonably certain of his/her identity and has developed his/her own identity (Louw, 1993).

The national association of social workers (NASW, 2001) defines adolescence as a time of tremendous opportunity and possibilities, when young people begin to explore their individuality, which is flourishing, and independence and begin to think critically about themselves and the world around them. Interactions with families, communities and the larger social environment are crucial to the ways in which adolescents will navigate the changes and challenges they will face during this stage of development, and will influence their health and well-being.

Adolescence is accepted as a universal phenomenon, and has been viewed as a “problematic life stage”, characterized by “problematic behaviour” (Louw & Louw, 2007). It is a challenging life stage (Geldard & Geldard, 2004) where the individual moves from being dependent to being independent and mature (Geldard & Geldard, 2004; Louw & Louw, 2007). The individual develops physically, cognitively and psychologically, and faces social and moral challenges during this developmental life stage. These challenges influence the adolescent’s ability to deal with problems, including sexual harassment, and to master adolescent life tasks such as developing one’s own identity, preparation of a career, socially acceptable behaviour, gaining knowledge, forming relationships, developing moral understanding and a value system (Louw & Louw, 2007; Gouws *et al.*, 2000).

Geldard & Geldard (2004) differentiate between healthy adolescents and unhealthy adolescents. They note that healthy adolescents are able to master life tasks and to cope with

challenges associated with adolescent development. Houghton and Roche (2001) add that healthy adolescents have a good self-image and are not threatened by shortcomings; have individual, group and family identity; have their own value system; are able to act confidently in high-risk situations; and are able to make decisions that benefit their well-being. Healthy adolescents enjoy a quality of life which is related to physical and mental health, a lifestyle that promotes responsible and socially accepted behaviour, and an environment that includes the support of family and peers to help the adolescent deal with the challenges that accompany the adolescent development stage (Houghton & Roche, 2001). On the other hand, unhealthy adolescents are not able to master life tasks or to cope with challenges associated with adolescence (Geldard & Geldard, 2004).



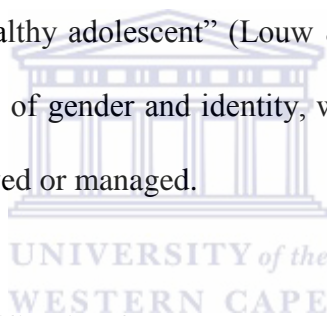
Adolescents are capable of thinking and reasoning about concepts such as love and hate, justice and injustice; they are able to be critical about themselves; to reflect on their own ideas. They are extremely sensitive and conscious about the impression they make on others; and they want to be part of a group (Louw & Louw, 2007; Owens, 2002; Gouws *et al.*, 2000). Adolescents have an intense desire to ‘belong.’ Their social development is characterized by an increasing interest in and involvement with the peer group (Louw *et al.*, 1998). Relations with peers are highly significant for self-concept formation and for self-actualization. Due to their desire to be accepted in their peer group, it becomes very important for them to fit into their group (Louw & Louw, 2007).

Gouws *et al.* (2000) add that adolescents think in complex ways about themselves and other people. Besides being critical and analytical towards themselves and others, they can reason about alternatives, so that they often question instructions and convictions of adults. This could lead to mood swings: from depression and dissatisfaction to joy and happiness.

Adolescents struggle with being self-conscious and shy due to an acute awareness of the imaginary audience resulting in a need for privacy (Louw *et al.*, 1998).

Erikson (1968) emphasizes that adolescents have to confront the conflict of identity versus identity confusion, as part of a healthy process of development that is preceded by earlier development of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry, as discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter.

A social worker who works with adolescents should be aware of the challenges that adolescents face during this stage of development, while constantly allowing and encouraging him/her to be a “typical, but healthy adolescent” (Louw & Louw, 2007). Adolescents face many challenges regarding issues of gender and identity, which can manifest in “unhealthy” behaviour if not effectively resolved or managed.

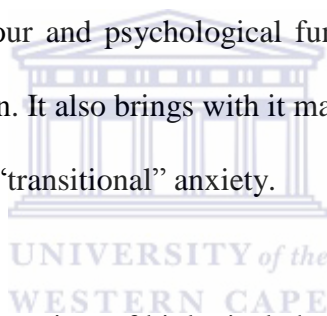


2.4.1 Definition dilemma: justification for a psychology of adolescence

There is disagreement about whether adolescence should be considered a ‘stage’ of development. Ausubel (2002) explains that this thought is based on the premise that as a human being, the adolescent is subject to the same laws of behaviour that govern all human beings, regardless of age. This means that the psychology of perception, emotion, motivation, learning, adjustment and group behaviour can all be explained within the psychological phenomenon of adolescence. Ausubel (2002), however, disputes this argument as being limited because he claims that “the laws of behaviour apply at such a high degree of generality and abstraction that it is inadequate to identity specific behaviour that occurs at any specific age.”

Further justification that legitimises adolescence as a field of specialization is provided by Kagan (1971) cited by Ausubel (2002), who points out that the intense biological changes that occur and the significant social impact of these changes, are a sound basis for claiming adolescence as a stage of development.

Sherif and Cantril (1947) cited by Ausubel (2002) affirm that the rate at which psychological changes occur for adolescents is another criterion for setting apart this period of development for separate study. They explain that this rate of change in adolescents is immeasurably greater than that which occurs in any other developmental stage, including the pre-adolescent years or in the third, fourth and fifth decades of life. This accelerated rate of change results in distinctive adjustment of behaviour and psychological functioning, for example, long-term planning, need for status and so on. It also brings with it many unique problems of adjustment such as emotional instability and “transitional” anxiety.



It must be noted that besides being a time of biological changes, adolescence is a cultural and sociological time period (Ausubel, 2002). Three broad periods of human development are recognized by all cultures, namely; childhood, youth and adulthood. Expected behaviours of individuals at different ages may differ across cultures, but the division itself is universal. This, in itself, points to adolescence as a distinct transitional stage of development.

The main justification for a separate psychology of adolescence is, therefore, that adolescence is a distinct, unique transitional stage of development during which important and unique changes take place in the bio-social status of the adolescent (Ausubel, 2002).

2.5 Significance of gender in adolescent development

An individual's thought about gender facilitates his/her development in gender-related ways. This, in turn, shapes how the individual perceives the environment, and motivates gender-related choices and preferences (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). This means that behaviour and thought about gender constructs are learned through socialization.

Lerner & Steinberg (2009) summarise gender development in adolescents in Table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3 Gender-related constructs

Content	Concepts and beliefs	Identity or self-perception	Preferences	Behavioural enactments
Biological/ categorical sex	Gender awareness, labeling	Personal sense of self as male or female	Wish to be male or female	Display bodily attributes of one's gender (e.g. clothing, hair), transvestism, transsexualism
Activities and interests	Knowledge of gender stereotypes about activities	Self-perception of own interests and activities as it relates to gender	Preference of toys, games, activities	Engage in gender play, activities or occupation
Personal social attributes	Knowledge of gender stereotypes or beliefs about personality / role- appropriate behaviour	Perception of own traits or abilities	Preference of gender-linked attributes	Display gender- type traits (e.g. aggression) and abilities (e.g. Maths)

Social relationships: sex of peers, friends, lovers	Concepts about norms for gender-based relationships	Self-perception of own patterns of relationships based on gender	Preference for social interactions based on gender	Engage in social activities based on gender
Styles and symbols: gestures, speech patterns, body image	Awareness of gender-related symbols	Self-perception of non-verbal stylistic character or body image	Preference for gender-type stylistic or symbolic objects	Manifest gender-type verbal and non-verbal behaviour
Values regarding gender	Knowledge of greater value attached to one sex or gender role than another	Self-perception associated with group identification	In-group/ out-group, biases, prejudices or attitude toward egalitarian roles	In-group / out-group discrimination

Source: Ruble, Martin & Berenbaum, (2006) cited in Lerner & Steinberg, (2009)

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The information presented in this Table show that various aspects of gender awareness and gender roles are significant in the development of the adolescent. Adolescents develop certain beliefs and perceptions regarding their own gender and engage in behaviour that fits with those perceptions. These beliefs and perceptions regarding gender provide insight into the behaviour of adolescents who perpetrate sexual harassment as well as into the responses of those who are victims of sexual harassment.

Lerner and Steinberg (2009) cite early research by Hill and Lynch (1983) which suggests that during the adolescent stage of development there is an increasing separation of development

between boys and girls. Not only is this divergence of development obvious biologically, but also socially and cognitively.

These changes influence the adolescent's self-perception which affects stereotypical activities and interests. Lerner and Steinberg (2009) continue to cite Hill and Lynch (1983) who state that gender differences during adolescence include: internalizing symptoms, (for example, girls have greater anxiety and self-esteem problems than boys); achievement, (being more prevalent in boys than in girls); and social relationships and behaviour, where girls are more oriented toward relationship intimacy than boys, and boys are more inclined to exhibit physical aggression than girls.

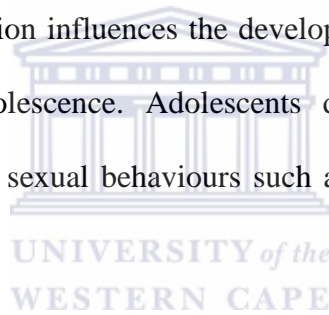
Bandura's social learning theory (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Owens, 2002) emphasizes the concept of modelling whereby children imitate the behaviour of others; this means that boys learn how to behave as boys by observing and imitating the behaviour of other males, and likewise, girls learn how to behave as girls by observing and imitating the behaviour of other females.

At the same time, adolescents grapple with questions such as "Who am I?" as described in Erikson's psychosocial theory of identity. Such uncertainty, along with all the other changes and challenges of that particular life stage can promote conformity to one's gender role. This social expectation and conformity, however, is often more complex for those adolescents who are beginning to think about or question their sexual orientation (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005).

2.6 Adolescence: Sexual development, orientation and influences

Sexual development is a critical part of adolescent development (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2010). At this stage, adolescents develop a sexual identity and experience an increase in sexual interest. The extent to which they engage in sexual behaviour and other aspects of sexual development depends on what is acceptable in the society in which they live. This includes religious values, cultural values, gender norms and attitude of their parents and peers.

The Marshall Cavendish Corporation (2010) emphasizes that society and culture play a huge role in an individual's sexual development. Added to this, the combined effects of physical, psychological and social maturation influences the development of sexuality, sexual interest and sexual identity during adolescence. Adolescents develop an interest in romantic relationships and may engage in sexual behaviours such as masturbation, kissing, touching and sexual intercourse.



Physical changes of puberty can be dramatic and occur rapidly, and the environment plays an important role in motivating, regulating or even extinguishing many behaviours. Adolescents have to deal with socialisation tasks which are very important at this time, and although they will face these challenging tasks throughout their lives, it is as adolescents that they're first encountered and mastered (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005). According to Van Dyk (2008) adolescents become more aware of their sexuality during puberty, and this may play a large role in their interpersonal relationships. Papalia *et al.* (2008) and Van Dyk (2008) agree that during this stage adolescents discover their sexual orientation and are often confused and worried about the changes taking place in their body. Papalia *et al.* (2008) claim that this

confusion and uncertainty explains some of the emotional outbursts and unsafe behaviour of many adolescents.

Sexual identity refers to how a person thinks about and defines himself or herself as a sexual being. During adolescence the individual begins to establish sexual identity and may think about or question his/her sexual orientation (i.e. whether the individual is heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or transsexual) (Perrin, 2002).

Perrin (2002) points out that non-heterosexuality is severely stigmatized in most cultures. Non-heterosexuals usually experience negative judgments and systematic discrimination, which sometimes culminates in sexual violence or *homophobia*. The effects of this phenomenon on adolescents who may have recognized that they may be non-heterosexual are particularly challenging. They will define an image of themselves based on their orientation, and because of the stigma, may damage their self-esteem and sense of belonging. Perrin adds that like other stereotyping, these adolescents will be judged in terms of being a homosexual, and not in terms of the uniqueness that makes up each individual.

2.6.1 Adolescent sexuality: A South African perspective

Adolescent sexuality in South African must be considered in the light of the specific challenges of HIV and AIDS in this country. A study conducted by the Department of Health in 2009 found that an estimated 5.6 million people were living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa in 2009, more than in any other country. It is also believed that in that same year, an estimated 310 000 people died of AIDS-related illnesses. An international AIDS charity, Avert, recorded an estimated prevalence of HIV among pregnant women per province as being Kwazulu Natal (39.5%), Mpumalanga (34.7%), Free State (30.1%), North West (30%),

Northern Cape (17.2%) and Western Cape (16.9%) (<http://www.avert.org/aidssouthafrica.htm> viewed 27 October 2011).

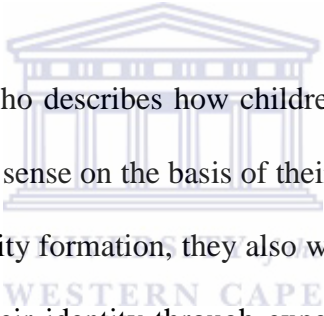
In South Africa, Szabo (2006) points out that sexual maturity in adolescents brings with it some concern as sexual activity seems to be moving in an increasingly permissive direction. This results in an increase of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The second South African national youth risk behaviour survey (YRBS) was conducted in 2008 in schools and found that 38% of youth had engaged in sex, while 13% of youth had had sex before the age of 14.

Szabo (2006) refers to recent studies in South Africa (Richter, Norris & Ginsberg, 2006; Mash, Kareithi & Mash, 2006) which offer important insights into adolescent sexuality. It was found that both parents and health services have failed to provide secure and trusting environments that promote open communication for adolescents. Similar findings were shown in a study among Anglican youth in the Western Cape where 31% of the youth aged 12 to 19 were sexually active. The youth regard their parents as the ones who should provide information about sex and sexuality, although this is not what happens in most cases (Erasmus & Le Roux, 2008). The importance of parental involvement and open avenues of communication are highlighted.

Westheimer and Lopater (2005) concur that the family plays a crucial role in the sexual development of the adolescent. Just as parents have difficulty in accepting their children as sexual beings, so do adolescents have difficulty in accepting their parents as sexual beings, and these issues are seldom discussed openly in the family.

2.7 Impact of culture and cultural values on adolescents

Culture is a system of beliefs, values, languages and behaviours that vary from one group to another and can have powerful effects on adolescent development (Chen & Faruggia, 2002). Culture and its defining features create in adolescence a sense of belonging and determines how they will define themselves and how they will be defined by others (Smidt, 2006). Cultural values and beliefs are often regarded as a way of handing a legacy to adolescents. They are seen as helping adolescents to make sense out of: life and death; meanings of obligations, responsibilities and rights; and through an understanding of these concepts, adolescents will find their place in the world and explore their belonging further (Smidt, 2006).



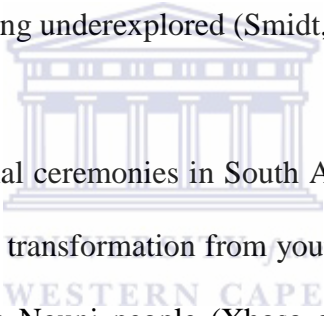
Smidt (2006) cites Hall (1992) who describes how children and adolescents can sometimes be defined by others in a negative sense on the basis of their class, gender, race and language. As adolescents grapple with identity formation, they also work out who they are similar to or different from. They construct their identity through experiences and interactions, and this includes being part of a group of people who share a culture. Hall adds that children who experience minimal images or predominantly negative images of themselves and their group will experience low self-esteem and the process of identity formation will be different.

2.7.1 Cultural values and impact on adolescents in South Africa

In various cultures, the transition period between childhood and adulthood is marked by a 'rite of passage.' For example, in Hindu tradition, *Upanayanam* is the 'coming-of-age' ceremony for males; in Judaism, 12-year-old girls and 13-year-old boys become *Bat* or *Bar Mitzvah*, respectively, and usually have a celebration to mark this coming-of-age; in some

Christian denominations, adolescents receive first communion or confirmation to mark them becoming members of the church in their own right (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2010).

In South Africa, much emphasis is placed on the role of the parents and family to pass on the cultural values and norms. This family socialization is seen as a way of preparing the adolescent for life in society, but has been deeply damaged by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Smidt, 2006). In South Africa, the disease has killed an estimated 310 000 people in 2009 (<http://www.avert.org/aidssouthafrica.htm>, viewed 27 October 2011), leaving child-headed households and many children being reared by their grandparents. Social issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic and poverty can impinge heavily on culture, as it inevitably leads to many traditional family values being underexplored (Smidt, 2006).

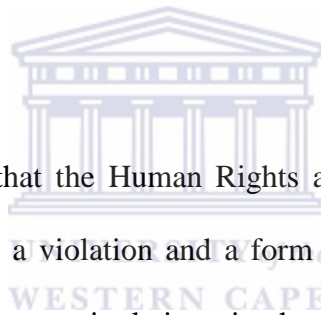


Among the most notable traditional ceremonies in South Africa are those that are associated with marking the formal stages of transformation from youth to adulthood, namely; the ritual circumcision of males among the Nguni people (Xhosa and Zulu) and virginity-testing of females, a ritual most common among the Zulus.

Among the Nguni people, circumcision takes place in the late teenage years. Afolayan (2004) describes this process, as beginning with the potential candidates spending time together in the bush collecting firewood, learning songs, cutting saplings, wearing feather headdresses, painting themselves in ochre, and roaming and ravaging the countryside like a band of raiders. After a period of communal feasting, the elders admonish the boys to put away childish things and to henceforth conduct themselves with dignity as befitting men. The boys are strictly exhorted not to flinch or cry out when the circumcision is performed as this is a

sign of courage. Once the procedure is completed, each boy must call out “*Ndiyindoda!*” (I am a man!) Afolayan (2004).

Virginity-testing is a traditional ceremony performed by the Zulu people and has been the cause of much controversy in recent years (Grinker, Lubkemann & Steiner, 2010). An inspection is done of the adolescent girl’s hymen on the assumption that her hymen can only be torn if she has engaged in sexual intercourse. If the girl is declared a virgin, she honours her family and may participate in the ceremonial dance for the king. If the girl is declared not to be a virgin, she disgraces her family and her father has to pay a fine for “tainting” the community. This girl may be shunned and is in danger of being raped (Women’s Health, 2008).



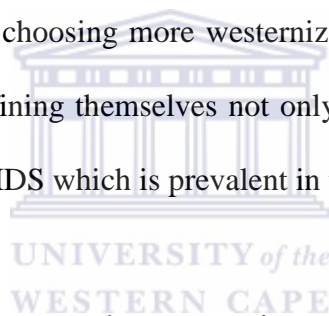
Grinker *et al.* (2010) point out that the Human Rights and Gender Commission of South Africa regard virginity-testing as a violation and a form of violence against women. They claim that the practice is counter to stipulations in the South African constitution which upholds the rights to privacy and bodily integrity and outlaws all forms of gender discrimination (Grinker *et al.*, 2010).

At the same time, representatives of an organization called *Igugu Lama Africa* (Pride of Africa), who perform the virginity testing, claim that the practice is a response to the growing HIV and AIDS pandemic among the Zulu people. By testing the girls they are attempting to delay the start of sexual intercourse and encourage faithfulness to one partner only (Grinker *et al.*, 2010).

Culture and cultural values are, therefore, a significant development factor that influences the experiences of adolescents and relates closely to the way in which they perceive themselves and the world (Papalia *et al.*, 2008).

