



**TEACHERS' ATTITUDES WITH REGARD TO BULLYING AT A HIGH SCHOOL
IN THE CAPE METROPOLE**

by

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DECLARATION

I, BARRY IGNATIUS MORGAN, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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ABSTRACT

Bullying at schools is a worldwide phenomenon and has been extensively researched. However, the role of teachers in this regard, specifically their responses and attitudes towards bullying, has not been as widely covered or reported on.

In this study a qualitative case study approach was used to explore teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying at a high school in the Cape Metropole. Teachers' attitudes, responses, understandings and perceptions with regard to bullying were explored primarily through interviews with nine staff members at the school.

The purpose of the research is to attempt to create a greater awareness among teachers of the phenomenon of bullying, and to investigate how their attitudes affect the dynamics in the school yard and related educational issues such as retaliation, tolerance, etc.

The research was conducted according to international ethical guidelines and with the permission of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

The literature review for this study covers two main areas: bullying and teachers' attitudes towards it. The area of bullying looks at the phenomenon itself, the definitions thereof, how it is viewed in this study, types of bullying, the role players as well as the effects. Teachers' attitudes towards bullying hone in on school climate, the whole-school approach to bullying prevention, teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying, and the South African context of the study.

Findings will be reported in a narrative format, considering the methodology cited and the literature review.

The conclusions in this study are meant to contribute to the overall prevention of bullying in schools in this country. The conclusions concerning teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying should be of some value in the ongoing challenge to minimise the scourge of bullying in South African schools.

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KEYWORDS

Empathy

Sympathy

Attitudes

Responses

Opinions

Understandings

Whole-school approach

Self-efficacy

Classroom behavioural management

School climate

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

'Reflection upon my practice and wide reading has allowed me to make some sense of the complexities of school bullying. Although bullying may originate outside the school, when it occurs in school, it is the school's responsibility to stop it re-occurring and worsening. A successful intervention is one which recognises ... the key role of the ... teacher and the empowering impact a bully free culture should have on learning.'

(Cleary, 2001: 8)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study explores the attitudes and responses of teachers with regard to bullying behaviour at a high school in the Cape Metropole. This chapter explains the motivation and context for the study. It also refers briefly to the literature to be discussed in Chapter Two and the methodology to be discussed in Chapter Three. Finally, it provides an overview of the structure of the study and definitions of some key concepts.

1.2 MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

I have been teaching for 25 years at a high school in Cape Town. Bullying, (during the 80's and 90's), not globally highlighted and debated as it is today, was a common occurrence at our school during that time. Our principal encouraged the staff to immediately deal with the problem – whether in the classroom or the playground. We were not to bring such 'trivial matters' to the office. Teachers were not given any guidelines and we were left to deal with this as we saw fit. I did not agree with this system as it would lead to disciplinary measures, as widely ranged as teachers' own attitudes to bullying behaviour.

At our school presently, not much has changed in spite of the development of whole-school policies in the South African education system (this approach involves the entire school community made up of the parents, learners and the school staff). A whole-school approach addresses bullying from as many angles and across as broad a

spectrum of the school community as possible and it is based on shared values, beliefs and attitudes within the school community. Our school does not have an anti-bullying policy in place.

The reason for my exploration of this topic is to attempt to create a greater awareness among teachers about the phenomenon of bullying, and how their attitudes could affect the issues around bullying. These could include how teachers' attitudes either strengthen the culture of bullying at a school or lessen its impact and how teachers' attitudes could influence learners' reporting of bullying incidents.

1.3 INFORMATION ON THE SCHOOL CHOSEN FOR CASE STUDY

The school is in the area of Athlone (on the Cape Flats). It presently has an enrolment of about 500 learners. The majority of the learners (70%) are Xhosa-speaking Africans from Langa, Gugulethu, Nyanga, and a few from as far as Khayalitsha. The rest of the learners are classified as 'Coloured' and reside in the Athlone areas of Bridgetown, Kewtown and Silvertown, with a few from Bonthewel, Heideveld and Mitchell's Plain.

The academic measure being the matric results, the school had an average pass rate of below 60% for the 2009 academic year. These results are, to all intents and purposes, the culmination of five years of high school education, sealed with a school-leaving certificate. They are, by and large, a measurement of the teaching and learning programs in place at the school covering the duration of the learners' schooling.