2.8 Conclusion

Adolescent development is a life stage illuminated by theoretical approaches which give insight into adolescent physical and psychological development. Identity formation is crucial during this life stage and is influenced by the social context which includes cultural values and interactions. Adolescents in South Africa face many challenges as they attempt to construct their identity amid traditional cultural values to which they may not necessarily subscribe. Many adolescents are choosing more westernized cultures that go against that of their up-bringing. They are redefining themselves not only in terms of culture but also with regard to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS which is prevalent in the country.



In light of the focus of this current study on experiences of adolescents regarding sexual harassment in the school context, this chapter has considered the theoretical approaches to adolescent development, the psychology of adolescence, the significance of gender, sexuality and cultural values and their influence on the identity formation of adolescents.

The overview of literature pertaining to adolescent development and theory is relevant as it gives insight into an important aspect of historical context which is appropriate to the approach of phenomenology, which is applied in this study.

The significance and impact of sexual harassment as it pertains to adolescents is explored in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

TOWARDS A SOCIAL WORK UNDERSTANDING: SEXUAL HARASSMENT, LEGISLATION AND THE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses sexual harassment as it is addressed in South African legislation regarding children and adolescents. Characteristics and features of sexual harassment are examined as it applies to adolescents, including definitions, knowledge of the phenomenon, gender issues and ways of dealing with the phenomenon. Sexual harassment is looked at from a social work practitioner perspective.

3.2 South Africa: Legislation and policy development - protection and prevention

The South African Constitution and Bill of Rights (1996) give extensive attention to the rights of all people in South Africa to the right to human dignity, equality and freedom (<http://www.gov.co.za> viewed 19 October 2011). The Children's Act 38 (2005) focuses on children's rights to survival and protection, their rights to developing to their full potential, and their responsibility to make a contribution in helping to build a better world. In the South African context, children up to and including the age of 17 are regarded as minors. Within this policy prescriptions, adolescence as a development stage is considered to have ended at age 17. From age 18, parental consent terminates and the person becomes legible for contractual obligations (Louw & Louw, 2007).

The Children's Act 38 (2005) stipulates that children as young as 12 may give consent to sexual health issues and medical treatment such as HIV testing, contraception and abortion, without their parent's consent or knowledge.

The law regarding age of sexual consent, however, is confusing. The New Sexual Offences Act 32 (2007) states that sex with a minor (person under the age of 18) is a criminal offence and is punishable by law, while at the same time it states that the age of sexual consent is 16.

In South Africa, child protection is regarded as an important preventative field of social service. Legislation and policy content over recent years has been amended to take into account every possible aspect of child protection. The dedication and efforts of advocates for children's rights cannot be ignored. However, effective implementation of these laws remains a challenge, mainly due to lack of capacity. All service providers, practitioners and community workers who work in the children's sector must have a basic understanding of legislation that surrounds children and to ensure that acts or offences against children are prevented and addressed.

The Children's Act 38 (2005) gives effect to the constitutional rights of children, and maintains that children should be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation, and that the best interests of the child must be maintained in every situation. The child is defined as a person under the age of 18, and abuse includes subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

The Children's Bill of Rights (2003) reiterates the rights of children and specifically states, among other things, that children's inherent dignity must be respected. The New Sexual

Offences Act 32 (2007) goes further in stating that any form of sexual violation against children is regarded as a criminal offence.

3.2.1 School education policies that address sexual harassment

The national department of basic education (DBE) states in its guidelines to school governing bodies (South African Schools Act: Guidelines for the consideration of Governing Bodies in adopting a code of conduct, 1998) that all learners have a right to a safe school environment, absent from harassment (Education Department, 1998).

The Western Cape education department (WCED) has a policy document called: “Abuse no more: Dealing effectively with child abuse” (WCED, 2002). The document distinguishes between different types of abuse and prescribes how educators can observe signs and symptoms of the various types of abuse, dealing with disclosures and offenders. On page 9, sexual harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature” as opposed to behaviour which is welcome and mutual. Sexual attention becomes harassment if, firstly, the behaviour is continuous (although a single incident of harassment can constitute sexual harassment); secondly, the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is unwanted and insulting; and thirdly, the perpetrator knows that the behaviour is regarded as unacceptable (WCED, 2002). The document defines unwelcome physical, verbal and non-verbal behaviour that constitutes sexual harassment as well as detailing step-by-step procedures required to manage the disclosure of sexual harassment and all other types of abuse (WCED, 2002).

In 2003, Dr. Kader Asmal (the South African minister of education at the time), initiated the *Girls’ education movement* (GEM) in Parliament. Asmal pronounced that “Girls must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to progress, but they must be supported so that they

can obtain also the necessary confidence and attitudes to command the respect they deserve. Girls must take the lead in determining and securing their own futures, and the future of their schools and communities. There are no second-class citizens in South Africa today” (Accessed 17 September 2011 at <http://education.pwv.gov.za>).

GEM is an education movement which aims to empower students in schools and in communities to engage in strategies to bring about positive change in the lives of girls and boys. The basis of this programme is to combat gender inequality, to promote school safety, and to create child-friendly schools and communities in South Africa. Boys are included as strategic partners and are key to the process of dispelling inequality and violence in schools (Wilson, 2008).

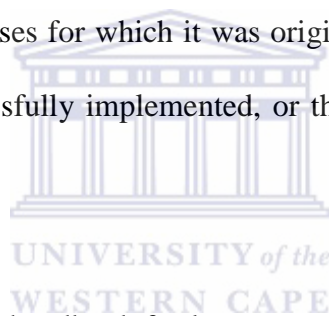
The goals of the programme are:

- (1) To protect the rights of girls and any child at risk of abuse inside and outside the school
- (2) To highlight the importance of girls’ education and to motivate for policies that ensure girls receive equal education opportunities
- (3) To empower girls to participate in decisions regarding their education
- (4) To empower girls to practise their leadership and technical skills
- (5) To create a collaborative partnership between girls, boys, men and women that will promote accessible, high quality education for all in Africa (Wilson, 2008).

This programme is currently functioning in various student-led clubs that address issues such as access to education, clean and safe school environments, equal opportunities in Maths and Science, life skills, leadership development, good communication among peers, and so on. Some clubs have evolved into drama clubs that produce skits relating to matters of education.

Wilson (2008) correctly points out that GEM does not, however, include a specific strategy to address the compelling problem of sexual violence in schools.

In March 2003, when the minister of education was promoting the GEM programme in parliament, he also made reference to publications from the DBE for educators that addressed issues of sexual harassment and gender violence in schools. The minister claimed that these publications would help educators to identify sexual harassment and to deal with it when it is experienced in order to combat the problem of sexual harassment and abuse. However, when the researcher asked two school principals about these publications, and enquired at a WCED office, it was discovered that no one had any knowledge of their existence or any proof that they had been used for the purposes for which it was originally intended. This indicates that possibly the plan was not successfully implemented, or that the publications never reached the schools.

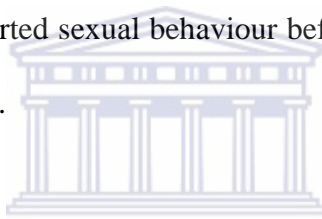


In June 2010, the DBE released a handbook for learners entitled: *“Speak out: a handbook for learners on how to prevent sexual abuse in public schools.”* This handbook is colourful and relevant and raises awareness of sexual harassment and sexual violence perpetrated by educators. It encourages learners to report unwanted sexual behaviour and stipulates clearly that any kind of sexual relationship between a learner and educator is a serious offence and that the offending educator will be fired. The handbook includes a promise from the department to “honour our duty to respect and protect you while you are at school. Likewise we promise you our full support in seeking justice if you have been a victim of sexual abuse.” This handbook is in the process of being distributed to schools in South Africa but, according to a social worker employed at the Western Cape education department, there is no plan regarding its implementation beyond that it will be handed out to the learners (Kemp, 2012).

3.2.2 School health policy: sexuality and high risk behaviour of children and adolescents

Given the initiatives of the national DoE, the national DoH appears to have their own approach to matters that involve potential risk or harm to learners.

The medical research council (MRC) of South Africa was commissioned by the national DoH in South Africa to undertake a Youth Risk Behaviour Assessment Survey in 2002 and again in 2008. This initiative was partly prompted by the youth of South Africa being constantly exposed to risks which promote substance abuse, unprotected sex, unhealthy eating habits and violence. The 2008 findings showed that 38% of learners had sex, (down from the 41% finding in 2002) and 13% had started sexual behaviour before the age of 14, (down from the 14% result in 2002) (MRC, 2008).



The school health policy (SHP) (2003) is the first national health policy with guidelines for South African school-going youth and adolescents. The latter are defined as people aged between 10 and 24 years. The document focuses on decisions and risks taken by adolescents in order to define their adulthood. Related to these are findings of high risk behaviour, with contributing factors being transactional sex, peer pressure, and sexual coercion. The impact of the risk behaviour is unwanted teenage pregnancy, termination of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV infection).

Intervention strategies listed in the document are: creating a safe and supportive environment, providing information, building skills, counselling and access to health services (Policy guidelines for youth and adolescent health, 2003).

Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga, and Bradshaw (2002) found that a significantly high number of women in South Africa, under the age of 15 years, were being raped, mostly by school teachers. Sexual violence and sexual harassment of adolescent girls in schools in South Africa can, therefore, be viewed against a backdrop of violence against women in South Africa. A later study conducted by the UNAIDS (2004), found that 19 to 28% of women in South Africa are victims of physical violence (Haffejee, 2006).

The South African government has recognized that violence is a major social issue in South Africa which poses a threat to safety in schools (Haffejee, 2006; Jewkes *et al.*, 2002; HRW, 2001). The education policy-makers claim that they are committed to ending sexual violence in schools (HRW, 2001) which explains the publication of the 2010 handbooks for learners.

3.3 Sexual harassment

Harassment is explicitly mentioned in the national school education policy and sexual harassment is clearly defined in the Western Cape education policy: “Abuse no more: Dealing effectively with child abuse” (2002). A more in-depth look is required to unravel and understand this phenomenon.

3.3.1 Definition of sexual harassment

The United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women (2008) include the following in its definition of sexual harassment: “*Unwelcome* behaviour is the critical word. Unwelcome does not mean ‘involuntary.’ A victim may consent or agree to certain conduct and actively participate in it even though it is offensive and objectionable. Therefore, sexual conduct is unwelcome whenever the person subjected to it considers it unwelcome.

Table 3.1 below provides descriptions of sexual harassment as contained in the definition under discussion.

Table 3.1 Sexual harassment includes many diverse descriptions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted pressure for sexual favors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted sexual looks or gestures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted letters, telephone calls, or materials of a sexual nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted pressure for dates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring to an adult as a girl, hunk, doll, babe, honey, or any other derogatory term.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistling at someone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat calls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning work discussions to sexual topics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual innuendos or stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking about sexual fantasies, preferences, or history.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal questions about social or sexual life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy, or looks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing sounds, howling, and smacking lips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling lies or spreading rumours about a person's personal sex life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neck massage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching an employee's clothing, hair, or body.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving personal gifts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanging around a person.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hugging, kissing, patting, or stroking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching or rubbing oneself sexually around another person.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing close or brushing up against a person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking a person up and down (elevator eyes).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staring at someone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexually suggestive signals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facial expressions, winking, throwing kisses, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sexual gestures with hands or through body movements

or licking lips.	
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Source: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2008)

The DBE published a handbook for learners regarding sexual harassment and abuse by educators, entitled: “*Speak out: A handbook for learners on how to prevent sexual abuse in public schools.*” This handbook is being distributed to schools for handing out to learners. It defines sexual harassment as follows (Page 4):

“You are being sexually harassed if someone: talks to you about sex when you don’t want them to; touches, pinches or grabs parts of your body you don’t want touched; sends you sexual notes, SMSs or pictures, writes rude graffiti about you or spreads sexual rumours about you; makes sexual comments or jokes, calls you rude names like ‘bitch’, ‘moffie’, ‘slut’, etc.; demands sex in return for a bribe, like higher marks.”

The definition of sexual harassment provided by WCED is comprehensive and is internationally accepted as set out in the Code of good practice on the handling of sexual harassment (Government Gazette, 17 July 1998). The WCED, in its policy document “*Abuse No More: Dealing effectively with child abuse*” (2002) defines sexual harassment as “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature” (p 9) and emphasizes that even a single incident of harassment can constitute sexual harassment, particularly if the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is considered offensive, and/or if the perpetrator knows that the behaviour is unacceptable. It clarifies that sexual harassment “may include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct” (p 10) and that *quid pro quo* sexual harassment (sexual blackmail) occurs when an employee or another learner influences or attempts to influence a learner’s

academic results, leadership position, standing at the school or sporting achievements in exchange for sexual favours (WCED, 2002).

These explicit definitions of sexual harassment, particularly those found in policies and publications of the WCED and DBE respectively, indicate that there is a regional and national policy and awareness of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the school environment, which has to be further addressed. Research findings in South Africa and in the Western Cape, however, indicate that the phenomenon remains prevalent, yet under-researched in schools (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006).

3.3.1.1 Sexual harassment defined as sexual violence

The world health organization (WHO) (2002) defines sexual violence as being any coerced sexual acts or attempted sexual acts, or unwanted sexual comments or advances against a person's sexuality in any setting or context. It, therefore, includes rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, and physical and verbal sexual harassment.

WHO reports that many studies in sub-Saharan Africa show that the first sexual experience of girls is often unwanted and forced. They refer to a specific study done at an ante-natal clinic in Cape Town, South Africa, where the findings indicated that almost 32% of the girls had been forced into their sexual initiation (WHO, 2002). In their report, WHO encourages further research around this phenomenon which has been associated with a number of mental health and behavioural problems in adolescence and adulthood.

The center for disease control and prevention (CDC) (2012) defines sexual violence similarly to that of the WHO in that it is any sexual act perpetrated against someone's will. They add that sexual violence can be identified as four types: (1) a completed sex act, which would be rape, (2) an attempted but not completed sex act, which would be attempted rape or sexual assault, (3) abusive sexual contact, being intentional touching of a sexual nature, whether directly or over the clothing, and (4) non-contact sexual abuse, which could be voyeurism, verbal sexual harassment or threats of sexual harassment.

From the definitions above, it is clear that sexual violence encompasses sexual harassment and sexual harassment can, therefore, be defined as an act of sexual violence.

3.3.2 Prevalence: sexual harassment in the school environment: a global perspective

Numerous studies have been done to quantify the phenomenon of sexual harassment in schools; to determine perceptions and to investigate the outcomes and influences this phenomenon has on adolescents.

Roscoe, Strouse and Goodwin (1994) stated that sexual harassment among adolescents had been a matter of concern and investigation since the mid-1970s. The focus then was on older adolescents and college students. Only since the early 1990s have professionals begun to address the reality that sexual harassment is becoming prevalent among younger adolescents as well. Roscoe *et al.* (1994) noted that in 1992 the U. S. DoE's office for Civil Rights stated:

“Sexual harassment is a real and increasingly visible problem, one that can threaten a student's emotional well-being and impair academic progress.”

This statement has proven to be accurate not only in the United States but worldwide.

A study by Lee, Croninger, Linn and Chen (1996) investigated the frequency, severity and consequences of sexual harassment among adolescents in American secondary schools. They used 1993 survey data from a nationally representative sample of 8 to 11 Grade students, i.e. 13 to 17 year-old adolescents. The findings showed that 83% of girls and 60% of boys receive unwanted sexual attention in school. Social background was found to be unrelated to either the probability or the severity of the harassment. The current study considers social background, or environmental context, in the light of the meaning of the experiences of sexual harassment, and not with regard to probability or severity of the behaviour.

These findings concur with those of McMaster, Connolly, Pepler and Craig (2002) who did a study in a city in Canada where they looked at peer-to-peer sexual harassment in adolescence. They found that sexual harassment was prevalent in high schools and brings with it psychosocial problems for both the victims and the perpetrators.

Leach and Sitaram (2007) found that adolescent schoolgirls in South India experience sexual harassment and abuse. Although the discussion of sexual matters is taboo in South India, adolescent girls revealed that they experience sexual harassment from boys in the school grounds and from boys and older men when they travel to and from school.

In Australia, Shute, Owens and Slee (2008) found that school-based sexual harassment of adolescent girls by adolescent boys appeared to be commonplace. Victimization of girls was an everyday occurrence and was entirely sexual. They concluded that the term “sexual bullying” was an appropriate description for this behaviour.

This same phenomenon was found to occur in Taiwan in a study by Chang, Hayter and Lin (2010). They explored the sexual harassment experiences of young adolescents in an effort to understand how these adolescents felt about sexual harassment and their coping strategies. They found that the adolescents experienced physical and verbal harassment and had a need to cope with the harassment. The aim of the study was to create a guide to school nursing interventions in order to promote sexual health.

In South Africa, the human rights watch report (HRW, 2001) found that rape, assault and sexual harassment were being committed against adolescent girls in schools, by educators and male learners. They found that girls from all levels of societies and from all ethnic groups were affected by sexual violence in schools.

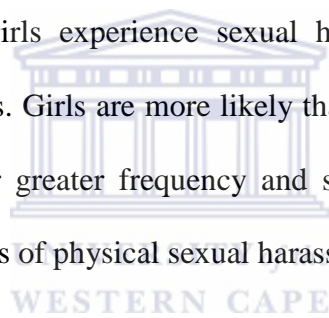
Fineran, Bennet and Sacco (2003) did a comparative study of peer sexual harassment and peer violence among adolescents in Johannesburg (Gauteng, South Africa) and Chicago (USA). They looked at the role of gender and power in the experience, perpetration and reaction to peer sexual harassment and physical and sexual violence among students aged 16 to 18. In both cities they found that both boys and girls experience sexual violations as listed above, and that girls in particular were seen as being at risk to sexual harassment within a school environment that was described as “hostile.” This study preceded and agreed with the findings of a study done three years later by Haffejee.

Haffejee (2006) conducted a study with adolescent girls in nine schools in Gauteng, South Africa, and found that sexual harassment was disturbingly prevalent and that the number of incidences of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls in schools was high. Minimal interventions were in place in either the schools or the communities. More recent

studies of a similar nature among adolescents in schools in the Free State, Gauteng and the Western Cape, South Africa, concur with these findings, and indicate that sexual harassment among adolescents is a phenomenon that continues unabated in South African schools (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006).

3.3.3 Sexual harassment: gender differences

Hand and Sanchez (2000) investigated the gender differences in the experience of and reactions to sexual harassment among adolescents. They looked at differences in behavioural, emotional and educational consequences of sexual harassment and found that a high percentage of both boys and girls experience sexual harassment and that the negative consequences are greater for girls. Girls are more likely than boys to perceive harassment as harmful and to experience a far greater frequency and severity of harassment. Girls are, therefore, more likely to be targets of physical sexual harassment.

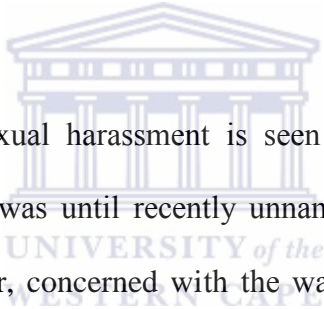


However, in a study with middle and high school adolescents in the USA, Gruber and Fineran (2008) found that girls were bullied or harassed as frequently as boys. Petersen and Hyde (2009) found no gender difference in 15-year-old cross-gender sexual harassment, but that boys received more same-gender harassment than girls. Gruber and Fineran (2008) found that girls were sexually harassed as frequently as boys and had adverse health outcomes.

An earlier study done by Fineran, Bennet and Sacco (2003) looked specifically at gender and power issues of peer sexual harassment within a school environment in two different countries. They found that in both Johannesburg and Chicago, both boys and girls were sexually harassed by peers, but that girls experienced more overt, blatant forms of harassment

than boys. Boys reported perpetrating sexual harassment more than girls. These authors concluded that there was a relationship between power, gender and the perpetration of sexual harassment among adolescent peers in the school environment.

This corresponds with Timmerman's findings (2005) in the Netherlands that both boys and girls experience sexual harassment but that the type of behaviour differed according to gender. Girls experienced more severe forms of unwanted sexual behaviour which was more upsetting to them than to boys, and girls more often felt embarrassed than did boys. Sexual harassment allowed boys to denigrate girls, while boys brush off the behaviour as "only joking" (Arnot & Mac An Ghail, 2006).



According to Bacchi (2001), sexual harassment is seen by feminists as being a 'social problem' which always existed, was until recently unnamed and, therefore, had no social existence. Feminists are, however, concerned with the way the 'problem' is being framed. Bacchi cites Wendy Pollack (1990) who stated that "women have named sexual harassment but have lost control of the content of its definition." Bacchi cites other authors (Bingham, 1994; Brant and Too, 1994; Wise and Stanley, 1987) who suggest that it is time to 'rethink sexual harassment'. Bacchi goes on to expound on the definition of sexual harassment, examining it as sex discrimination, workplace discrimination, unwelcome advances, *sexual harassment*, *sexual harassment* and woman-hating harassment.

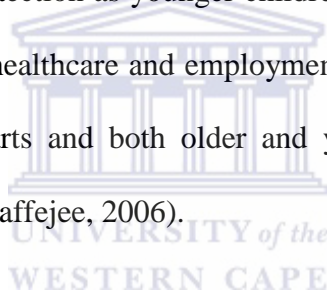
A study on the implementation of policies on sexual harassment at the department of gender studies at the university of the Western Cape, found that sexual harassment falls within the framework of sexual violence and that there remains a lack of recognition that being

gendered as a woman in South Africa carries culturally entrenched vulnerabilities to sexual violence and sexual stigmatization (Bennett, Gouws, Kritzinger, Hames & Tidimane, 2007).

The feminist perspective on sexual harassment is worth deeper consideration and investigation, and is a topic on its own in relation to adolescents and the social work perspective.

3.3.3.1 Sexual harassment and adolescent girls

Adolescent girls occupy the lowest level in the hierarchy of gender-based power relations (Mpiana, 2010; Haffejee, 2006). They are limited by opportunities for self-development and do not solicit the same social protection as younger children. Their subordinate status denies them equal access to education, healthcare and employment and they are more vulnerable to abuse than their male counterparts and both older and younger females (United Nations population fund, 2005, cited by Haffejee, 2006).

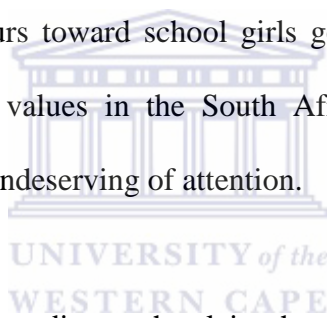


Research studies show that adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence, as approximately 40% of reported rapes in South Africa, between 1996 and 1998, were of girls aged 17 years and under (HRW, 2001). This report highlights girls' vulnerability to rape by teachers and male students in schools in South Africa and in dating relationships. Despite these disturbing findings, and further similar findings in South Africa (Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Haffejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006), sexual harassment and sexual violence against girls remain unchallenged, and they remain a hurdle to equal opportunities for girls in South Africa.

Leach (2006), cited by Jacobs and de Wet (2011) refers to the perceived “acceptance” by women of sexual violence as a consequence of the low social and economic status given to women in many societies. She adds that sexual harassment ...

originates in the imbalance in power between males and females, in the gendered hierarchy of separation of tasks and responsibilities, and in the socially accepted view of what constitutes masculine and feminine behaviour. The school, alongside the family, is a prime site for the construction of gender relations built on socially sanctioned inequalities.

This view is supported by Mabusela (2006) cited by Jacobs and de Wet (2011) who argues that many of the sexist behaviours toward school girls goes without comment or restraint because of gendered normative values in the South African society. This behaviour is, therefore, viewed as natural and undeserving of attention.



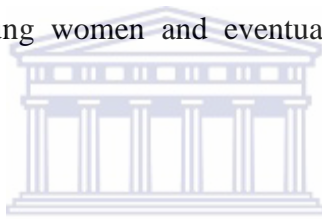
In light of the above, it is difficult to dispute the claim that girls are trained to accept violence and sexual abuse, while boys receive tacit permission for their violent behaviour because they are not interrupted or condemned (Stein, 1993, cited by Mirsky, 2003). In order to eliminate this phenomenon from South African schools, it will have to be addressed on a national level and will require commitment and action from all educational, health and social departments.

3.3.3.2 Adolescent boys as offenders of sexual harassment

WHO (2002) reports that sexual harassment, as part of sexual violence, of women perpetrated by men is found in most countries, in all socio-economic groups and in all age groups. There are numerous factors that contribute to this phenomenon, and they are related to attitudes and beliefs, as well as behaviours that arise from situations linked to abuse.

Psychological factors play a role in that the boys often do not see the negative impact that their actions have on the victims, and rather place the blame with the girls (WHO, 2002). These boys misread the cues given by the girls and have likely not developed the ability to control their inhibitions by suppressing inappropriate actions or behaviour (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005).

Witnessing family violence and having emotionally distant and uncaring fathers are factors linked to aggressive sexual behaviour of young men (WHO, 2002). Adolescents who grow up in strong patriarchal structures will have adversarial attitudes about gender, that hold that females are opponents to be challenged and conquered. These young men are more likely to use sexual coercion against young women and eventually become abusive toward their intimate partners.



The relationship between poverty and sexually aggressive behaviour is linked to a crisis in masculine identity (Bourgois, 1996 in WHO, 2002). Bourgois found, in a study in East Harlem, that young men struggled with the pressure of models of “successful” masculinity and family structure passed down by parents and grandparents, particularly in the light of modern day ideals of material consumption. Trapped in unemployment and poverty, they were unlikely to attain the expectations required for masculine “success”, and the ideals, therefore, had to be reshaped. In this case, the young men turned to social ills of substance abuse, crime and sexual aggression against women, which eventually became normalized (Bourgois, 1996 in WHO, 2002).

The social environment is important in determining to what extent sexual violence by males is tolerated in a community (WHO, 2002). In some communities, particularly in the poor

socio-economic areas, public displays of sexual aggression, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence are commonplace and don't raise much ire. It is in these contexts that reports of rape to the local police are often not taken seriously or attended to with much urgency.

3.3.4 Consequences of peer sexual harassment on adolescents in schools

The journal of women's health (2010) reported that sexual harassment is viewed as sexual violence and that reporting such incidences leads to stigmatization. Reporting often results in discrediting of the survivor's character and testimony. Adolescent girls would, therefore, more often refrain from reporting. The article goes on to state that sexual violence crimes are serious violations against human rights and recommend that victims of sexual violations should receive physical and psychological treatment.

Timmerman (2004) found in the Netherlands that adolescents who experienced unwanted sexual behaviour at school reported more psychosomatic problems and lower self-esteem, including feelings of embarrassment. Girls experienced more symptoms of psychosomatic problems and lower self-esteem than boys.

Ntuli (2006) found that in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, sexual harassment affects adolescent girls negatively in that they lose interest in schoolwork, which leads to poor academic performance. These girls also experience feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, hurt, guilt and fear.

A more recent study in the Free State, South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011) found that adolescent victims of sexual harassment by peers in the school environment experienced

multifaceted negative feelings, for example, “angry and powerless”, “scared and extremely angry”, “embarrassed, ashamed and lost”, etc. Further feelings expressed were that of humiliation, depression and feeling dirty.

Despite this, Mpiana (2010) found that when discussing sexual violence with adolescent girls, some of the girls were ambivalent in that although they said that they abhorred the behaviour, and it brought about negative feelings, they nevertheless tried to justify it. Other girls were clear in their stance that sexual violence is unacceptable.

Peer-to-peer sexual harassment in schools is pervasive and is responsible for a number of health effects such as sleeplessness, low self-esteem and depression, including other negative education and social issues (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Timmerman, 2004; Fineran, 2002). As a behaviour that is learned, the incidence of peer-to-peer, sexual harassment may be reduced through interventions aimed at changing inappropriate and harmful behaviour.

3.3.5 Sexual harassment: intervention and management

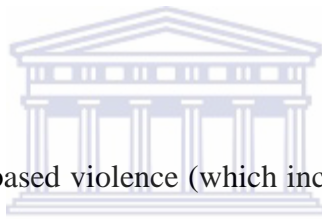
Young and Ashbaker (2008) found that sexual harassment is prevalent in schools in Utah, USA, and maintain that it should not be tolerated by school management. They suggest that a starting point would be to provide relevant information to students, teachers and parents. Thereafter, schools would need to take decisive action by offering positive, proactive behavioural supports, ongoing training and regular discussions as a daily part of the school routine. This would be preferable to relying solely on disciplinary consequences for inappropriate behaviour and language.

Stein (1993), cited by Mirsky (2003) found that student testimonies of sexual harassment provided a profile of harassment behaviours. She suggested that a study of these testimonies could help to lessen sexual harassment in schools, as they provide clarity and meaning from the very recipients of the abuse. She adds that schools should raise awareness of the inequity and injustice of the phenomenon.

This leads to the issue of raising the awareness of sexual harassment and preventing its occurrence in the school environment, which was investigated by Kraus (1996). Kraus found that both students and school staff possessed a poor understanding of what defines sexual harassment. Kraus also noted that the school did not have a policy that addressed sexual harassment. The findings of the study led to recommendations for intervention strategies that began with providing clear definitions of sexual harassment, and adopting a strong policy that prohibits sexual harassment. Here, it must be noted that such clear definitions of sexual harassment were only officially formulated early in the 21st century when it was acknowledged that the phenomenon was real and occurring in the school environment among adolescents.

In order to achieve clear understanding of the phenomenon, and to, thereby, increase reporting of sexual harassment, open discussion must be encouraged (Timmerman, 2004). This author added that a safe school environment was not sufficient for students to speak freely or report unwanted sexual attention. Good sex education classes would provide students with an opportunity to learn, discuss and ask about behaviours that make them feel uncomfortable.

Hoover and Olsen (2009) designed a guide for teachers of young adolescents which aims to helping young people to deal with teasing and harassment at school. The guide looks at how bullying can be stopped and how children can become more resilient in the face of this abuse. It uses the “frames and scripts” approach, which is a method based on social-learning theory, and provides techniques for preventing and countering low-level aggression at school and at home. “Frames” are mental pictures teachers and parents use when helping children understand the complexities of teasing and being teased. “Scripts” are words and phrases teachers and parents use in developing understandable explanations of the behaviour and effective ways to respond to it. Whether these techniques have been successful in reducing the bullying behaviour is as yet untested. Awareness and discussion seem to be the guiding principles of these techniques.



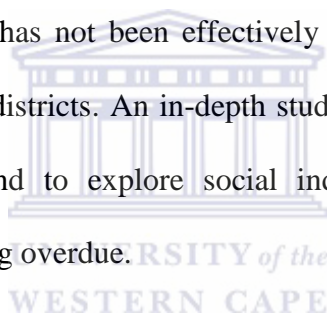
Wilson (2008) looked at gender-based violence (which includes sexual harassment) in South African schools and concluded that addressing issues of sexual violence should incorporate a whole-school approach. School management, educators, learners and the curriculum should be instrumental in ensuring consistency of messages to reinforce non-violent behaviour. At the same time, she acknowledges from her findings that often male educators and male learners are the perpetrators of the violence, and while female learners and educators are the victims, these relational issues cannot be ignored. Addressing the issues of sexual violence in schools should, therefore, begin by dealing with the perpetrators.

Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, Mukoma and Jansen (2009) found that although educators are well placed to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and skills to adolescents, educators are conflicted about HIV and sex education and perceive these programmes as contradicting of their values and beliefs. Ntabong (2011) adds that educators need to seriously consider

their obligation and responsibility toward learners in promoting their safety with regard to sexual violence in schools.

Despite recent findings of the startling realities of sexual harassment and sexual violence in South African schools (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Haffejee, 2006), very few adequate intervention strategies have been put in place by national or provincial governments to effectively address these issues.

The Western Cape has a policy document that was formulated by the WCED that highlights the problem and stipulates procedures for dealing with the problem (WCED, 2002). However, studies conducted in schools in the Western Cape (Wilson, 2008; Haffejee, 2006) show that this policy document has not been effectively implemented, despite widespread training of educators in specific districts. An in-depth study to highlight the problem from a provincial policy perspective and to explore social indicators and policy measures in addressing this gap is perhaps long overdue.



In 2003 the DBE published books that address issues of sexual harassment and gender violence in schools, but it seems that no implementation and intervention programme accompanied the books. A more recent publication from the DBE for learners was released in July 2010. This handbook is relevant, colourful and learner-friendly but again is not accompanied by an implementation intervention plan and is leaving it at risk of being ineffective and inefficient on its own.

3.4 Conclusion

The South African Constitution (1996) stipulates that all people, including children, have a right to human dignity, equality and freedom (<http://gov.co.za>). The Children's Act 38 (2005)

adds that children, (i.e. any person under the age of 18 years), should be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation. Relevant literature which defines sexual harassment and research that investigates sexual harassment in schools indicates that sexual harassment is prevalent among adolescents in schools globally, in Africa and in South Africa. This means that the rights of adolescents, as defined in the South African Constitution (1996), are being violated (Ntabong, 2011; Prinsloo, 2006).

The findings further seem to indicate that school educators, learners and their parents do not have a clear understanding of the phenomenon of peer sexual harassment and learners' rights relating to it (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010). Fennell and Arnot (2008) suggest that safe spaces must be made available where misconceptions regarding gender relations and the phenomena of sexual violence can be challenged. A response from many of the researchers and practitioners to the research findings has been to recommend, establish and implement school policies that address appropriate methods of intervention in schools. These methods focus on the phenomenon of sexual harassment in an effort to raise awareness and to prevent the behaviour and its subsequent effects on adolescents.

In South Africa, however, it would seem that existing school policies that address the phenomenon of sexual harassment, and recommendations from researchers and practitioners regarding intervention strategies are not being adequately addressed or implemented.

The phenomenon of sexual harassment among adolescents in the school environment is explored further in the next two chapters. The methodology used is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses phenomenology and its related methodology from a social work perspective as it was applied to this study. The process of qualitative research, data collection strategy and analysis that commensurate with this approach will be described in an attempt to meet the aim and objectives of this study and to provide an understanding of adolescents' experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment. Discussions include an account of the research design, the site, the sample, and concludes with the attribute of reflexivity.

4.2 Research methodology

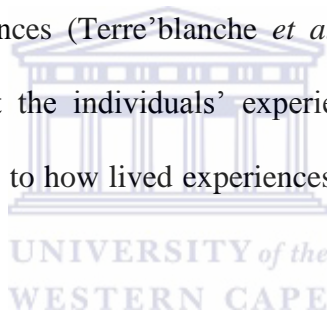
The current study was conducted in a qualitative framework. The Handbook of Social Work Research Methods (Thyer, 2010) defines qualitative research as “firsthand involvement with the social world” where “firsthand” refers to the context of investigation and “involvement” refers to the role of the researcher in the social world being studied.

Qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) cited by Klencke (2008) as follows:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, observation, history, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

Qualitative research methods are, therefore, geared toward obtaining peoples' shared observations and experiences through oral descriptions (Leedy, 1997), and are designed to reveal the respondents' in-depth emotions, thoughts, experiences and perceptions (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

Klencke (2008) adds that the qualitative researcher seeks to capture the richness of people's experiences through illumination, understanding and meaning of data. Qualitative research embraces a diverse range of methodologies, including phenomenology, which was the methodology employed in this study. Phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with human existence and experiences, and the ways in which phenomena are revealed in consciousness and lived experiences (Terre'blanche *et al.*, 2006). It focuses on how one might come to understand what the individuals' experiences in the world are like, and provides a rich source of ideas as to how lived experiences can be examined and understood (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010).



There are a wide range of qualitative methods from which to choose with new theoretical combinations of methods constantly emerging (Pascal, 2010). Qualitative methods of research share key epistemological underpinnings, but there are distinguishing features between key areas of research (Creswell, 2009). For example, ethnography focuses on describing cultural and social groups; narrative and biography focuses on individual life stories; grounded theory focuses on developing theory from the field; action research is participant and social-action driven and feminist theory explores gendered micro and macro experiences (Pascal, 2010).

These few examples provide a hint of the range of contemporary qualitative research methods. In the researcher's opinion, phenomenology is best suited to the current study, as explained in the next paragraph.

4.2.1 Phenomenology as a research method

As well as being a philosophical approach, phenomenology is also a research method, with the primary focus being that the most basic human truths are accessible only through inner subjectivity (Thorne, 1991 cited by Flood, 2010) and that the individual is integral to the environment (Burns & Grove, 1999 cited by Flood, 2010).

The phenomenological approach in research aims to focus on the perceptions that people have of their world and the meanings that they ascribe to these perceptions; and how the world is shaped through conscious acts (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Langridge, 2007). Flood (2010) states that the phenomenological research approach aims at revealing meaning instead of arguing a point or developing an abstract theory.

Heidegger conceptualised Being-in-the-World as a holistic phenomenon (Heidegger, 2002 cited by Pascal, 2010) and can, therefore, be understood as the inter-subjectivity of inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of human relationships (Cohn, 2002 in Pascal, 2010). Pascal (2010) adds that Being-in-the-World encourages research exploration of holistic life experiences, including, where appropriate, that of the researcher. Inter-subjectivity acknowledges values, experience and knowledge which the researcher brings as being unavoidable, but with the capacity to enhance the research relationship. Inter-subjectivity, therefore, creates an interpretive space which focuses on multiple meanings, what is revealed,

what is concealed, and what goes beyond mere description of the phenomena (Watts, 2001 in Pascal, 2010).

Pascal (2010) points out that the lived experience of the everyday world, as revealed through consciousness, is the primary focus of the phenomenological inquiry. The lived experience presents to the individual the many truths and realities of life. Researchers may gain an understanding of the meanings and perceptions of another person's world by accessing these lived experiences, and gaining an understanding of these meanings form the basis for Heidegger's interpretative approach to phenomenology (Pascal, 2010).

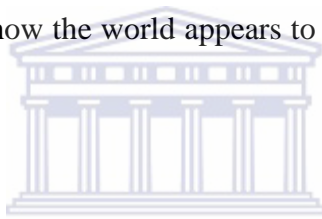
According to Cohen and Omery (1994) cited by Flood (2010) the two main phenomenological approaches are the descriptive approach, which is supported by Husserl, and the interpretative approach, which is supported by Heidegger. In the current study, interpretative phenomenology was utilised where the focus was on the perceptions and experiences of the participants with regard to sexual harassment and the meanings they gave to these perceptions and experiences, which they shared with me in unstructured interviews. Heidegger's phenomenology is, therefore, in part also concerned with that which is latent, or hidden, as it emerges into light.

Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology places the focus on the exploration of the lived experience or the meaning of a human in the world and is underpinned by hermeneutics (Thompson, 1990 cited by Flood, 2010). Hermeneutics goes beyond the descriptions of core concepts, and seeks for meaning embedded in what people experience and not only on what they know (Flood, 2010). Moustakas (1994) adds that the interpreter (researcher) plays an important role in the process of interpretation as she/he has to *understand* the text, not simply

from reading, but through knowledge of the historical context which was produced, and the psychology of the author, i.e. the participant.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) explicitly attends to the hermeneutics (interpretation) as a method of understanding how an experience is given meaning by the individual (Smith *et al.*, 2010; Eatough & Smith, 2008).

As the researcher had to search for the underlying meaning of the experiences and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (Creswell, 2007). The focus was on the lived experience and the aim of the phenomenological research was not merely to study experiences and how the world appears to people, but to ascribe meanings to the perceptions and experiences.



The interpretive phenomenologist will, therefore, focus on interpreting the meanings of the individual 'dasein' and how these meanings influence the choices they make rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real, perceived world in the narratives of the participants (Flood, 2010).

Bradbury-Jones, Irvine and Sambrook (2010) cite Koch (1996) who stated that an interpreter always draws on certain experiences and frames of reference during the act of understanding and these cannot be bracketed. Thus, descriptive phenomenology focuses on the lived world from the viewpoint of a detached observer, while interpretive phenomenology is based on the assumption that separation of the observer from the world cannot be achieved. Within the social work context, to which this study is relevant, interpretative phenomenology is, therefore, appropriate and has been applied.

4.3 Research setting and population

4.3.1 Study site

The study was conducted at two high schools on the Cape Flats in Cape Town in the Western Cape. Both schools are attended by learners from mostly low socio-economic outlying areas on the Cape Flats.

Neuman (2007) points out that researchers should consider three factors in selecting a study site, namely; richness of data, unfamiliarity, and suitability. In this instance, the researcher felt confident that the data would be rich, based on the similarity of these schools to the schools which were attended by the four Childline clients whom she had counselled. These clients had experienced sexual harassment in the school environment and had aroused the researcher's interest in the study in the first place, as discussed in Chapter 1. The researcher was unfamiliar with these particular two schools and would, therefore, be open to observing cultural events and social relations. This researcher found the schools to be suitable as they were easy to reach and she had no conflict issues with anyone on the site (Neuman, 2007).

4.3.2 Access to the study site

Gaining entry to the study site and consulting all the relevant stakeholders, i.e. the school principal, the life orientation educator, and people involved in the study, is an important first step to qualitative research. (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). It is sometimes necessary for a researcher to first approach and engage with gatekeepers before approaching possible participants, as in the case of a school (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2009). Neuman (2007) adds that field researchers need social skills and personal charm to build rapport. The researcher has to present her/himself in a manner that affects trust and rapport, and this process is developed over a period of time.

As the researcher she, therefore, presented herself in an appropriate manner as she attempted to meet with the school principals after permission for the study had been granted by the WCED and the school principals themselves. At each school the researcher was assigned a contact person who co-ordinated the process so that she could address the relevant classes to discuss the phenomenon of sexual harassment and the study, and request voluntary participants who had experienced sexual harassment. Once this was completed, and ethical principles were considered, arrangements were made for a classroom where uninterrupted interviews could take place.

4.4 Population

The target population within the context of a qualitative study specifies the entire set of people or group who will be studied (Bless *et al.*, 2009). In the early stages of planning the current study, the researcher needed to define the target group. The population of the current study consisted of male and female Grade 10 and 11 learners at two high schools on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape. Due to previous incidences of related misconduct at the respective schools, these particular grades were identified as the most appropriate target group for the study. The socio-historical context of the Cape Flats is described earlier in the introduction as a marginalized area that is known for its social issues of gangsterism, domestic violence, gender violence, sexual abuse and substance abuse.

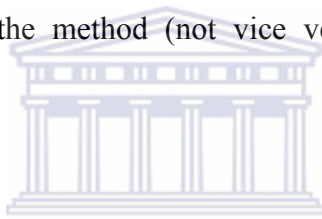
4.4.1 Sampling

According to Bless *et al.* (2009) sampling may be the only practical method of data collection. Patton (2002) states that qualitative research typically focuses in-depth on relatively, small samples which are purposefully selected. The purpose of sampling is to collect cases, events or actions that clarify and deepen understanding. The concern of the

qualitative researcher is to find cases that will enhance what the researcher learns about the processes of social life in a specific context (Neuman, 2007). Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, which falls in line with phenomenology (Patton, 2002).

Purposeful or purposive sampling fits with the phenomenological approach used in this study. The sample was made up of volunteers who met the criteria of having experienced sexual harassment in the school environment, and were taken from Grade 10 and 11 learners at two High schools on the Cape Flats. Groenewald (2004) cites Hycner (1999) who stated that within a phenomenological study:

“the phenomena dictate the method (not vice versa) including even the type of participants.”




As the researcher had chosen purposive sampling, she had to identify the primary participants, based on her judgment and the purpose of the research (Bless *et al.*, 2009; Babbie, 1995), being those who had experiences relating to sexual harassment within the school environment. Creswell (2007) states that within the phenomenological inquiry not more than eight to ten participants are necessary. After meeting with the Grade 10 and Grade 11 learners at the two high schools, it was found that a total of fifteen learners had volunteered to be part of the study; eleven females and four males. I, therefore, decided not to seek out more participants at other schools.

4.4.2 Participants of the study

Before the interviews began, two participants (males) withdrew from the study. As the study progressed, I interviewed thirteen participants, two males and eleven females. One participant

(female) shared a friend’s experience of sexual harassment in the home, and this information was not included in the final data as it was not her lived experience. One participant (male) shared his experience of witnessing sexual harassment being perpetrated regularly against females by certain boys in his class, and because he had not had his own lived experience of sexual harassment, his information was not included in the final data. One participant (male) shared his experience of being a perpetrator of sexual harassment against females at school and his information was not included with the data. Phenomenology requires that the participants should have experienced the phenomenon under investigation first-hand. I eventually used the data of ten participants. The participants are listed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Summary of participants:



Participant Number	Gender	Age	School Grade	Home language
1	Female	16	10	English
2	Female	16	10	Xhosa
3	Female	15	10	English
4	Female	17	11	Afrikaans
5	Female	16	10	Xhosa
6	Female	15	10	English
7	Female	17	10	English
8	Female	17	11	Afrikaans
9	Female	17	11	English
10	Male	17	11	Xhosa

The information in this Table shows that a total of ten adolescents, between the ages of 15 to 17, participated in the study. Nine participants were female and one participant was male.

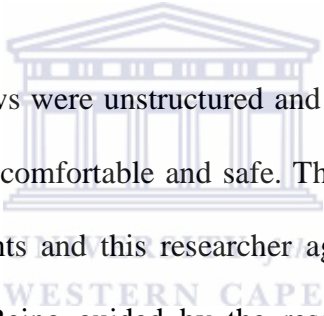
4.5 Data collection

The unstructured interview is the main method of data collection in the phenomenology approach as the participants' descriptions can be explored, illuminated and probed using reflection, clarification, requests for examples and descriptions, and listening techniques (Kvale, 1996; Jasper, 1994, cited by Flood, 2010).

Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people and, therefore, fits well with the qualitative approach to research. It offers an opportunity to get to know people quite intimately, so that the researcher can fully understand how the participants think and feel (Terre'Blanche *et al.*, 2006). The purpose of the interview is not to get answers to questions, nor is it to evaluate a situation, but is rather an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning which they ascribe to that experience (Seidman, 2006).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) cite Tesch (1994) who states that in a phenomenological study, the participant and the researcher work together to "arrive at the heart of the matter." Leedy and Ormrod (2005) add that the unstructured interviews can vary from half an hour to two hours, where the researcher listens closely to the participant who describes his or her everyday experiences that relate to the phenomenon under discussion. The participant must do most of the talking while the researcher must listen and be alert for subtle yet meaningful cues in the participant's expressions, questions and occasional sidetracks. The researcher may have to probe and ask for further clarification to obtain additional, relevant information.

Seidman (2006) suggests that within the phenomenological qualitative research approach, interviewing will pass through three structured stages: firstly, establishing the context of the interviewee's experience whereby the participant explains something about him/herself in light of the topic; secondly, the construction of the experience whereby the participant is asked to reconstruct details of the event; and thirdly, a reflection on the meaning it holds whereby the participants are asked how they make sense of the phenomenon. The researcher attempted to move across these three stages in each interview and found that she was able to establish the context, the participants reconstructed the details of the event, and, in reflecting, the participants were clear about how they felt about the phenomenon and what it meant to them.



In the current study, the interviews were unstructured and conducted in a secure classroom, where the participants could feel comfortable and safe. The interviews were audio recorded with permission of the participants and this researcher again reassured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality. Being guided by the research method of phenomenology required that this author asked each participant the one research question, namely; "What are your experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment?" This was explored and probed further to gain more insight into the descriptions and meanings reflected by the participants. No interview schedule was required or used. The researcher occasionally asked for clarification on words or sequence of events that she did not fully understand.

As the participants related their experiences, they were able to give meaning to their experiences and perceptions. As the researcher, one had to search for the underlying meanings or the essences of their experiences in order to emphasize the intentionality of consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (Creswell, 2007).

The participants were not limited by time constraints and the average time per interview lasted for thirty minutes. An attempt was made to conduct the interviews in an informal, non-threatening manner thereby allowing the participants to share freely and openly. Despite this, some participants appeared anxious and got straight to the point in sharing their account of being sexually harassed, possibly as a result of having to share something intimate and sensitive with a relative stranger. The duration of the interviews supports Creswell's view (1998) that in phenomenological interviews, asking appropriate questions and relying on informants to discuss their experiences and reflect on the meaning it has for them, requires patience and skill on the part of the researcher.

4.6 Data analysis

Data within Heideggerian phenomenology can be analysed using the phenomenological IPA. The IPA method of analysis was used for the interpretation of the research data for the current study and the process was guided by Heidegger's concept of 'Being-in-the-World' (Pascal, 2010).

IPA aims to discover personal meanings that people ascribe to a particular event or phenomenon, as they perceive it and reconstruct it in the telling of that experience (Tsarsara & Johnson, 2002). IPA takes into account the uniqueness of each person's experience as it is influenced by their personal cognitions (Tsarsara & Johnson, 2002). According to Fade (2004), IPA is phenomenological because it seeks to understand the individual's lived experience, and it is interpretative because it acknowledges the researcher's personal beliefs and opinions while emphasizing the view that understanding requires interpretation. IPA recognizes the interpretative role of the researcher in interaction between the researcher and the participant and accepts that environment and context have to be considered as part of this

process (Smith *et al.*, 2010; Flood, 2010). The interpreter (researcher) plays an important role in the process of interpretation as she/he has to *understand* the text, not simply from reading or hearing, but through knowledge of the historical context which was produced, and the psychology of the author, i.e. the participant (Moustakas, 1994).

Smith *et al.* (2010) add that within IPA, the researcher engages in unique techniques and a range of skills, including intuition, so that a detailed, comprehensive and holistic analysis will produce ‘an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself’ (Schleiermacher, 1998 cited by Smith *et al.*, 2010). This allows the researcher to offer meaningful insights that exceed the claims of the participant, but should not be seen as being more ‘true’ than the claims of the participant (Smith *et al.*, 2010).

Existing literature indicates that no single method has been prescribed for IPA but that the focus should be directed toward the participants’ attempts at making sense of their experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008). The process of IPA first requires that the researcher make sense of the participants’ experiences and world by reading the transcripts many times, ensuring that the participants are the focus of analysis (Smith *et al.*, 2010; Langridge, 2007). During this process of reading and re-reading the transcripts, this researcher became immersed in the data and she had an awareness of entering the participants’ worlds. She considered her own observations and notes taken during the period of data collection (Smith *et al.*, 2010).

This author further found that she was able to identify certain ways in which the participants talked about, understood and thought about their experiences of the phenomenon, and she made relevant notes on the transcripts. Smith *et al.* (2010) explains this as the next phase in

the process of interpretation as it produces a comprehensive, detailed set of notes and comments on the data. Comments included that which is important and of concern to the participant, such as relationships, processes, places, events, values, principles and the like, and was closely linked to the participants' explicit meaning (Smith *et al.*, 2010). During this phase it was found that interpretative notes helped to understand why the participant has these particular concerns. Also of consideration was the context in which the concerns were raised (the lived world), as is appropriate within phenomenology. This allowed the researcher to make sense of the patterns of meaning being provided (Smith *et al.*, 2010).

The third level of explanation was more interpretative as this author noted questions which she had asked herself which might or might not lead her back to the data. At times, this involved a shift in focus, and she needed to do some self-reflection and draw on her own experiential and /or professional knowledge (Smith *et al.*, 2010).

Besides the interview transcripts, this researcher now had substantially more data that included exploratory notes and comments as mentioned above. From this, she was able to reorganize the data and develop emergent sub-themes and themes (Smith *et al.*, 2010; Eatough & Smith, 2008). These sub-themes and themes reflected not only the participants' original words, but also the interviewer's interpretation. It is made up of a collaboration of the process of description and interpretation (Smith *et al.*, 2010).

The next phase was to search for connections in the emergent sub-themes (Smith *et al.*, 2010; Eatough & Smith, 2008). This process was not prescriptive but required the drawing together of sub-themes to produce a structure which allowed the most interesting and important

aspects of the participants' accounts, and the discarding of some sub-themes. The resultant product became the key themes that are relevant to the current study.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability are two factors which every researcher should be concerned about when designing a study, analysing results and deciding on the quality of that study (Patton, (2002). De Vos *et al.* (2005) refer to validity and reliability within qualitative research as trustworthiness and cite Lincoln and Guba (1985) who proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and offered it as an alternative to the traditional quantitative oriented criteria. These alternative criteria to judging qualitative research is the trustworthiness that focuses on *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability* (De Vos *et al.*, 2005).



Credibility within a phenomenological study is when the reader can follow how the researcher arrived at his/her interpretations, and not necessarily when there are other like-minded interpretations (Koch, 1994 cited by Klencke, 2008). The current study provides a clear explanation of the way in which the researcher arrived at interpretations of the data. This process is supported by literature and supervision guidance, and can be accessed in Chapter 4: Research Methodology and in Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion.

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005) transferability is present when readers of the study can relate to the findings and are able to 'transfer' the information to another situation. They find congruence between the various texts. Previous studies in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Ntuli, 2006; Hafejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006) support this congruence.

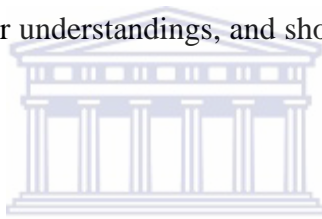
Dependability within a study is met when readers are provided with a detailed summary of assumptions and theory behind the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The current study gives clear indications of the theory of phenomenology and its application to the study.

The criteria of confirmability for the current study were increased through supervision guidance and the linking of findings and interpretations. An audit trail, which added to confirmability, included transcripts, field notes, researcher memos and reflexivity of the researcher (De Vos *et al.*, 2005) which required an acknowledgment of this researcher's role in the inquiry.

Kuiken and Miall (2001) cited by Klencke (2008) introduced a conception of quality made up of distinctiveness, coherence and richness, intended to enhance the quality and precision of phenomenological studies: *Distinctiveness* refers to the extent to which a phenomenon can be discriminated from others. It fosters reliability. The current study is distinctive in that a qualitative study of this nature was never before conducted at either of these schools, and the phenomenon of sexual harassment is clearly identified through in-depth definitions, included in the research study, and which were communicated to the participants in interactive discussions.

Coherence refers to the extent to which judgments about the attribute structure of the phenomenon are congruent. It is said to enhance validity (Kuiken & Miall, 2001 cited by Klencke, 2008). The findings of the current study indicate an understanding of the phenomenon by the participants and the general feelings and opinions expressed were similar, thereby enhancing coherence.

Richness refers to the full differentiation of a phenomenon's attributes, identification of its structure, and the appreciation of phenomenology to address issues that pertain to the extent to which a category of experience is manifest in an experiential narrative (Kuiken & Miall, 2001 cited by Klencke, 2008). The phenomenon of sexual harassment is a sensitive topic and the participants in the current study were given an opportunity to discuss their experiences of the phenomenon in private, anonymously, and in confidence. This researcher was able to probe further in order to gain more in-depth information and to assist the participant to better understand what was being shared. The result was that a richness of data was obtained. The probing ties in with Spiegelberg's statement (1982) cited by Klencke (2008) that the researcher has to maintain a constantly questioning attitude in search for understandings, incomplete understandings, deeper understandings, and should clarify understanding between the researcher and the researched.



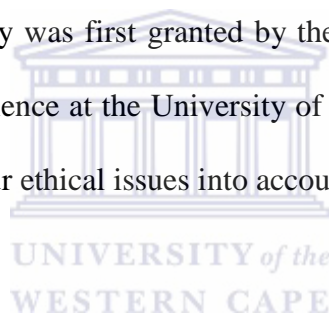
Klencke (2008) cites Wertz (1986) who refers to the reliability of phenomenological research as a multi-perspective view of the phenomenon from which emerges the sameness of meaning even though the fact or content may not be the same. Wertz confirms that for the purpose of validity, phenomenology relies on the coherence of the interpretation of the data. Findings are also valid if they resonate with others who have experienced the phenomenon in question. Findings in the current study indicate that even though the participants had separate experiences of sexual harassment, and were mostly unaware of each others' experiences, the feelings and opinions were similar and there was coherence in the interpretations.

The current study is distinctive in that no such study has been conducted in the two particular schools in the Western Cape. The data provides strong indications of coherence and richness, fostering reliability and validity.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is defined as a set of moral principals as suggested by an individual or a group (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). Ethics of research pertains to the researcher's appropriate behaviour in relation to the participants or those who are affected by the research study (Gray, 2005). It places emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of participants and it is the researcher who is always responsible that these ethical considerations be maintained (Bless *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the researcher, as a social worker, was bound by the code of ethics of the South African Council of Social Service Professions (SACSSP) (1978) as well as by the ethical code of Social Science Research Ethics.

Permission to undertake the study was first granted by the higher degrees committee of the faculty of Community Health Science at the University of the Western Cape. The researcher then had to take the following four ethical issues into account:



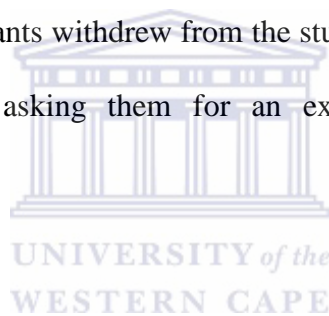
4.8.1 Confidentiality

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005) it is critical that strategies to maintain confidentiality be applied so that no participant is harmed before, during or after the study. Participants have to be assured that no one who is not directly involved in the study will have access to the information provided and that all forms of communication and client records will be protected (Gray, 2005). In order to promote the principles of confidentiality for this study, the transcripts and recordings were kept in a locked cupboard and were only made available to the research supervisors. The names of the participants were not used in the study.