In sport and other extra-curricular activities the school has not been very active. Organised inter-school sport is non-existent. Up until a few years ago the school was involved in soccer, netball, hockey and chess competitions. A combination of factors such as teacher apathy and organisational weaknesses in the school league structures has led to this decline.

The staff, of which I am a member, consists of nineteen members, including the principal. The hierarchal structure has the principal as head, one deputy principal, three heads of department and fourteen post level one teachers. Eleven staff members are male and eight are female.

The school is situated in a low socio-economic area, with a minority of learners coming from severely disadvantaged backgrounds. There are quite a few learners who attend school irregularly due to a lack of travelling funds. Many learners also stay in informal settlements.

I chose the school where I am teaching for my case study. My motivation is that I encountered the problem of bullying at my school and also within my classroom. I observed the negative impact of bullying on my learners over the years. As a consequence, I decided to investigate, to create awareness and to look at remedies to counter the situation.

1.4 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The literature review is divided into two sections. The first section looks at bullying, including the phenomenon itself, definitions thereof, the various types and forms of bullying, the role players involved, as well as the effects of bullying.

The phenomenon of bullying, according to Walker, Ramsey & Gresham (2004: 237) has been around since the advent of schooling, but its intensity and damaging effects have since increased.

There are multiple definitions of bullying in the literature. Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan (2004: 4) defines bullying as a negative act or series of acts, usually carried out over a period of time and mainly characterised by an imbalance of power.

The types of bullying behaviour are wide ranging, from something as 'minor' as a nasty sms, to physical assault causing grievous bodily harm. Hibbert (2004: 8) makes reference to verbal bullying, which includes teasing and name-calling, physical bullying and indirect bullying which encompasses, among others, social exclusion and the spreading of rumours. Cyber bullying is also well documented and includes malicious messages via sms and emails. The common thread is the intention to hurt or humiliate over a period of time.

The role players involved in these acts are bullies, victims and bystanders. Varnava (2002: 2) states that bullies are individuals who constantly crave attention, and bullying satisfies their need for recognition and approval. Csoti (2008: 23) refers to certain traits of victims which make them vulnerable to being singled out by bullies. These include, amongst others, being timid in social situations and crying easily. The bystanders' roles, according to Suckling and Temple (2002: 95), are key to curbing bullying as they are usually in the majority and could take a stand against the perpetrators.

The effects of bullying are wide-ranging. Rigby (2002: 125) states that bullying is a serious mental health problem, both for the victim as well as the bully. Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King (2008: 24) refer to the effects on life, which include absenteeism and poor academic growth. The one point of agreement is that children are negatively affected by bullying, both in the short and long term.

The second section looks at teachers' attitudes to bullying. These include the context in which teachers find themselves, the school climate, the whole-school approach to bullying prevention, and the factors which determine teachers' attitudes.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is underpinned by qualitative research. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 13), qualitative research mostly takes place in naturally occurring situations and it emphasises the multiple realities of subjects' perceptions. This study is primarily qualitative in nature. It seeks an in-depth understanding of teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying behaviour.

The specific epistemology framing the study is the interpretivist framework. Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004: 20) describes the interpretivist paradigm as including descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning-making and understanding. This study ties in with that view as it focuses on the individual teacher and his or her perceptions of and attitudes to bullying behaviour.

The principal research strategy is the case study because of its suitability in undertaking an in-depth study of teachers' attitudes, opinions and responses to

bullying behaviour. According to Henning, et al (2004: 32), the aim of the case study is not just to describe the case for purposes of description, but to probe for patterns, relationships and the dynamics that urge such a study. The aim of this study is to identify patterns and relationships around teachers' responses to bullying and to capture the dynamics of their attitudes in this regard.

Data collection was done by means of interviews. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 349) state that the use of the interview locates human interaction at the core of knowledge generation. The purpose of the interview in this study was to elicit information on teachers' attitudes to bullying, as well as to gauge their opinions, understanding and responses to bullying behaviour.

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' attitudes to bullying at a high school in the Cape Metropole. The two central questions are: 1. What are teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying? 2. How do teachers respond to bullying behaviour?

The data collected in the interviews was thematically analysed and then synthesised into codes, categories and themes. The different codes and themes were then compared and contrasted to test relationships.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 explains the motivation and context for the study and provides a brief introduction to its content and structure. Some definitions of key words are given.