4.8.2 Voluntary participation

No person should be coerced to participate in a research study (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The researcher has to inform the participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and without any repercussions (Gray, 2005). Gray added that when people participate voluntarily they are more likely to be honest in sharing their information.

In the current study, the intention of the study, its purpose and process, were shared with a total of approximately 200 learners from ten classes. Fifteen learners voluntarily indicated their willingness to be part of the study. Three participants were found to not meet the required criteria and two participants withdrew from the study. The researcher respected their decision to withdraw without asking them for an explanation or making them feel uncomfortable or guilty.



4.8.3 Informed consent

The research study and the purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were encouraged to ask questions which the researcher answered to ensure that they were fully informed before making a decision as to whether to participate or not. Bless *et al.* (2009) state that participants have a right to know what the research is about, how it will affect them and the risks and benefits involved. Since the participants were all minors, the researcher had to ensure that the parents/caregivers were given the necessary information about the study, and their permission had to be requested once the learner had volunteered to be a participant in the study. See Appendix 1.

At both schools this researcher was advised that the parents/caregivers seldom attended school meetings and the best way to get information to them would be in writing, as was the normal procedure at the school. The prospective participants were each given two forms that had to be completed and returned to the researcher. One was a consent form that gave details of the study and had to be signed by the parents/caregivers and one was an assent form to be signed by the participants themselves. All the participants returned both forms. See Appendix 2.

4.8.4 Appropriate referral

The researcher should always be aware of the possibility of the participants' wellbeing being compromised as a result of participation in the study and should therefore put processes in place to manage any negative consequences (Bless *et al.*, 2009). Due to the topic of the current study being sensitive and, moreover, could possibly lead to the participant becoming emotionally overwhelmed, the researcher arranged with the social workers at Childline, an NGO that works with children and adolescents who have been sexually abused, to provide appropriate counselling. It was not necessary to make use of this facility for any of the participants as none of them became emotionally overwhelmed or indicated a need for further counselling.

4.9 Reflexivity

Whittaker (2009) cites Payne and Payne (2004) as defining reflexivity as the practice of researchers having a self-awareness of their own beliefs, values and attitudes, their personal effects on the setting they are studying, and being critical about their research methods. This constant reviewing of the process of study can ensure high standards.

This researcher's experience of reflexivity in this study was to keep a journal of personal thoughts, feelings, observations, fears, anticipations and expectations in an effort to constantly review the process of the study. This helped to regularly reflect on every aspect of the study, particularly her identity as a practising social worker in relation to her self-awareness, her own personal biography and how this could possibly influence the study (Creswell, 2009). This researcher, therefore, had to be honest with herself and open to what the participants were sharing without shaping it to suit herself or the study. Furthermore, she had to be prepared to deal not only with any possible emotional outburst by the participant but also her own emotions.

There were times when the researcher felt anger toward the perpetrators but she maintained her professionalism by not becoming emotionally charged. In the process of reflection, the researcher had to remain conscious of the ways in which her questions and her own subjective position might impact on the psychological knowledge in the research study because the role of the researcher is co-producing psychological knowledge either as an insider or an outsider (Langridge, 2007). As the researcher had not personally experienced sexual harassment in the school environment, her role in this context was that of an outsider.

4.9.1 Phenomenological research and role-taking

As a social worker in practice who regularly counsels children that have been sexually abused, this researcher was comfortable and experienced in interviewing adolescents. However, it was sometimes difficult to maintain the skill of the researcher without becoming too empathic and showing understanding and, thereby, using counselling skills. Although none of the participants required an urgent referral for counselling, the researcher's natural instinct as a social work practitioner was to want to help them to deal with the continuing

experience of sexual harassment through counselling. Some of this researcher's responses were, therefore, empathic, but even during the process she would immediately become aware of it and then redirect herself toward probing and seeking clarity as the researcher.

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, this researcher remained aware of the important aspects of phenomenology whereby participants were given the opportunity to share their conscious lived experience as perceived in everyday life (Moustakas, 1994), and the role of the researcher was to seek to understand the essence or central underlying meaning of that experience (Creswell, 2007). The researcher was also constantly aware of Heidegger's phenomenology which affirms that the establishment of truth cannot be separated from what is known (Pascal, 2010). The researcher, therefore, did not attempt to separate the participants' shared experiences of sexual harassment from their real world as 'no one is isolated from their own subjectivity' (Heidegger, as cited by Pascal, 2010). Listening to the participants sharing their experiences of sexual harassment to a relative stranger was both humbling and enriching for this researcher.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter explains the methodological procedure that was involved in the study and how it corroborates with the theory of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a research methodology which falls in the framework of qualitative research. It can be broadly defined as understanding meaning of an event as described by the person who experienced that event (Moustakas, 1994).

Purposive sampling, which fits with the phenomenological approach, was used for this study and the sample was made up of ten volunteers who met the criteria of having experienced sexual harassment in the school environment.

The data was analysed using the IPA and was underpinned by Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the World.

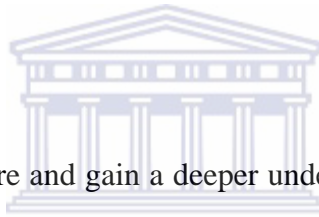
The following two chapters present the findings and discussion of the study and the themes that were identified (Chapter 5); and conclusion and recommendations (Chapter 6).



CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Sexual harassment and sexual violence of adolescents by their peers in the school environment is not uncommon in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Hafejee, 2006; Ntuli, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006; HRW, 2001). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among adolescent girls and occurs in the context of gender violence, unequal power relations and patriarchal values in South African society (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Hafejee, 2006). As explored in Chapter 2, the response from national and regional government education departments to this situation has not been adequate.



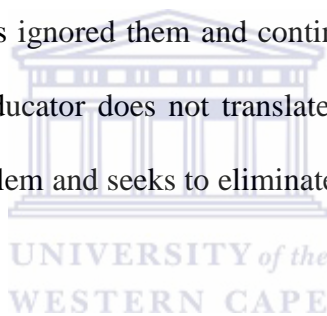
The current study aimed to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school environment. Phenomenology requires an extrapolation of the core essence and meaning of the phenomenon from the perspective of the person experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Purposive sampling was used in order to engage volunteer participants who had experienced the phenomena of sexual harassment, which is also a requirement of phenomenology. Ten participants were interviewed and were each asked the research question: “What are, or were, your experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment?” Further probing and clarity was sought throughout the interview process in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of adolescents’ experiences of the phenomenon.

The data was analysed using the IPA which aims to discover people’s personal accounts of their experiences and to find meaning within these experiences (Tsarsara & Johnson, 2002).

Through this process, which is explained in detail in Chapter 4, this researcher was able to note exploratory comments, sub-themes and then themes.

5.1.1 Structural description of the phenomenon

The structural descriptions and core essence that emerged from the study are briefly explained as follows and are elaborated upon further in this chapter. Nine of the ten participants were girls who all shared their experiences of physical and verbal sexual harassment on a daily basis. The girls strongly disliked the sexual harassment from boys which they experienced as public humiliation and it left them feeling angry and powerless. This powerlessness is based on two factors; firstly, despite their efforts to tell the boys to stop the unwanted behaviour, the boys ignored them and continued the behaviour, and secondly, reporting the behaviour to the educator does not translate into the implementation of a set procedure that addresses the problem and seeks to eliminate it. As participant 4 said: “Telling the teacher doesn’t help.”



The girls were, therefore, left with feelings of ambivalence as on the one hand they wanted the behaviour to stop and on the other hand they didn’t want the added attention of having to make an extra fuss and then be seen as telling on the boys and getting them into trouble.

This chapter presents a description of the findings of this study and the core meaning essence, or key themes of these findings.

5.2 Themes

The following findings presented by four key themes below were identified across all ten interviews, and were gained through the process of IPA, and is explained in Chapter 4. Together they represent the unique experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school environment of the sample of Peninsula schools that the researcher investigated. The themes, sub-themes and exploratory comments are presented in Table 5.1

Table 5.1: Four key themes identified from the study.

	Theme	Sub-themes	Exploratory comments
1.	Boys do not respect girls' sexuality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls are being sexually harassed. • Boys perpetrate sexual harassment. • Sexual harassment occurs frequently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate touching • Attempted rape or sexual assault • Verbal sexual harassment.
2.	Boys demonstrate power over girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'No' does not mean 'no'. • Girls feel helpless to stop the boys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys don't stop when the girls ask them to. • Boys say the girls' like it.
3.	Girls who are sexually harassed at schools are publicly humiliated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaming • Negative feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls feel angry, uncomfortable, humiliated, embarrassed and fearful.
4.	Reporting procedures in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude of educators does 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls want to keep the

	are inadequate.	<p>not encourage reporting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls have no faith in intervention strategies. • Girls seldom report the abuse. • Girls are unsafe in the schools. 	<p>peace; don't want to get the boys into trouble.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls don't want trouble. • Girls try to ignore the behaviour. • Educators don't take immediate action.
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The information in this Table provides insight into the process that led to the identification of the key themes. After gaining an understanding of the text, exploratory comments were noted. These were then described as sub-themes and finally interpreted into key themes. The key themes (see Table 5.1) are discussed below and incorporate all the elements of the sub-themes, in line with the process of IPA. Direct quotations are used to emphasize the findings.

5.2.1 Boys do not respect girls' sexuality

This theme emerged after consideration of the sub-themes which found that girls are being sexually harassed; boys are the perpetrators of sexual harassment; and sexual harassment occurs frequently.

These findings concur in part with earlier studies on gender and violence conducted in schools in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Prinsloo, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; HRW, 2001). The latter showed that sexual harassment as a form of sexual violence is prevalent in schools and is committed mostly against adolescent girls by

their male counterparts and male educators. In the current study, no disclosures were made with regard to sexual harassment being perpetrated by male educators. This aspect was not further explored in this study.

All the girls in the current study disclosed to this author that physical sexual harassment is the type of harassment that was mostly perpetrated against them by certain boys who often “touched” them. They understood “touching” to mean boys touching them on their private parts (breasts, bum, vagina), on the inside of their thigh, under their skirts, pulling up their skirts or pulling down their pants while they (the girls) were sitting in the classroom, sitting outside during the break, or walking up or down the stairs.

The descriptions of “touching” resonates with the WCED’s policy document “*Abuse no more: Dealing effectively with child abuse*” (2002) which partially defines sexual harassment as “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature” and may include unwanted conduct which is physical, verbal or non-verbal .

“Touching” is also clarified in the comprehensive definition of sexual harassment provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2008), which includes “unwanted deliberate touching, kissing, stroking, rubbing against someone.”

The participants were unwavering and specific in their descriptions of their experiences of sexual harassment. They were able to provide numerous examples of how they experience the harassment, and they recognized the significance of the behaviour as being unacceptable and inappropriate. The following are examples given of inappropriate touching:

“He touched my private parts and stuff... and then whenever he sees me he would grab my arm and I would tell him to let go.” (Participant 1)

“Random boys will walk pass and say ‘Ow’ and they will touch your arse... Like they come up behind you and touch your bottom ...” (Participant 2)

“He has touched me under my dress, and that’s when I was very upset because I knew that he would do something more if he had the guts to touch under my dress, and sometimes he’d touch my breasts and I would tell him to stop. He would say it’s like something he needs... I don’t know..., but I told him I’m uncomfortable with it. I’m very uncomfortable.” (Participant 3)

“He touches me on my bum or puts his hand up my skirt.” (Participant 4)

“The one was like standing behind me and wanted to touch me and I was like saying not to touch me and whatever. The one boy that owned the phone that they were watching said ‘let’s make a video of her and whatever.’ The one was pulling me and they were just agreeing, and they pushed me on the floor and the one got on top of me. They were going on with me Miss and I was angry so I called my friend outside and she came in and they wanted to pull her also in so she ran away and whatever, so they closed the door again.” (Participant 6)

“Sometimes when they walk past, they try to pull off your pants...” (Participant 9)

“They’re putting their hand on my leg then putting it under my dress.” (Participant 8)

Three girls described incidences of physical sexual harassment which almost led to rape. These incidences are more aptly referred to as attempted rape or sexual assault, in terms of definitions of sexual harassment provided by CDC (Viewed 2012), the United Nations Entity of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2008), the New Sexual Offences Act (2007) and WHO (2002).

Examples given of attempted rape or sexual assault (physical sexual harassment):

“..he didn’t want to let go, and I told him to let go of me, and he didn’t and he had me, and I knew that he was going to do something to me because that’s what he usually does to me... but I didn’t think that he would go so far, so he put me on a desk and he started ...being sexually, and we were both... we weren’t naked, and he started being sexual and was on top of me and he started to do things, and I was screaming in class and there were people in class who tried to stop him, and then I was trying to get him off but he was stronger than me and taller than me.” (Participant 3)

“...he got me down on the floor, and that’s when it almost led to the rape.” (Participant 1)

“...and they pushed me on the floor and the one got on top of me...” (Participant 6)

The descriptions above show that physical sexual harassment had moved beyond inappropriate touching as boys were becoming bolder in their acts of unwanted sexual behaviour.

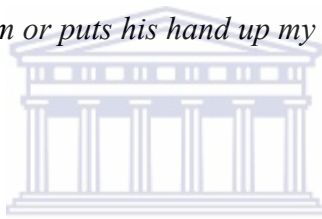
The three girls who described these acts each added that after these particular events they were afraid of the boys, as they realised that the boys might rape them. Up to then, the girls had felt that they could handle the situation but they were shaken by these particular events

and felt that it was just a step away from rape. This raises two issues; firstly, that the sexual harassment is not viewed with the same seriousness as rape, despite the numerous negative feelings that it evokes, and secondly, that adolescent girls do not feel safe within the school environment. The extracts below illuminates the anxiety felt by the girls.

“And I didn’t want to get him into trouble but what happened on Tuesday I thought if I don’t do anything about it, it will become very dangerous because if he could do that, who knows what he could do if we’re alone or something. It could go far....”

(Participant 3)

“He touches me on my bum or puts his hand up my skirt,... and I’m scared of where it will lead.” (Participant 5)



“I was very scared cause I told my mommy that I’m not gonna back to school if it’s gonna go on like this.” (Participant 1)

These acts of attempted rape or sexual assault, which are included as definitions of sexual harassment, are also defined as “sexual violence” (WHO, 2002; CDC, viewed 2012). CDC defines sexual violence as any sexual act, whether completed or not, perpetrated against someone’s will, such as rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, as well as verbal sexual harassment. WHO concurs, adding that sexual violence is a phenomenon that is associated with a number of mental health and behavioural problems in adolescence and adulthood.

While ten participants (nine girls and one boy) described physical harassment, three girls recollected sexual harassment as including unwanted sexual messages on the mobile phone or verbal encounters. Verbal or ‘non-contact’ sexual harassment is included in the definitions of sexual harassment by both the WCED (2002) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2008). Examples provided are “unwanted sexual telephone calls or messages, sexual innuendos or comments etc.”

WHO (2002) and CDC (2012) add that verbal or non-contact sexual harassment is also defined as sexual violence as it may involve psychological intimidation and threats. They must, therefore, be viewed in a serious light.

The girls described verbal sexual harassment as:

“In winter the boys will say ‘I wish you can go home with me and we can do that and that’...” (Participant 4)

“...or they send a text message and say something stupid like ‘I wish you were here with me’...” (Participant 2)

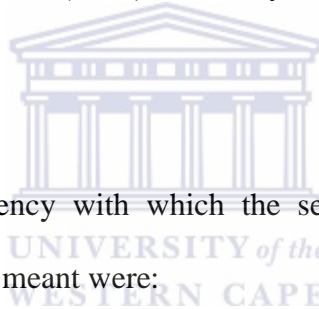
“I was in the class and a bunch of boys were sitting in a group. The teacher went out and we had to do a book discussion, so they came to my group and started touching me and said that I would make a nice prostitute and so on. Some children said they must stop but they didn’t.” (Participant 4)

The girls were aware that comments like these were inappropriate as it held sexual innuendos and it made them feel uncomfortable. Their discomfort was conveyed in their facial

expressions, which were serious and showed distaste and disgust as they described these messages.

Although verbal sexual harassment on its own is not generally viewed as being serious, studies by WHO (2002) and CDC (2012) indicate that it is but part of a bigger social problem that is usually not isolated. However, it brings with it the same feelings of discomfort and distaste as with other forms of sexual harassment and is defined as sexual violence (CDC, 2012; WHO, 2002).

The frequency with which sexual harassment was found to occur is clarified as a sexual offence by WCED's policy document (2002) which says that even a *single* act of harassment constitutes sexual harassment.



Five girls referred to the frequency with which the sexual harassment occurred. Some examples that illustrate what they meant were:

"I don't remember a day that someone doesn't touch me." (Participant 9)

"...something that happens on a daily basis." (Participant 3)

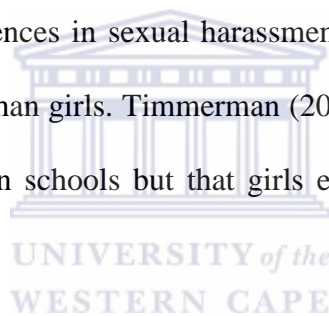
"They're forever touching a person and stuff." (Participant 5)

The girls described this frequency of sexual harassment with contempt. This researcher got the impression that they wanted to express how serious the situation was for them.

The regular occurrence of sexual harassment as experienced by these adolescent school-going girls corroborated the findings of similar studies worldwide (Petersen & Hyde, 2009; Gruber & Fineran, 2008; Shute *et al.*, 2008; Leach & Sitaram, 2007; Timmerman, 2005; McMaster *et*

al., 2002). Shute *et al.* (2008) found that in Australia sexual harassment of adolescent girls by boys in the school environment and victimization of girls was an everyday occurrence. Leach and Sitaram (2007) concur that adolescent schoolgirls in South India experienced sexual harassment on a regular basis from boys in the school.

Global studies thus show that sexual harassment in schools is commonplace, but gender differences with regard to experiences were noted. Some studies found that sexual harassment was perpetrated against both girls and boys, and not only against girls as found in the current study (Petersen & Hyde, 2009; Gruber & Fineran, 2008; Timmerman, 2005; Fineran *et al.*, 2003; Hand & Sanchez, 2000). For example, Petersen and Hyde (2009) found that there were no gender differences in sexual harassment but that boys experienced more same-gender sexual harassment than girls. Timmerman (2005) found that both boys and girls experienced sexual harassment in schools but that girls experienced more severe forms of unwanted sexual behaviour.



The male participant in the current study said that older girls at the school had on one occasion ‘flirted’ with him. He described it as follows: *“Yes Miss, when I started at this school, I came down the stairs and these two girls came to me and they were flirting and what-what-what with me... wanting to kiss and I didn’t really like it because it was embarrassing Miss.....kissing me in my neck and pushing me against the wall.. and it didn’t feel good Miss.”* (Participant 10)

Studies in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010, Wilson, 2008; Haffejee, 2006, Prinsloo, 2006) found that sexual harassment in schools is perpetrated mostly against

girls by boys. Ntabong (2011) and HRW (2001) found that sexual harassment was also perpetrated by male educators.

Although the current study found that sexual harassment is regularly perpetrated by certain boys, five participants said that the behaviour was often repeated by other boys who mimicked the behaviour. This concurs with Bandura's social learning theory which states that individuals learn through social behaviour which they observe from others and find appealing, and they will mimic the behaviour in order to acquire the same desired results (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002).

According to Shute *et al.* (2008), most literature on sexual harassment among adolescents considers the behaviour to be largely perpetrated by males toward females, reflecting culturally entrenched male-female power differentials. They cite Bretherton, Allard & Collins (1994) who suggest that boys are socialized to believe that they have power over females. This approach is further endorsed by Duncan (1999) who found that boy-to-girl bullying can only be understood within the context of culture, and that both bullying and sexual harassment are regarded as abuses of power.

The literature indicates that gender-based socialization of boys is cultivated through social institutions such as family, school, the state, criminal justice system, church and normative institutions that regulate gender relations. A culture of male dominance is prevalent in South Africa and has been passed down through generations (Leach, 2006, in Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mabusela, 2006, in Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Van Vuuren & Jacobson (1997) in Rizzuto, 2010; Fouton, 2006).

This male dominance gives effect to Bandura's social learning theory which posits that social behaviour is learned through observation and modelling, which seems to be very relevant in this case. The boys have been socialized with regard to specific gender behaviour in various cultural contexts including family, school and peer relations (Van Vuuren & Jacobson, 1997, cited by Rizzuto, 2010), which is displayed in their relations with girls at school.

The endorsement of male dominance through patriarchal institutions is further exacerbated by three factors, namely; the increasing incidents of rape in South Africa, the importance that society attaches to male power and aggression, and the economic and political factors that lead to violence (McKendrick & Hoffman, 1990, cited by Rizzuto, 2010).

5.2.2 Boys demonstrate power over girls

This second theme emerged after consideration of the sub-themes which found that "No" does not mean "no", and girls feel helpless to stop the boys.

All the girls said that the boys did not stop the unwanted sexual attention when they were asked to do so by the girls. When girls told the boys to stop the harassment, the boys ignored them and continued the behaviour. The girls confirmed that they did not like it and were often embarrassed and angry at this stage; they said that when they resorted to pleading with the boys to stop, they still did not stop.

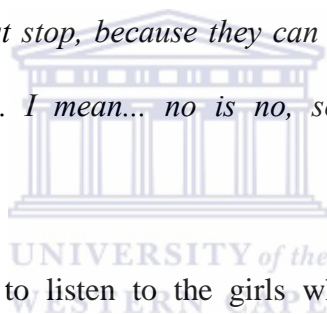
The girls made it clear by their tone of voice and body language that they did not like the harassment, and they seemed exasperated by the situation. Not only did the boys not listen, they told the girls that they knew that they liked it, even though the girls were telling the boys to stop. To the boys, 'no' did not mean 'no.'

“...and you keep on telling them “no” but they don’t listen and they’ll say ‘Oh you do like it,’ whereas you don’t.” (Participant 1)

*“I said I don’t like it...so will you **please** not do this... but he did it again.”*
(participant’s emphasis) (Participant 4)

“ I felt helpless,.... useless,I didn’t know what to do.” (Participant 4)

“Mostly everyday when they’re walking past, and sometimes I will say ‘I don’t like it’ but they just say that I’m enjoying it, and then I’m not even enjoying it. I tell them I don’t like it and they must stop, because they can tell their friends that I’m an easy target. They don’t listen. I mean... no is no, so why can’t they just stop it?”
(Participant 3)



The fact that the boys refused to listen to the girls when asked to stop the unwanted behaviour, concurs with Wilson’s (2008) finding that while speaking with adolescent boys in South African schools about sexual harassment, there was a level of insensitivity, and many boys seemed to regard sexual harassment merely as teasing. Arnot and Mac An Ghail (2006) found that boys brush off the behaviour as “only joking.”

Wilson (2008) added that while there were boys who were insensitive to the girls’ feelings about sexual harassment, there were also some boys who recognized the behaviour as serious and offensive. This indicates a level of awareness among boys as to the inappropriateness of unwanted sexual behaviour on their part, and points to a critical need for education and discussion.

The differences in the levels of awareness of the boys, correlated with identity formation advocated by Erikson's adolescent stage of development and Marcia's identity status. The boys have been faced with a situation that requires re-evaluation of their values. They are faced with role choices to which they must commit. In these choices they can decide to ignore the seriousness of the phenomena of sexual harassment and continue to indulge in it, or they can choose to accept that the behaviour is inappropriate and to abstain from it. Erikson and Marcia's theories both allow opportunity for the adolescent to reflect and to make a choice, and the choices made will be influenced by the social and cultural history of each individual (Westheimer & Lopater, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Owens, 2002).

Further to the boys' disregard of the girls' pleas to stop the behaviour, several authors state that most boys engage in sexual harassment against girls or comply with it (Arnot & Mac An Ghail, 2006). Males subscribe to the traditional and patriarchal views of male power and superiority, traditional gender roles, and the view that violence is an acceptable way of dealing with conflict, as it is a way of keeping women in a position of subservience. In this way, the male's sense of superiority is maintained by his act of power over women (Arnot & Mac An Ghail, 2006).

These traditional gender roles were confirmed by young males in a recent study on the Cape Flats (Fouton, 2006). The young males confirmed their masculinity by viewing themselves as breadwinners of their households, taking responsibility for the needs of their families and having to make important decisions that affect their families (Fouton, 2006). The boys in the current study who perpetrated sexual harassment also lived on the Cape Flats. Their attitudes regarding male superiority and traditional gender roles appear to match their behaviour of power and control over the girls (WHO, 2002; Fouton, 2006).

Wilson (2008) draws our attention to contextual and cultural issues that determine the social arena in sub-Saharan African countries. She points out that school-related violence in developing countries can be viewed in the context of inequality and certain cultural beliefs and attitudes regarding gender roles, particularly with regard to male and female sexuality, economic inequality, and in some instances, political unrest and violence. Understanding this context, gives insight into the health and education implications and the consequences of sexual violence in schools (Wellesley Center for Research on Women as cited by Wilson, 2008).

WHO (2002) found that the perpetration of sexual violence by young men is related to attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that can be linked to a number of factors, including early childhood environment, psychological factors, poverty and their social environment.

Responses from female participants in the current study reflected a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, fear and resignation because they were not being heard. Their sense of resignation is disturbing and reminiscent of behaviour that adolescent girls witness in their homes when women are continuously subjected to domestic violence (Humphreys & Campbell, 2010). Gender relational problems experienced by men and women on the Cape Flats seem to be repeated in a similar sense to boys and girls in schools.

This apparent powerlessness by the girls of the unwanted sexual behaviour and their resignation toward it is given meaning when considered in relation to the participant's world, where gendered violence and women abuse is witnessed, and Bandura's social learning theory, which supports learning through observation and modelling. Domestic violence is

often not vigorously contested and women frequently remain with the abuser or return to him after a short period (Humphreys & Campbell, 2010). This general powerlessness and helplessness appears as learned or socialized behaviour by the girls.

Haffejee (2006) in this regard, refers to a study done in 2000 (CIETAfrica, 2000) where female participants expressed the same sentiments of “helplessness”, and asked for a forum where issues of sexual harassment and sexual violence could be discussed. Six years after the study, there was still no response to their pleas. Haffejee asks how young women could be persuaded to assert their rights and respect their bodies when no one else seems to respect their rights or hear their voices? (Haffejee, 2006).

The girls in the current study were helpless to stop the boys. Their earnestness as they described this aspect of the sexual harassment seemed to this researcher to be a request for help, and she I wondered whether they hoped that by sharing the experience they might bring about an awareness of the offence to the authorities, which would lead to some form of intervention to deal with the unwanted behaviour, without being compromised.

5.2.3 Girls who are sexually harassed at schools are publicly humiliated

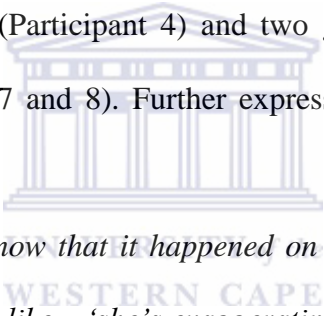
This third theme emerged after consideration of the sub-themes which found that girls who were sexually harassed felt shamed and experienced negative feelings as a result of the behaviour.

Adolescent girls who are sexually harassed at school did not like it and this made them feel angry, humiliated, frustrated, embarrassed and fearful. All the girls who shared their

experiences confirmed that they disliked the unwanted sexual behaviour and it made them angry. Some included feelings of frustration, humiliation, embarrassment and fear.

When the girls shared these experiences, once again their tone of voice and body language suggested that these feelings were very real for them and affected them negatively. One girl expressed deep feelings of *'hatred'* (Participant 9), another said that it *'breaks me apart'* (Participant 1), and another said that it made her *'so angry'* (Participant 2). Many said that they were fearful that the touching could lead to something more serious.

Some girls said that when they tell the boys that they dislike their behaviour, the boys reply that they, the girls, **do** in fact like it. *"They think I like it, you see."* (Participant 2) One girl said that it made her *'irritated'* (Participant 4) and two girls said that they responded by feeling *'frustrated'* (Participants 7 and 8). Further expressions of negative feelings were a result of sexual harassment:



"It breaks me apart, to know that it happened on the school... it just like.. because people will just look at me like... 'she's exaggerating', it just hurts me. I cried once in front of the class and I almost fell down the stairs cause I couldn't breathe and I just went blank and then someone had to keep me tight because I almost fell over."
(Participant 1)

*"....and it made me uncomfortable **every time** he did that,and that's when I was very upset because I knew that he would do something more if he had the guts to touch under my dress, and sometimes he'd touch my breasts and I would tell him to stop. He would say it's like something he needs... I don't know..., but I told him I'm uncomfortable with it. I'm very uncomfortable. I felt humiliated because he also does it in public and the others see that he does it to me and his friends are doing the same*

thing because they see him like a role model now because he's doing this thing and I can't do anything about it." (Participant 6)

"...it makes me like....humiliated..." (Participant 3)

"It was embarrassing." (Participant 7)

These expressed, negative feelings of the girls toward the unwanted sexual behaviour, concurs with similar studies in this regard (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Roscoe & Strouse, 1994). Roscoe and Strouse (1994) found that in the USA a considerable number of adolescents had experienced some form of sexual harassment behaviour from a male classmate. The behaviour was viewed by the girls as being inappropriate, invasive, disruptive, and causing a hostile environment. The girls did not experience the behaviour as humorous or recreational, and it resulted in conditions which adversely affected the learning environment.

A recent study in the Free State, South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011) found that adolescent victims of sexual harassment by peers in the school environment experienced multifaceted negative feelings; for example, "angry and powerless", "scared and extremely angry", "embarrassed, ashamed and lost etc." Further feelings expressed were that of humiliation, depression and feeling dirty. However, while most girls experienced only negative feelings, some girls found themselves in an emotional turmoil as, in addition, they also felt good and flattered by the attention (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011).

The findings of the current study concur with most literature which indicates that adolescent victims of sexual harassment experience feelings of anger, humiliation, depression, fear, embarrassment, shame, powerlessness, feeling upset, anxious, vulnerable, unsafe, used,

unclean, dirty, distressed, confused and a sense of helplessness (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Fineran, 2002). These negative feelings expressed have been shown in other studies to contribute to low self-esteem and an impact on school performance (Young & Ashbaker, 2008; Haffejee, 2006; Timmerman, 2004).

Girls also often feel that they are to blame for the sexual harassment and that it was not entirely the boys' fault. They will likely remain silent about the sexual harassment because of patriarchal gender issues that result in acceptance despite negative feelings; and they feared that sexual harassment in schools could eventually lead to them being killed by the perpetrator (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Arnot & Mac An Ghail, 2006).

5.2.4 Reporting procedures in schools are inadequate

This final theme emerged after consideration of the sub-themes which found that the attitude of the educators does not encourage reporting; girls have no faith in intervention strategies at the school; girls seldom report the harassment; and girls are unsafe in the schools.

Findings in the current study indicate that adolescent girls who are sexually harassed in schools seldom officially report the behaviour. "Officially" indicates that they do not pursue formal reporting of the event other than telling the educator in the classroom immediately when the behaviour occurs.

Four participants said that they sometimes complained to the teacher in the classroom when the sexual harassment was happening, but it did not stop the harassment as no definite steps were taken to stop it. The girls all accepted that it was something they would have to handle themselves.

When the sexual harassment is reported to the educator in the classroom, the learner expects the educator to respond from the position of power that the educator holds. However, the girls state that *“it doesn’t help”* (Participant 5) and they resign themselves to dealing with the problem themselves by simply tolerating it. These findings concur with that of Ntuli’s (2006) study which indicated that no serious steps were taken by the teachers or the school authorities against the perpetrators of sexual violence and as a result the adolescent girls decided to keep quiet about the matter and to endure school life feeling ‘threatened and in pain’ (Ntuli, 2006).

Some expressions from girls regarding reporting of sexual harassment:

“...because I think I can solve it by myself but I haven’t because even when I say ‘stop it’ it doesn’t stop. ...there’s nothing else I can do.” (Participant 4)

“I just tell them to leave me alone, something they do, sometimes not. I know they’re playing.” (Participant 2)

“But let’s say...I do tell my teacher but they do nothing. Most of the time I call out to the teacher and the teacher then calls me up. I tell the teacher and the teacher does do something about it but the kids don’t listen because they do it over and over and over again.” (Participant 8)

“I never thought of making it liketalking to a teacher.... because... I don’t know.... I just didn’t think of that.” (Participant 9)

“...we don’t report it anymore because it doesn’t help.” (Participant 6)

“It was like I was going to get him into trouble.” (Participant 7)

“I don’t want to make a scene or anything like that.” (Participant 9)

This “acceptance” can be linked to two factors: (1) when the girls report the behaviour to an educator in the classroom, the response is non-committal and sometimes judgemental, *“I told the teacher and he said I probably asked for it.”* (Participant 6), so that no effective action is taken against the perpetrators; (2) learners grow up in environments where gender inequality and unfair discrimination becomes a way of life, and women are regarded as being inferior to men, who use violence as a means of dealing with conflict (Fouton, 2006). Mpiana (2010) found that some adolescent girls accepted the sexual violence as normal, particularly as responses from the school and outside of school appeared to be non-existent and inadequate.

Jacobs and de Wet (2011) found that some girls kept quiet about the unwanted behaviour for a number of reasons, namely; they felt that they were somehow to blame for the behaviour, some feared that the boys’ responses might be violent, and some feared that they would not be believed.

In the current study, only three participants out of the twelve officially reported the sexual harassment, and then only once they felt that the harassment was getting out of control. The rest said that they did not want to cause trouble for the perpetrators, even though they, the girls, realized that the behaviour was unacceptable and it made them angry. These responses are somewhat ambivalent as on the one hand the girls made it clear that they dislike the behaviour, yet they were reluctant to immediately report it. These findings are similar to that of Mpiana (2010) who found that adolescent girls were confused as to how they should intervene in cases of sexual violence against them.

Mpiana (2010) makes a valid observation in highlighting the manner in which these adolescent girls perceive their own value and potential, which is strongly influenced by family, friends, community, school and media. If these influences do not respond to sexual violence against adolescent girls, then they, i.e. family, friends, community, school and media, are suggesting that the behaviour is normal and acceptable, and that the girls are not valuable enough to warrant protection.

This lack of reporting, therefore, also addresses issues of gender values in South African society, whereby women are afforded low social and economic status, so that incidences against them of an unacceptable sexual nature are ignored and not given the serious attention which they deserve (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Arnot & Mac An Ghail, 2006).

However, a study done in another context in the United States found that although the adolescents found the sexual harassment behaviours to be highly unacceptable and offensive, they acknowledged that they did nothing to stop it (Roscoe *et al.*, 1994). Roscoe explains that this is not surprising since adults rarely intervene to stop one adult from sexually harassing another. At the same time, this acceptance can be viewed in the light of the adolescents' extreme sensitivity to the impression they make on others, their need to be liked, and to be included in the peer group (Deacon & Stephney, 2007; Owens, 2002).

The literature indicates that reporting such incidents leads to stigmatization, and the victim's character and testimony is often discredited (The Journal of Women's Health, 2010; Young & Ashbaker, 2008).

Two of the official complaints mentioned in the current study were taken as far as the governing body of the school and had been reported to the police. In both these cases, the continual sexual harassment was followed by attempted rape or sexual assault. Also, in both cases the boys had been suspended for a period, but before then, the one girl was so afraid to walk alone on the school grounds, that she got permission from her teacher to be accompanied by a friend wherever she went.

When the perpetrator returned to school, he no longer interfered with her. The literature indicates that policies and procedures that address issues such as sexual harassment in schools should ensure adequate knowledge and management of the phenomenon that would promote early intervention and prevention (Young & Ashbaker, 2008; Timmerman, 2004).

The third reported case went as far as the school principal and the participant decided at that stage not to report it to the police because she did not want to be exposed as the person who makes trouble for a fellow learner. The boy (perpetrator) was admonished although not suspended, so that the participant met up with him in the classroom the very next day. He kept his distance from her but she was on her guard with him, and at the time of the interview was unsure how long he would keep away from her, as the incident had happened just a few days before the interview took place.

The South African Constitution and the DoBE state that children have a right to a safe school environment (Prinsloo, 2006). Policies and procedures in schools should/must, therefore, ensure that boys and girls feel confident enough to report incidences of sexual harassment or any other form of sexual violence in the school environment (Young & Ashbaker, 2008; Prinsloo, 2006).

Literature also shows that besides the fear of stigmatization, victims of sexual harassment often avoid reporting the incident(s) because of the way in which the media may publicise the event. This may lead to the victim being further exposed, something that would be difficult to deal with in the context of school and the adolescent stage of development (Young & Ashbaker, 2008; Timmerman, 2005).

Despite policy-makers claims that they are committed to ending sexual violence in schools, it continues unabated (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2010; Mpiana, 2010; Hafejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006; HRW, 2001). Education policies and recent publications that address the problem of unwanted sexual behaviour in schools have failed to stop or prevent it. Boys and girls in South African schools remain exposed and at risk to inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Findings of studies in South Africa indicate that reporting policies and procedures in schools are either non-existent or inadequate in addressing the phenomenon of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2010; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Prinsloo, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; HRW, 2001).

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings and discussions of the four key themes that emerged from this study. These themes that were discussed were interpreted as the central meanings and essence of the lived experiences of the adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school environment. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used as a tool to analyse the data which was also considered in the light of Heidegger's concept of 'Being-in-the World' discussed in chapter 4.

The themes were explained using participants' own words in order to provide a clearer picture of what the participants shared when they described their feelings, perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment. The findings were validated by literature and expounded upon to give relevance and substance regarding the phenomenon of the sexual harassment under study.



6.1 Introduction

The current study aimed to explore the lived experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school environment. The study was qualitative and conducted within the framework of phenomenology, and specifically considered Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world, meaning that we exist as individuals within a social context, and, therefore, the individual cannot be separated from his/her world (Pascal, 2010).

This view is in line with the social work concept of person-in-context which refers to the developmental and social functioning abilities of a person within the context of that person's environment or factors in society that either enhance or impede that person's development and social well-being (Canadian Association of Social Work (CASW), 2000; SACSSP).

The experiences of adolescents, as described by the adolescents in their own voices, were, therefore, interpreted within their social historical contexts, in an attempt to understand the meanings of these experiences.