In Chapter 2 various theoretical viewpoints on the phenomena of bullying as well as teachers' attitudes to bullying are presented. It focuses on the various definitions of what constitutes bullying behaviour, the various types of bullying, teachers' attitudes to this, how they perceive bullying as well as their understanding of it.

In Chapter 3 the methodology is discussed. It provides the rationale for following a qualitative approach and describes the use of interviews, the case study method and the analysis procedures employed. The chapter also discusses validity and ethical considerations.

In Chapter 4 the findings are reported and discussed. This chapter is organised within the framework of the research questions, according to the themes identified in the staff interview transcripts.

Chapter 5 discusses the case study findings, points out some limitations of the study and makes some practical recommendations and some suggestions for further research.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF KEY WORDS

The following definitions from the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) have been adopted for the purpose of this study:

- Attitude: A settled way of thinking or feeling about something.
- Response: A reaction to something.
- Opinion: A view or judgement formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.
- Belief: An acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof.
- Understanding: An individual's perception or judgement of a situation.
- Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- Sympathy: Feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.
- Bystander: A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter briefly introduces the study and explains the rationale for the research. A brief synopsis of the literature review and methodology to be used has been set out. Lastly, an overview of the structure of the study, as well as definitions of some key words have been provided.

In the next chapter the researcher will review literature which covers the phenomenon of bullying, definitions thereof, the role players involved as well as the effects of

bullying. A second section looks at teachers' attitudes to bullying, which includes the context in which teachers find themselves, the school climate, the whole-school approach to bullying prevention, and the factors which determine teachers' attitudes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Bullying has been part of school life for generations but [it] cannot be tolerated. The victims are emotionally traumatised and can be driven from school. In the worst cases, bullying can lead to suicide. The bullies will graduate on to domestic violence and assault if not confronted. If we are to become a less violent society, we need to start in the playground.” – Nick Smith, New Zealand Education Minister (Hibbert, 2004: 13).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review is used to create a link between literature on the topic and the research study. Henning, et al (2004: 27) point out that the literature review creates a context in which to argue a case for the study and that it creates a dynamic dialogue between the literature and the study.

This study looks at teacher attitudes to bullying behaviour. As such, a definitive analysis of bullying needs to be proposed prior to any detailed discussion of adult attitudes to bullying. This initial section examines the phenomenon of bullying, definitions thereof, the various types and forms of bullying, the role players involved as well as the effects of bullying.

The following section explores teachers’ attitudes to bullying by looking at teachers and the context in which they find themselves. School climate and how it impacts on bullying behaviour and teacher attitudes to such behaviour is explored at some length. This is followed by an overview of the whole-school approach to bullying prevention and the influence this has on the rate of bullying incidents as well as teacher attitudes to bullying. Finally, the factors of teachers’ attitudes to bullying are described in detail.

2.2 **BULLYING**

2.2.1 **The phenomenon of bullying**

According to Sullivan (2006: 9), thorough investigating into bullying started about 25 years back and has been more urgently addressed at an international level for the past ten years. Roberts (2006: 3) says that evidence has been accumulating, pointing to the problem being far more prevalent than ever imagined. Suckling and Temple (2002: 8) assert that bullying is regarded as violence, whether physical, verbal, blatant or subtle, and that our values are being shaped by the violence prevalent today in our homes, in public places and what we view via the media. In recent years bullying has gained the spotlight as a prime social problem that needs addressing. Varnava (2002: 11) refers to bullying as a wily social issue prevalent in many occupations and walks of life. Bullying is a flaw in the fabric of society and does a lot of damage to any community. Walker, et al (2004: 237) contends that bullying has been around since society first recognised it as part of the schooling process but that this negative social force appears to have increased and become more damaging in its social impact. School bullying has become recognised as a very serious problem for schools, teachers, parents and the learners involved. There is increasing pressure on schools to minimise or halt this aberration in society. What has certainly further lent a sense of urgency to dealing with the problem has been the school shooting tragedies of the 1990s in the USA. Potterton (2003: 5) refers to the first South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey of Grades 8 to 11 learners in which 41% of learners reported that they had been bullied whilst 22% felt unsafe on their way to and from school and 32% felt unsafe at school. This evidence highlights the extent of bullying in South African schools, but it is certainly not confined to our country. Potterton (2003: 5) states that worldwide surveys have identified bullying as the most serious problem at schools.

2.2.2 Definitions of bullying

Relevant literature presents a myriad of definitions. Sullivan (2006: 42) refers to the difference between play and bullying to define bullying. According to Sullivan (2006: 42), children can easily distinguish between play fighting and bullying whilst teachers often confuse the two. In play fighting children take turns being 'victims' or 'perpetrators', no one child is singled out as a victim and no one child or gang is always in control. The difference in a bullying situation is that the victims involved do not agree to the physical contact. Malicious intent is present in bullying. Roberts (2006: 13), on the other hand, differentiates between bullying and teasing in order to define bullying. He defines bullying as long-term exposure to repeated negative actions on the part of one or more persons. Teasing is considered to be less physical and more verbal than bullying and is not seen to be as intimidating as bullying. Roberts (2006: 14) does concede, however, that both teasing and bullying can cause long term psychological damage to the victims.

Sullivan, et al (2004: 4) maintains that '...the underlying factors of abuse, coercion, cruelty, and the wielding of power are of relevance when considering bullying of any type.' They define bullying as a negative act or series of acts, usually over a period of time, and primarily based on an imbalance of power. Forms of bullying could be physical or non-physical and could include damage to property. Sprague and Walker (2005: 81) concur and they define bullying as the intent to physically, socially or mentally harm by means of physical and/or verbal threats or assaults, offensive / threatening gestures and facial expressions, verbal, physical or social intimidation and social exclusion from groups. Bullying also involves a power imbalance, occurs repeatedly over time and often involves the same students. McMullen (2005: 12), however, distinguishes between bullying and conflict in order to expose the misconception that bullying is normal and that children should learn to deal with it. She defines bullying as incidents often out of sight of adults and always containing elements of intimidation and aggression. It is an abuse of power and the victims are usually vulnerable in some way. Hibbert (2004: 4), in a similar vein, refers to bullying as '... done by a person with more power to

a person with less power.’ Further elements include the repetition of the behaviour in most cases and the unfair aggression of one person towards another, mostly repeatedly over a period of time. The Western Cape Education Department (2007: page) refers to bullying behaviour as ‘When a child or group of children misuse their power to hurt other children or exclude them.’ It speaks of three essential elements present in bullying behaviour, namely: the conscious use of aggressive behaviour; the imbalance of power; and, the causing of physical and/or emotional anguish.

2.2.3 How is bullying viewed in this research?

For purposes of this study I would define teasing as a form of bullying and not separate from it. Also, isolated cases of conflict, showing no pattern of intimidation and aggression and being overt of nature, would not be seen as bullying. All the other definitions, however, are congruent and appropriate for this study.

2.2.4 Types of bullying

There has to be an understanding of the breadth of behaviours which could be classed as bullying in order to become familiar with its constant metamorphosis. An example of this is the recent phenomenon of ‘cyber bullying’ (bullying via mobile phones and computers).

Hibbert (2004: 8) refers to three types of bullying: verbal bullying, which includes teasing and name-calling; physical bullying, which ranges from threats to physical assaults and indirect bullying, which includes social exclusion and spreading rumours. Csoti (2008: 12) states that there are two types of bullying behaviour, physical and non-physical bullying, with the former including taking possessions and extortion, while the latter includes provocative behaviour, verbal bullying, relational bullying, sexual harassment as well as cyber bullying.

Direct bullying, according to Walker et al (2004: 240), is an open, confrontational attack which is not only physical in nature, but also includes

threats and intimidation, whereas indirect bullying may be more subtle and includes name-calling, ostracizing and the spreading of rumours.

2.2.5 The role-players involved in bullying

According to Smith, Cousins & Stewart (2005: 740), bullying is dynamic and relational. The roles that children play within a bullying situation, whether as bully, victim or bystander, consolidate over time and sets the tone for a vicious structure of bullying. Players get trapped within these roles and, notwithstanding outside intervention, struggle to break this social mould.

2.3 BULLIES

Sullivan (2006: 16) states that bullies, mostly boys, gravitate towards other anti-social behaviour and many resort to crime.

Research highlights certain characteristics that are commonly found in perpetrators of bullying behaviour. Varnava (2002: 2) refers to bullies as attention-seeking individuals who bully in order to get recognition and approval. Sullivan (2006: 18) says that bullies are often controlling, hot-tempered and lack empathy. According to Walker, et al (2004: 244), male bullies tend to use violence and coercion, are impulsive, lacking in empathy and react aggressively when challenged.