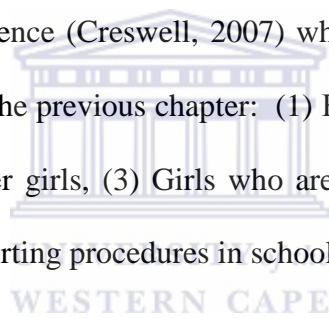
As discussed in Chapter 4, IPA was applied in analysing the data, with specific emphasis on Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-World. This approach is in line with the social work perspective of person-in-context, and correlates with the theory of phenomenology.

In line with the framework of phenomenology, purposive sampling was used. Nine adolescent girls and one adolescent boy from two high schools on the Cape Flats, who met the criteria of having experienced sexual harassment in the school environment, were

interviewed. They were asked one question: “What are your experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment?” Further elaborations and clarity were sought through probing.

The aim of this study was to understand the essence of adolescents’ experiences and perceptions of sexual harassment in the school environment, from the perspective of the adolescents who have experienced the phenomenon. The objectives, as stated, were to gain a deeper understanding as to the manner in which sexual harassment is experienced by them and the ways in which they respond to these experiences in a school environment.

The four key themes or core essence (Creswell, 2007) which emerged from the study have been described and discussed in the previous chapter: (1) Boys don’t respect girls’ sexuality, (2) Boys demonstrate power over girls, (3) Girls who are sexually harassed in schools are publicly humiliated, and (4) Reporting procedures in schools are inadequate.



The research process provided a deeper and more holistic understanding of both the literature and the adolescents’ perceptions, thoughts and feelings with regard to their experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment, as well as their responses to the phenomenon. The aim and objectives of the study were, therefore, met and the findings of this study have highlighted additional issues that relate to adolescent girls in the school environment. Although the following information is new to the study, the researcher felt that it could not be ignored and needed to be included as concerns for further studies and practical consideration.

Based on the findings of the current study, three key principles were identified which relate to the bill of human rights within the South African Constitution (1996) which may have been infringed, namely:

- (1) The right to non-discrimination
- (2) The right to human dignity
- (3) The right to a safe school environment.

The potential infringement of these rights is important to contextualise the experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment, and have led to recommendations which are elaborated and discussed below.

6.2 The right to non-discrimination

The findings of this study suggest that adolescent girls are sexually harassed in schools by adolescent boys. Meanings attributed to these findings suggest an intimate connection between gender and sexual harassment. For example, adolescent girls are sexually harassed by boys. However, sexual harassment of adolescent boys and adolescents in same-sex relationships is not ruled out.

Sexual harassment of adolescent girls by adolescent boys in the school environment in South Africa has been reported in many studies since 2001 (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Prinsloo, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; HRW, 2001) and can be seen as unfair discrimination (Prinsloo, 2006).

Prinsloo (2006) further states that the South African Constitutional Court has explained unfair discrimination as being the unequal treatment that damages human dignity, or affects someone in a serious manner (Prinsloo v Van der Linde, 1997, as cited by Prinsloo, 2006).

Sexual harassment of adolescent girls can be identified as unfair discrimination as it refers to the unequal treatment of adolescent learners which damages their human dignity.

6.2.1 How then has unfair discrimination affected the girl learners?

Prinsloo (2006) suggests a focus on what girl learners have been denied as a result of the unfair discrimination of sexual harassment (Keet, 2005 as cited by Prinsloo, 2006) and to do so, one has to ask some pertinent questions:

- Have they been denied an opportunity? (education)
- Have they been denied a resource/s? (access to school)
- Have they been denied a service/s? (effective education)
- Have they been denied their right to respect and dignity? (sexual offence).

South African legislation provides guidance in this regard. The South African Bill of Rights and the Constitution of South Africa are regarded as being among the most comprehensive bills of rights in the world (De Groof & Malherbe, 1997 cited by Prinsloo, 2006). These rights focus on human rights for all, taking into account democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

The Children's Act 38 (2005) and the New Sexual Offences Act (2007) address the specific rights of children and stipulate that sexual offences against children are regarded as a crime (Haffejee, 2006).

Section 9 of the South African Constitution (1996), states that female learners are entitled to equal opportunities and equal treatment in South African schools (Prinsloo, 2006). This means that there should be no unfair discrimination against female learners.

The Schools Act (1996) also makes provision for equal opportunities for female learners by stating that school attendance is compulsory and parents have a legal obligation to send their children to school (<http://www.education.gov.za> viewed 21 October 2011).

South African legislation, therefore, makes it clear that girl adolescent learners are not to be denied opportunities to education and education services, and their rights to respect and dignity must be upheld. Findings of the current study and others in South Africa (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Ntuli, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; Prinsloo, 2006) reflect and concur that the unsafe school environment puts these rights in jeopardy and needs critical interventions with the help of social work.

6.3 The right to human dignity

In the current study, adolescent girls said that boys who sexually harass girls, totally disregarded the girls' pleas for them to stop and it made them feel angry, humiliated, frustrated, embarrassed and fearful.

Prinsloo (2006) cites Malherbe and Beckmann (2003) who refer to the South African Constitution (1996), Section 10, which states that the right to have one's inherent dignity respected and protected is a fundamental right that underlies all other rights. Human dignity is, therefore, the cornerstone of all other rights, so that often, when another right is violated, it infringes on the right to human dignity.

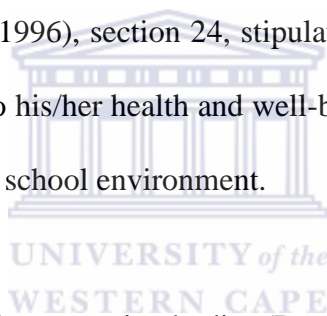
Sexual harassment is a serious violation of the right to human dignity. The effects of this violation on adolescent girls are feelings of worthlessness, fear and denial of self-respect.

These girls may also possibly be denied education and access to school should they decide to stay home to avoid further humiliation.

6.4 The right to a safe school environment

Findings in the current study indicate that adolescent girls who are sexually harassed in schools seldom officially report the behaviour. When the sexual harassment is reported to the educator in the classroom, the learner expects the educator to respond from the position of power that the educator holds. However, the girls state that “*it doesn't help*” (Participant 4) and resign themselves to dealing with the problem themselves.

The South African Constitution (1996), section 24, stipulates that everyone has a right to an environment that is not harmful to his/her health and well-being (Prinsloo, 2006). This means that learners have a right to a safe school environment.



The DoE states in the guidelines for governing bodies (Department of Education, 1998) that:

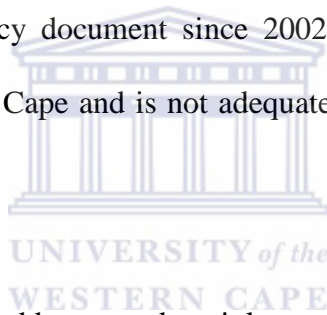
“Learners have a right to: a clean and safe environment that is conducive to education; security of property, well-cared-for facilities, school furniture and equipment, clean toilets, water and green environment; an **absence of harassment** when attending classes or writing tests and examinations; which all create an atmosphere that is conducive to education and training.”

Prinsloo (2006) points out that the common law principles of *in loco parentis* forces educators to foresee the potential dangers to which learners may be exposed at schools, and to act proactively by taking steps in the form of policy to protect learners from harm. This

means that schools and educators are legally obliged to ensure the physical and psychological safety of learners in their care.

This legal responsibility of the educator has huge significance for the way that reporting of sexual harassment is handled, because it means that currently, educators are not endorsing their legal responsibility of addressing the phenomenon of sexual harassment and, thereby, protecting adolescents from danger (Prinsloo, 2006).

Simply having a policy that provides definitions and guidance for school management in handling the phenomenon of sexual harassment is not enough. The Western Cape education department has had such a policy document since 2002, and yet sexual harassment still occurs in schools in the Western Cape and is not adequately addressed. Many educators are unaware of this document.



Other national publications that address gender violence and sexual abuse in schools have been produced over the years but were unaccompanied by an intervention strategy or implementation plan and/or monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and have, therefore, been ineffective in combating the problems.

In 1997, a gender equity task team (GETT) was put together as part of the national education policy (NEP) initiatives to address gender issues in schools (Chisholm & September, 2005). Their directive was to investigate and advise the DoE, now DBE, on gender matters related to education, including issues such as gender discrimination and sex-based violence in schools.

The result was a publication of a book: *Issues on gender in schools: An introduction for teachers*. The members of the GETT initially thought that the books would be widely distributed; a copy for each educator. This, however, did not happen. The book and its accompanying implementation strategy were not promoted. The members of the GETT were further disappointed to discover that the GETT report had not been read by the ministers of each province when they next met to discuss the report (Chisholm & September, 2005).

It is, therefore, difficult to dispute the claim that has been made that girls are trained to accept violence and sexual abuse, while boys receive tacit permission for their violent behaviour because they are not interrupted or condemned (Stein, 1993, cited by Mirsky, 2003).

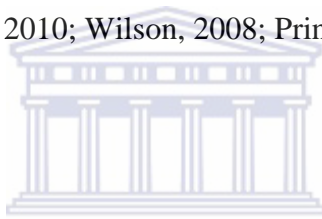
6.5 Central issues

Research literature shows that sexual harassment, as part of a larger phenomenon of sexual violence, had been investigated and found to be prevalent in South African schools, particularly perpetrated against adolescent girls by their male counterparts (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Ntuli, 2006; Wilson, 2008; Haffejee, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Despite these findings, little effective intervention strategies have been instituted to combat or prevent this behaviour in schools (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Ntuli, 2006; Haffejee, 2006), including schools in the Western Cape.

The findings of the current study correspond with other global and national studies (mentioned in earlier chapters), which show that unwanted sexual behaviour in schools is prevalent and tends to be a more or less normal part of adolescent culture. When sexual harassment frequently occurs in the lives of adolescent girls, it can have negative repercussions on their developing self-esteem, body image, adjustment and beliefs in others

(Leaper & Brown, 2008). Many girls come to expect demeaning behaviours as normal in heterosexual relationships and may be at risk for dysfunctional and abusive relationships in adulthood (Mpiana, 2010; Leaper & Anderson, 1998).

In South Africa, gender violence in society results partially from unequal power relations and can, in turn, be regarded as a cause of sexual violence against adolescent girls in schools (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Haffejee, 2006). The impact of this violence is extensive, affecting girls' academic performance and school attendance, and is harmful to their physical and psychological health. Research studies found that adolescent girls often stop attending school after becoming victims of sexual violence, due to feelings of fear and helplessness (Jacobs & de Wet, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Prinsloo, 2006; Haffejee, 2006; HRW, 2001).

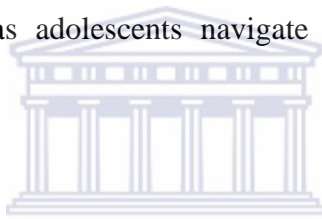


Many girls prefer not to report sexual harassment because they don't want to cause trouble and their feeble attempts in this regard have not yielded any results, so that they don't believe that anything will be done about it (Ntabong, 2011; Mpiana, 2010; Wilson, 2008). This fear is not unfounded as it has been found that school administrations prefer to ignore complaints of violence against girls (HRW, 2001).

An intervention strategy should/must be aimed at creating an atmosphere where learners feel comfortable to report any kind of sexual offence. Young and Ashbaker (2008) suggest that learners will probably only report sexual harassment if the school educators and staff are trustworthy, caring and supportive.

The learners need to know that they will be protected and not blamed for the behaviour. Educators, therefore, need to be enabled, through training, to take an active role in encouraging boys and girls to respect each other, to listen to one another, and to participate in interactions that include sexuality. Safe spaces must be made available where educators can challenge misconceptions on gender relations (Fennell & Arnot, 2008).

Mpiana (2010) makes a case for the need to empower adolescent girls so that they will have a strong sense of self and an awareness of their rights. The culture of gender inequality and sexual violence in SA schools must be addressed. Schools, parents and communities must consistently denounce sexual violence against women and adolescent girls, and should provide guidance and support as adolescents navigate the challenges of their stage of development (Mpiana, 2010).



The South African government and its national DoE recognizes the severity of the problems, and have made significant efforts to address these issues, maintaining that schools should be safe spaces for girls as well as for boys, but implementation of intervention strategies have been ineffective and inadequate.

The initiative of the girls empowerment movement (GEM) (2003) attempts to address issues pertaining to girls inside and outside of schools, but does not address the issue of sexual violence. The department's publication of three books that address these issues: *Signposts to safe schools*; *Stopping sexual harassment in schools*; and *Issues of gender in schools*, have failed to make a significant impact on the phenomenon as no structures have been set in place to implement these strategies. School authorities have still been unable to protect girls from sexual harassment and sexual violence.

6.6 What is the value of the findings of this phenomenological study for social work practice?

Social work is a profession where people are helped to improve their lives. Social workers strive toward social justice and well-being of people (SACSSP; IFSW, 2000) and often advocate for improved services in order to assist people to solve issues in their everyday lives.

The findings of this study highlighted a serious problem being experienced by adolescents in the school environment, namely; the phenomenon of sexual harassment, which has to be addressed by all disciplines in the school environment, including social workers. While interviewing the participants, this researcher got a sense that they were sharing their experiences in order to bring awareness of the phenomenon to the authorities, possibly in the hope that it would be addressed and eventually stopped. This awareness cannot be ignored by social workers as it speaks for the responsibility of the social work profession to advocate on behalf of disempowered clients.

6.6.1 Recommendations for social workers

Social workers who work in the child and youth sector have to forge strong networking partnerships with school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses and educators in an inter-disciplinary and health-promoting way. Together, these social workers and networking partners should collaborate and lead to produce and implement age-appropriate programmes, promoting safety in primary and high schools that will create awareness and discussion about pertinent issues such as constitutional rights, sex education, risky sexual behaviours, gender equality and so on.

These programmes should focus on social protection and include awareness and prevention of all forms of child abuse, including sexual harassment, and empower boys and girls to report the behaviour. Ahmed *et al.* (2009) found that although educators are well placed to facilitate the distribution of knowledge and skills to adolescents, educators are conflicted about HIV and sex education and perceive these programmes as contradicting of their values and beliefs. The study noted a need for a comprehensive approach toward sexual health intervention.

Social workers must support other disciplines and educators in dealing with these issues by providing basic skills to those educators or peer educators who will be selected to be available to any child who reports an incident of sexual harassment. Young and Ashbaker (2008) noted that educators who handle complaints and cases of sexual harassment must be appropriately trained so that the learners feel comfortable in reporting this. Alternative measures like “peer buddy systems” could also be explored, which make peers available to handle complaints and reporting of abuse. The peer buddies would need appropriate training and support.

6.7 Recommendations for school management and educators

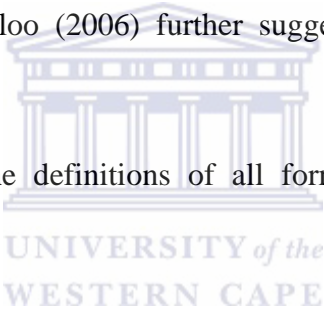
The findings of this study in relation to research literature point to the need for intervention and evaluation strategies by school management and educators that addresses the issues of sexual harassment of adolescent learners in schools.

School management and educators have to recognise the seriousness of sexual harassment and commit to managing the problem. This commitment must be built on the belief that all

boys and girls have a right to equal opportunities and that schools should be free of sexual harassment and intimidation (Prinsloo, 2006).

Not only is it necessary that school management and educators have knowledge of the problem, but a change in attitude is also required in order to address the social injustices that occur in South African schools.

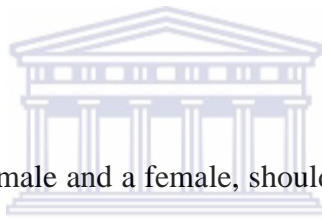
Change must come from within the schools and will require the combined efforts of school management and school governing bodies to make a serious attempt to stop all forms of sexual harassment in schools (Niemann, 2001; Squelch, 2001; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; cited by Prinsloo, 2006). Prinsloo (2006) further suggests that such an attempt should address the following:

- 
- Creating an awareness of the definitions of all forms of sexual harassment for all educators and learners
 - Developing a school culture that recognizes, values and protects human rights
 - Equipping learners with the necessary skills to assert and protect themselves against all forms of sexual harassment
 - Developing a standard of conduct among gender groups
 - Creating an atmosphere that encourages learners to discuss incidences of sexual harassment with educators whom they trust
 - Creating a safe school environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Young and Ashbaker (2008) provide similar guidelines, suggesting that a starting point would be for every school to have a written policy that clearly defines sexual harassment, including all the behaviours that could possibly constitute the definition. The policy should

emphasize a zero-tolerance approach, state that the behaviour is inappropriate and unacceptable, it should provide procedures for reporting, give clear indications of expected behaviour of respectfulness and should note consequences where necessary. The content of the sexual harassment policy should be shared with school staff, (including administrative staff, management and educators), parents and learners.

Timmerman (2004) suggests that to achieve a clear understanding of the phenomenon of sexual harassment, open discussion must be encouraged. This will give school staff, parents and learners an opportunity to learn, discuss and ask questions about aspects of the phenomenon that they don't fully understand or which makes them feel uncomfortable, and will also increase reporting.



At least two people, preferably a male and a female, should be designated and trained to deal with complaints of sexual harassment as a learner may not feel comfortable reporting sexual harassment to a person of the opposite sex. Young and Ashbaker (2008) add that the complaint must be handled sensitively and appropriately so that learners who report are not made to feel responsible for the harassment. The behaviour should not be downplayed or brushed off as unimportant or insignificant. Learners must be made to feel protected and should be taught how to respond assertively while maintaining boundaries.

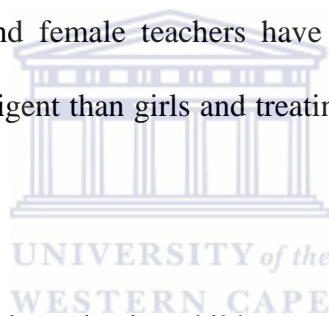
6.7.1 The role of the educator

Research done by UNICEF (2003) in Southern African countries, including South Africa, found that educators were not keen to engage their learners in interactive activities, particularly in the area of sexuality (Fennell & Arnot, 2008).

The educators admitted to having great difficulties in dealing with questions relating to sex and sexuality, and experienced feelings of embarrassment and vulnerability during these lessons. This resulted in them adopting a moralistic and authoritarian approach in order to protect themselves from ridicule.

The researchers found that the learners, on the other hand, were eager to address issues of gender and matters pertaining to sexuality, and developed a good relationship with the researchers who had been trained to discuss these issues with children in a gender-sensitive and friendly manner.

The girls observed that male and female teachers have a negative attitude toward girls, perceiving boys to be more intelligent than girls and treating them as such (Fennell & Arnot, 2008).



Social context is important when interviewing children and adolescents, as it determines the level of confidence of the interviewees and ultimately the level of content that the children and adolescents are willing to share (Fennell & Arnot, 2008).

Young and Ashbaker's (2008) suggestion, therefore, holds true that learners will likely only report sexual harassment if the school educators and staff are trustworthy, caring and supportive. The learners need to know that they will be protected and not blamed for the behaviour.

Educators, therefore, need to be enabled, through training, to take an active role in encouraging boys and girls to respect each other, to listen to one other and to participate in

interactions that include sexuality. Safe spaces must be made available where educators can challenge misconceptions on gender relations (Fennell & Arnot, 2008).