Sullivan (2000: 22) categorises bullies into three types: confident bullies who enjoy aggression and feel secure; anxious bullies who are weak students and usually less popular; and bully/victims who bully and get bullied and are usually unpopular. Bullies, according to Csoti (2008: 13), have a need to control and dominate others and are often defiant and disaffected with school. They also tend to be impatient and quick to anger, behave impulsively, are fairly confident and popular, dislike teamwork and exhibit low levels of empathy.

Bullying behaviour often has contextual relevance that greatly impacts on the situation. For example, bullies are often discovered to have seriously dysfunctional families where abuse is rife. Lines (2008: 76) refer to a range of factors that influence bullying behaviour: a home lacking emotional warmth; aggressive role-modelling;

internalised ethics of 'might is right'; miscalculated reactions from low self-esteem; behaviour disorders; poor social skills; being severely bullied and doing likewise; drug abuse; violent relationships; or a complex combination of these factors.

2.4 VICTIMS

There is a school of thought advocating for the use of the term 'target' instead of 'victim'. The rationale behind this is to highlight the malice of the bully, but also, in the case of the 'victim', the use of this emotive term is likely to compound the damage done. I have no problem with the term 'victim' as I do not perceive it as a permanent state.

Victims' behaviour often deviates from the social norm, and once they are singled out, they risk social rejection and being bullied by multiple bullies. Before long the role of the victim is institutionalised.

There are characteristics of victims that are known to attract bullies. Even though anyone can be bullied, most bullying is not by chance. Victims 'expose' themselves by certain traits. Csoti (2008: 23) refers to traits that increase the risk of victimisation as: being timid in social situations; not being physically strong or co-ordinated; being anxious, depressed or lacking supportive friends; and showing particular behavioural characteristics such as crying easily. Sullivan (2006: 58) refers to passive and provocative victims: passive victims do not directly provoke bullies, but they are perceived as submissive, socially withdrawn, often anxious and depressed and have a poor self-image; the provocative victims, on the other hand, are often hot-tempered, restless and anxious and subsequently less popular with their peers who mostly view their being bullied as brought on by themselves. Sullivan (2000: 26), however, classifies victims into three types, namely; passive victims, provocative victims and bully/victims, with the latter both bullied by stronger peers and, in turn, bullying weaker children.

In counter to the negative characteristics usually attributed to victims, Rigby (2002: 138) speaks of positive personality traits of victims that make them targets for bullies. These include being popular, incorruptible, successful and sensitive.

2.5 THE BYSTANDER

Suckling and Temple (2002: 95) perceive the role of the bystanders as pivotal to curbing bullying as they make up the majority and their stance, if positive, could create a safer school climate. Without the buy-in of this crucial component of a whole-school approach to curbing bullying, the initiative is not likely to be successful. Even with parental involvement and the full co-operation of the staff, the gains made would be minimal without the 'eyes and ears' of the anti-bullying project.

Bystanders take on various roles in the dynamics of bullying behaviour. Csoti (2008: 48) refers to the following roles in bystanders: outsiders, who are usually neutral and may walk away; reinforces, who act as encouragement to the bully; assistants, who join in; and defenders, who support the victim and try to stop the bullying. Sullivan (2000: 31) notes that onlookers are either passive observers, participants in the bullying, the ones who walk away or those who intervene to stop the bullying.

Lee (2004: 46) states that little research exists on the long-term effects of witnessing bullying, but adds that bystanders who do not act out of fear of the bully suffer feelings of disempowerment similar to that of a victim.

The infamous murder case of James Bulgar in Britain is cited by Rigby (2002: 207) as a case in point, where 39 witnesses to the infant's abduction did not intervene and took no action which could have saved the clearly distressed boy's life.

2.6 EFFECTS OF BULLYING

All across the world there have been documented cases of learners who have committed suicide as a direct result of bullying. Rossouw and Stewart (2008: 246) refer to a study in Britain in 1996 which concludes that on average sixteen schoolchildren per year commit suicide due to being bullied. This tragic act is the final cry for help from the bullied child. Post traumatic stress disorder, a normal emotional reaction to a deeply shocking and disturbing experience, has been known to be caused by bullying (Sullivan, 2006:192). Common symptoms of this disorder include: exaggerated startle response; sudden angry or violent outbursts; guilt; anxiety;

emotional numbness; and the development of phobias. Left untreated, the sufferer could have a stress breakdown (Sullivan, 2006: 193).

Hibbert (2004: 34) makes reference to two types of effects: mild cases – which could see behavioural changes in the victim, as well as sleeplessness, depression and poor health; and severe cases – which could be harmful to a child’s development, retard the growth of social skills, diminish self-esteem, lead to the taking of revenge and, ultimately, committing suicide. Rigby (2002: 125) states that bullying is a massive mental health problem, both for the victim whose capacity to cope with the ongoing humiliation and disempowerment may be exceeded, as well as the bully, who may be troubled by the effects of bullying on his victim as well as suffering effects of a dysfunctional family which often set off the cycle of bullying. Sullivan, et al (2004: 20) are of the mind that bullying affects the self-esteem of the victim, causes depression and anxiety and leads to victims becoming withdrawn, worried and fearful of new situations.

Being isolated and excluded, according to Sullivan (2000: 27), could cause a loss of friendship and social interaction, resulting in feelings of incompetence. Victims could develop difficulties in forming good relationships and tend to lead less successful lives. Roberts (2006: 37) adds that victims are negatively affected at three levels: cognitively; affectively; and behaviourally. Roberts (2006: 37) adds that the negative thoughts and feelings experienced by the victim lead to a downward spiral of further grief, thus impacting on the whole being of the child. Suckling and Temple (2002: 9) concur, adding that in later life, victims experience difficulty in developing intimate relationships. Townsend, et al (2008: 24) point to the effects on school life, which include a fear of school, absenteeism and poor academic growth. Some of the more adverse consequences of bullying include elevated psychosomatic complaints, depression and suicide (Townsend, et al 2008: 23).

2.7 TEACHER ATTITUDES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

2.7.1 School climate

The quality of the working life of the teacher, according to van der Westhuizen (2002: 148), is dependent on factors such as: just remuneration; a safe and

healthy working environment; recognition of achievements; a participative organisational structure and open communication channels, amongst other factors. Percival (2004: 121) refers to the creation of a school climate in which all staff members know their role in reaching the goals of the school and are thus able to function without the constant overseeing by the principal because of their belief in the vision for the school.

Gultig (2002: 25) refers to the functional school environment as being associated with order, consensus and clear lines of responsibility in a well organised and supportive climate, whereas the dysfunctional school is one of disorder and disempowered teachers in an environment of low morale.

2.7.2 The whole-school approach to bullying prevention

According to Sullivan, et al (2004: 94), there are six stages involved in the whole-school approach: Step one is ensuring the gaining of knowledge and expertise in the area to be developed; the second step is convincing key players of the importance of an anti-bullying project; step three is the formation of a planning committee; step four deals with the development of a plan of action; and the fifth stage is the implementation of the action plan; and the last step deals with the all important process of evaluation.

An effective whole-school approach to prevent bullying, which is seen to be working, lightens the burden of the teachers in terms of their responses to incidents of bullying. With policy in place and a code of conduct governing bullying prevention and intervention, as well as a supportive school community, teachers are able to effectively deal with incidents of bullying, if and when they occur.

2.7.3 Role modelling

An important aspect that impacts on bullying and teacher attitudes is whether teachers go beyond the 'talk' in addressing bullying. Students want to see that teachers are living the change they want to see. Are teachers intervening when they encounter bullying? Are they counselling the affected students? Are they

themselves utilising the anti-bullying measures they advocate to students? Are they behaving in the calm, assertive manner they expect of their students? Hirschstein, Van Schoiack Edstrom, Frey, Snell & MacKenzie (2007: 7) state that teachers should 'talk the talk' and 'walk the talk' and that teachers modelling the appropriate behaviour have more effect on reducing bullying than simply 'telling'. Biggs, Vernberg, Tremlow, Fonagy & Dill (2008: 535) add that techniques used by teachers such as addressing the whole class when they are disruptive instead of singling out individuals, praising student behaviour that promotes a positive classroom environment, and involving students in classroom goal setting all to promote anti-bullying attitudes amongst students. James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry & Murphy (2008: 161) state that students are particularly influenced by teachers' modelling behaviour, which includes: effective leadership; high expectations of students; and consensus and cohesion among staff. Espelage, Bosworth & Simon (2001: 420) suggest that adults who support non-violent methods of resolving conflict do have a positive influence on the bullying behaviours of students and that their open dialogue and continuous interaction with students help to reduce incidents of bullying.