School educators play an important role in the prevention of sexual harassment in that they provide education in many senses, including their norms and values, attitudes and behaviour which often function as a model for learners (Brandenburg, 1997). Educators' beliefs and attitudes are manifested not only in the academic material they present but also in the way they behave in social interactions at school. Appropriate attitudes, education and role modelling of educators and other school staff will make a major contribution toward stemming the tide of sexual harassment among adolescent peers.

Prinsloo (2006) suggests that the South African council for educators (SACE) can play a role in ensuring that educators earn the status and respect of the term 'profession' and that parents should be proud of the educators at their children's schools who uphold the cultural and religious values that are characteristic of the local school community.

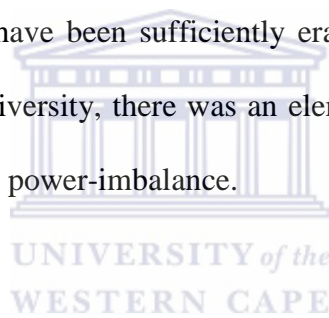
6.8 Limitations of the study

An important aspect of analysing the data within the phenomenological concept of 'Being-in-the-World' requires knowledge of the historical contexts of the participants in order to more fully understand the meanings they describe. Since most of the target group of both high schools live on the Cape Flats, the historical contexts and cultural diversities were generalized to all the participants and were not specific to each participant.

This researcher chose unstructured interviews for this study because of the sensitivity of the topic, but on reflection, taking into account the anxiety of the participants and seemingly

rushed interviews, she admits that she should have used semi-structured interviews, which are also in line with phenomenology, and which would possibly have allowed a more focused and structured format of sharing. It must be noted that although some of the participants seemed to hurry through their story, they provided valuable information that had relevance to the study.

In the role as researcher, working without a research team, this author was at risk of the 'lone analyst' (Patton, 2002). The researcher maintained an ethical commitment to the data collection and presentation, but nevertheless, despite her commitment to trustworthiness, interpretation is seldom value free (Pascal, 2010), and this may have compromised the data somewhat in that bias may not have been sufficiently eradicated. Furthermore, as a social worker and researcher from a university, there was an element of power in my professional role which may have resulted in a power-imbalance.



6.9 Strengths of the study

There are studies, to which this study referred that investigate and explore the phenomenon of sexual violence in schools in South Africa, but none that explore the lived experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment in the school environment. This study provides a deeper understanding of adolescents' experiences of sexual harassment. It gives insight not only to the meanings of the lived experiences but also to the implications of these meanings in respect of relational issues in communities and society, and the constitutional rights of children in South Africa.

6.10 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of adolescents regarding sexual harassment in the school environment and thereby give a deeper understanding of these experiences. Data analysis was guided by IPA and was, therefore, hermeneutic (interpretative) and underpinned by Heidegger's phenomenological concept of 'Being-in-the-World' which takes into account historical context. IPA has no prescribed format, and the method chosen was suggested by Smith *et al.* (2010). It required first reading the text several times to gain an understanding of the text; making exploratory comments; clustering data, comments and observational notes; identifying sub-themes and condensing main themes.

The main themes that emerged are the meanings and core essence that was interpreted from the data, being: (1) Boys do not respect girls' sexuality; (2) Boys demonstrate power over girls; (3) Girls who are sexually harassed at school are publicly humiliated; (4) Reporting procedures in schools are inadequate.

These meanings are useful in understanding the experiences of adolescents with regard to sexual harassment and have led to recommendations for social workers and school management and educators.

The main aim of the study was met in that adolescents shared their lived experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment and, thereby, enabled a deeper understanding of the meanings, perceptions, thoughts and feelings ascribed to the descriptions they shared. These meanings in turn, gave effect to the objectives in establishing the ways in which sexual harassment is experienced and the responses of adolescents to this phenomenon. In addition, it highlighted the fact that although the phenomenon of sexual harassment is known, it is not

understood as being behaviour that violates the constitutional rights of girls to non-discrimination and human dignity; nor is it understood that the behaviour potentially denies all learners, particularly girls, the right to a safe school environment. It also established that sexual harassment is seldom officially reported in the schools because there are inadequate intervention strategies.

Schools should be safe environments where boys and girls are afforded equal opportunities and where human rights are valued so that effective teaching and learning can take place.



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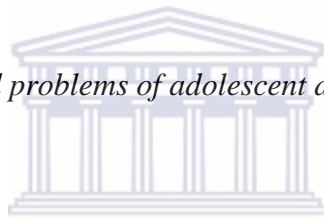
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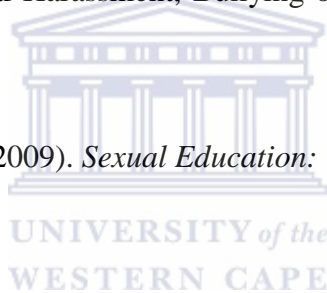
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Appendix 1



University of the Western Cape

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Assent Form

Title of Research Project:

Adolescents' lived experiences of sexual abuse in a school environment.

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

This research project involves recording what you say on a tape recorder so that the researcher can listen attentively, without taking notes. The recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, only accessible to the researcher, and will be destroyed once the study has been finalized.

I **agree** to be recorded during my participation in this study.

I **do not agree** to be recorded during my participation in this study.

In accordance with legal requirements and professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or potential harm to others.

Participant's name _____

Participant's signature _____

Date _____

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced relating to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Ms. M. Minnaar-McDonald

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 9592277 Cell: 083 286 5645

Email: mmcdonald@uwc.ac.za



Appendix 2



University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535 South Africa
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Consent Form

Title of Research Project:

Adolescents' lived experiences of sexual abuse in a school environment.

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I agree that my son/daughter, _____ may participate in the study. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my son/daughter's identity will not be disclosed and that he/she may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

This research project involves recording what my son/daughter will say on a tape recorder so that the researcher can listen attentively, without taking notes. The recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, only accessible to the researcher, and will be destroyed once the study has been finalized.

___ I **agree** that my son/daughter may be recorded during his/her participation in this study.

___ I **do not agree** that my son/daughter may be recorded during his/her participation in this study.

In accordance with legal requirements and professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or potential harm to others.

Participant's name _____

Participant's signature _____ **Date**

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced relating to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

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Appendix 3

In line with the phenomenological research approach, only one research question was asked:

“What are your experiences of sexual harassment in the school environment?”



Appendix 4

Abuse no more: Dealing Effectively with Child Abuse

Section 1

Background Information

1.1 Introduction

Child abuse is a serious problem that currently exists in communities and educational institutions throughout South Africa. Because of its high prevalence, this policy document has been developed to help institutions, employees and learners of the WCED to deal with the problem in the most efficient and effective way.

The reporting procedures contained in this policy may be used by learners, educators, employees, parents, caregivers or any other person. All WCED employees must therefore ensure that **they are fully conversant** with the contents of this policy document and that they have a clear understanding of their role and function in managing the process of combating child abuse.

Effective management of child abuse can only be achieved, however, if procedures are based on a strong **legal foundation**. As a basis for this policy document all relevant legislation regarding children has been considered and applied.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to put measures and procedures in place to respect and protect the **rights of learners**, particularly their rights to safety, personal security, bodily integrity, equal treatment and freedom from discrimination, and **especially to create an environment where learners can maximise their opportunity to learn**, free from abuse.

1.3 Objectives

The main thrust of this policy document is to manage abuse where the learner is involved. All procedures provided in this document, therefore, have a clear educational focus (prevention, timely intervention, and support).

1.3.1 Primary objectives:

To provide procedures for:

- The **identification** of abuse;
- The **management of suspected abuse**;
- The **management of disclosure**; and

- **Intervention.**

1.3.2 Secondary objectives:

The protection of children is not the responsibility of statutory and formal welfare organisations only, but the **legal duty** of every citizen.

The **secondary objectives**, therefore, are:

- To develop and sustain a **multi-disciplinary approach** in order to involve the community and other departments as well as private individuals in the process of identification, referral, support and intervention.
- To develop a **strategy** for the effective management of child abuse by:
 - targeting certain employees at institutions and EMDCs by making them both accountable and responsible;
 - creating mechanisms and structures for effective reporting and investigation of complaints, and for intervention; and
 - developing a system of joint accountability at institutions and EMDCs in monitoring and reviewing complaints and incidents of child abuse.

1.4 Accountability and Responsibility

1.4.1 At institutional level –

- The **manager** of the institution is **accountable** for implementing, managing and sustaining the policy and procedures described in this document. These must be managed in such a manner that confidentiality is maintained at all times. The manager may be assisted in the process by a management committee.
- All **educators** are **legally bound** to report all matters of suspected child abuse (see paragraph 3.1.3, Step 1). Such matters must always be reported to the **manager** of the institution unless she or he is implicated in the abuse.

1.4.2 At EMDC level –

- The **head** of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support component will be responsible for managing the implementation of this policy in all institutions in the area of the EMDC. All incidents of abuse should be reported to this person.

Section 2

Definitions

In this policy document, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following definitions apply:

"Alleged Employee Offender" means the employee or educator against whom a complaint has been laid.

"Alleged Learner Offender" means the learner against whom a complaint has been laid.

"Alleged Other Offender" means any other person against whom a complaint has been laid.

"Child abuse" means any action or inaction which is detrimental to the physical, emotional and developmental well-being of the child. It includes (but is not limited to) neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

"Educator" means an educator as defined in the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996, or the Employment of Educators Act, no. 76 of 1998.

"Governing body" means a governing body as defined in the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996.

"Intimidation" means uttering or conveying a verbal or non-verbal threat, or causing a complainant to receive a threat, which induces fear. It includes

- repeated threats to cause emotional pain, and
- repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy which is such as to constitute a serious invasion of a complainant's privacy, liberty, integrity and/or security.

"Labour Relations" means the Directorate: Labour Relations of the WCED.

"Learner" means any pupil enrolled in any institution within the jurisdiction of the WCED.

"Management" means the function of guiding the process and being responsible and accountable for the plan of action to be undertaken.

"Neglect" means any act or omission by a parent or any other person entrusted to care for a learner, which results in impaired physical functioning, impaired physical development, or injury or harm to the learner.

"Parent" means the biological, adoptive, foster- or step-parent or the guardian or person legally entitled to custody of a learner, including the learner's primary caregiver (who may legally be deemed not to be the learner's parent or guardian).

"Physical Abuse" means any act or threatened act of physical violence which may cause injury or even death to a learner.

"Referral" means the activation of the process in which the alleged child abuse will be

followed up and the learner will receive support, therapy and/or counselling.

“**Reporting**” means giving all available information obtained from the learner to the appropriate body, either telephonically or by written report.

“**SAPS**” means the South African Police Services.

“**Sexual Abuse**” means any unlawful physical act of a sexual nature and includes indecent assault, sexual harassment, attempted rape and rape.

“**Sexual Harassment**” is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. The unwanted nature of sexual harassment distinguishes it from behaviour that is welcome and mutual. *Sexual attention becomes sexual harassment if:*

- **the behaviour is persisted in, although a single incident of harassment can constitute sexual harassment; and/or**
- **the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is considered offensive; and/or the perpetrator should have known that the behaviour is regarded as unacceptable.**

Sexual harassment may include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, and is not limited to the examples listed below:

(a) **Physical conduct** of a sexual nature includes all unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to sexual assault and rape.

(b) **Verbal forms of sexual harassment** include:

- unwelcome innuendoes, suggestions, comments, advances and phone calls of a sexual nature;
- sex-related jokes and insults;
- unwelcome comments about a person's body made in a person's presence and directed towards that person;
- unwelcome and inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life; and unwelcome whistling or suggestive sounds directed at a person or group of persons.

(c) **Non-verbal forms of sexual harassment** include:

- unwelcome gestures and indecent exposure;
- the unwelcome display of sexually explicit objects or publications (pictures and printed text); and
- the sending of letters, faxes and electronic mail containing remarks with sexual connotations.

(d) **Quid pro quo sexual harassment (*sexual blackmail*)** occurs when an employee or another learner influences or attempts to influence a learner's academic results, leadership position, standing at the school or sporting achievements in exchange for sexual favours.

“**Stalking**” means repeatedly following, pursuing, or accosting the complainant.

“**TST**” means the Teacher Support Team at an Institution as defined above.

Note to the employee:

- Although sexual harassment is included as a part of the definition of child abuse, the definition of sexual harassment, above, is provided to emphasise its seriousness.
- The definition is internationally accepted and is set out in the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment (Government Gazette, 17 July 1998).

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Section 3: Part 2

Management Procedures: Disclosure

3.2 The management of disclosure

3.2.1 The management of disclosure applicable to educators and other employees (hereinafter all referred to as “employees”):

3.2.1.1 Introduction

Disclosure is a process that usually takes time, especially in cases of sexual abuse. It is therefore seldom done in one single isolated event. Learners often disclose only small amounts of information at a time over a period, or write a letter to the employee pleading for help.

Note to the employee:

Disclosure reaches a key stage when a learner provides the employee with specific information about the fact that she or he has been or is being abused or when the learner lodges a complaint after being abused. Once a learner has done this, she or he is referred to as the **complainant** in the case.

Note to the employee:

- Disclosure can be a very traumatic experience. Prevent further emotional harm to the complainant. The details of the abuse should be related to as few people as possible.
- Display empathy, warmth and acceptance.
- Try to ensure the safety of the complainant against further abuse.
- Clarify confidentiality, but explain that other professional persons will have to be informed.
- Identify the other role-players who are to be involved, as well as their roles and functions.
- Explain the potential consequences of the disclosure, i.e. that the employee is legally bound to report the case e.g. to the SAPS.
- Cases of sexual abuse or rape must be reported as soon as possible.
- Under no circumstances should the incident of child abuse be discussed with the alleged offender.
- **DO NOT** interrogate the complainant in order to obtain information or to "investigate" the case.
- **DO NOT** insist on seeing the physical evidence of abuse.
- **DO NOT** examine the complainant for signs of sexual abuse or rape by removing clothes and/or touching or examining the private parts.
- **DO NOT** take a statement from the complainant, as the investigating officer of the SAPS will do this.
- **DO NOT** confront the parents or the caregivers if they are the suspected or alleged perpetrators.

Note to the employee:

When disclosure takes place it is necessary to communicate the following to the complainant:

- I believe what you are telling me.
- I acknowledge that you feel uncomfortable about the incident.
- I appreciate your courage in speaking to me.
- I am sorry to hear what has happened to you.
- It is not your fault.
- In order to help you, I will have to speak to another person.
- Whatever may happen to the alleged offender is not your fault.

Note to the employee:

- The complainant may be unwilling to lay a charge against the alleged offender because of intimidation.

- The complainant may feel powerless and may have been sworn to secrecy by the alleged offender.
- The complainant may be related to the alleged offender and may want to protect the family.
- The complainant may feel that she or he lacks support because no one will believe her or him.
- Often the mother has divided loyalties and protects the father (or boyfriend, uncle, brother, grandfather, etc.) because of financial or emotional dependence.
- The complainant may love the alleged offender and just want the abuse to stop.
- The complainant may be afraid of being removed from the family.

Effective management of the process of disclosure will ensure that both complainant and employee are protected from additional and unnecessary emotional trauma. It is therefore important to ensure that

- the case is handled confidentially, and within a very short time,
- all relevant role-players are involved from the beginning of the intervention, and
- detailed plans to manage support and intervention are made in the best interest of the complainant.

Note to the employee:

Disclosure by a learner may be traumatic for you. You can ask for personal professional assistance from the EAP or from the Specialised Learner and Educator Support component at the EMDC.

Note to the employee:

Documenting all the information gathered from the complainant helps you to develop a profile of her or him and of the possible abuse that is taking place. It will also help you when the SAPS takes a sworn statement, should a criminal case be made.

Note to the employee:

- You can use the **8 point list which follows** as a guideline to ensure that you have enough information about the disclosure.
- You must, however, ensure that the information is obtained as objectively as possible.
- Avoid all risk of putting words in the complainant's mouth.
- Do not use the list as a question-and-answer session. **The complainant must be given the opportunity to speak**

spontaneously.

STEP 1

Ensure the **safety** of the complainant. (In collaboration with the SAPS and the social worker, ensure that the complainant will not have direct contact with the alleged offender.)

Note to the employee:

It is important to ensure that the social worker and/or the SAPS become involved as soon as possible.

STEP 2

Clarify confidentiality, but **explain** to the complainant the potential **consequences** of the disclosure, i.e. that in order to help her or him, you are legally obliged to report the case to other role-players such as the social worker and/or the SAPS. Explain the **roles** they will play. Explain also the procedures that will be followed (Steps 3 – 9 below).

STEP 3

Inform the institution manager (unless she or he is implicated). No detailed information about the abuse needs to be disclosed at this stage.

STEP 4

The institution manager and the employee immediately contact the relevant role-players in order to decide on the process of intervention.

Role-players to be contacted:

The school social worker at the EMDC will help the institution manager and the employee to decide on the involvement of other relevant agencies, e.g.

- The Department of Welfare;
- The local welfare organisation;
- The school psychologist;
- The Child Protection Unit;
- The SAPS in the residential area of the complainant;
- Labour Relations, when employees are the alleged offenders;
- The complainant's parent(s) (with the consent of the complainant, if she or he is over 14), provided that they are not the alleged offenders;
- The Child Protection Centre;
- The Department of Health school nurse (if available), or (if applicable) the ELSEN school nurse.

STEP 5

The institution manager and the employee compile a confidential report that will be used by the social worker and the SAPS. To protect its confidentiality this report must be kept locked in the strongroom or safe with all the relevant documentation on the case.

STEP 6

The institution manager and the employee will meet with the relevant role-players (mentioned in Step 4 above) to draw up a plan of action setting out the responsibility of each participant in the intervention process. Give the H: SLES this information for the attention of the school social worker.

STEP 7

The institution manager follows up with all participants on the progress of the intervention. All information is documented and reported to the employee and all others who will be supporting the complainant.

Pass on this information regularly to the H: SLES for the attention of the school social worker.

STEP 8

Keep the complainant and her or his parent(s) informed of the steps taken by the role-players and the outcome of the investigation.

STEP 9

The institution manager and the employee will monitor the complainant's emotional, mental and physical health, discuss it with her or his parents, and refer it for further professional help if necessary.

3.2.1.3 Additional procedures after disclosure (or a complaint) has revealed that the alleged offender is a learner:

Note to the employee:

Young alleged offenders need to be supported by the system. This should be seen as an attempt to prevent them from committing further abuse. They must therefore be supported as described in the **previous nine steps**. It is important to note and implement the following if necessary:

3.2.1.3.1 Contact the alleged learner offender's parents, inform them of the incident(s)

and discuss a plan of action for support and intervention.

3.2.1.3.2 Refer the alleged learner offender to relevant role-players for emotional support and therapy (see Step 4, paragraph 3.2.1.2 above).

3.2.1.3.3 Depending on the seriousness of the offence, temporary suspension of the alleged learner offender can be arranged, but only if it is in the best interests of other learners and the school.

3.2.1.3.4 The institution manager shall refer the complaint to the governing body of the school. If the alleged offence was serious enough to merit suspension or expulsion, the procedures laid down for these in the **South African Schools Act (Act no. 84, 1996), paragraph 9**, must be followed.

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