On the other hand, there are teachers who could be considered bad role models for anti-bullying initiatives. These include teachers who are bullies themselves as well as those who allow themselves to be bullied by other adults as well as students. Teachers who bully cannot effectively address any anti-bullying initiatives as students would easily pick up on the discrepancies. Espelage, et al (2001: 413) assert that the growth of bullying and aggression often involves trends from the larger social environment, which includes the modelling of aggressive and bullying action by adults. Sullivan (2006: 53) refers to teachers who harass students by the use of verbal abuse, public humiliation and threats of physical harm, amongst others. Sullivan, et al (2004: 73) categorise teachers who contribute to a bullying culture in the following manner: the authoritarian teacher whose classroom management is based on autocracy; the narcissistic, "queen bee" teacher whose strategies include seeking popularity by manipulating the social dynamics of the class, having favourites and humiliating victims; the active bully teacher who is the extreme narcissistic teacher, constantly and regularly hounding, belittling and bullying a student;

the disinterested teacher who often ridicules students and never listens to their problems; the permissive teacher who allows bullying to occur through general disinterest and a lax management style. Teachers are often the victims of bullies themselves. They are bullied by both adults and students. Teachers are often bullied by principals and senior teachers. This could take the form of verbal abuse, often in the presence of students, spreading rumours about them, or even social exclusion, amongst others. Teachers are also subjected daily to bullying by students, seriously undermining their role in bullying prevention. According to James, et al (2008: 162), the type of bullying carried out by students on teachers could include insolence, name-calling, non-cooperation, physical threats and theft of property. Such teachers, who lack assertiveness, would have a problem convincing students to be more assertive. Blasé, Blase' & Du (2008: 266) assert that teaching is ranked as a high-risk occupation for abuse.

In the above context it would be extremely difficult for a teacher to effectively respond to bullying and implement any far-reaching change. In fact, it could lead to a significant increase in the rate of bullying.

2.7.4 Teachers' definitions of bullying behaviour

A prerequisite for any whole-school approach to bullying prevention is to firstly reach consensus in terms of what defines bullying before proceeding to look at strategies for its prevention. In the absence of an anti-bullying policy, teachers' definitions of what constitutes bullying is critical in an assessment of teachers' attitudes to bullying behaviour. If teachers, for example, do not define ongoing teasing as bullying, this could, in all likelihood, be dismissed by them as not serious enough to warrant intervention. Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt & Lemme (2006: 555) state that most teachers do not define social exclusion as bullying and are unlikely to intervene despite evidence revealing that this type of bullying has serious psychological repercussions for victims. Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener (2005: 722) make reference to a study in which teachers all agreed that a power imbalance exists in bullying and most were of a mind that bullying is intentional. All teachers in this study included both direct and indirect bullying, although disagreeing on the

seriousness of the various forms. The missing ingredient in teachers' definition of bullying, however, was repetition, not noted by most.

Teachers' definitions of bullying would vary greatly, according to the individual and the ecological framework in which they find themselves. Teachers would mostly link physical assault to bullying because of its overt nature, but some would likely exclude other more covert forms of bullying. However, of greater importance, is that beyond the theoretical definitions of bullying, teachers need to recognise it in its real form and take practical steps to intervene. Mishna, et al (2005: 724) state that the disparity between teachers' definitions and how they perceive real life situations suggests that although a clear definition is central for education, intervention and research, more is required, that is, that teachers are able to unravel the complex dynamics of an incident and recognise whether or not it is bullying.

2.7.5 Teachers' recognition of bullying incidents

In order for teachers to be effective in preventing and intervening in incidents of bullying, they need to be able to recognise incidents of bullying. Recognition of bullying includes recognising the behaviour itself as well as recognising those prone to becoming victims or bullies. Piotrowski and Hoot (2008: 357) state that teachers and their attitudes to bullying hold the greatest potential for reversing the scourge, but that teachers, however, require training in order to recognise bullying behaviour, understand its causes and take deliberate steps to challenge it. Teachers need to be able to recognise specific characteristics of bullies and understand the fluid nature of the bully-victim relationship and the complex set of variables that promotes bullying, including the influences of the media and exposure to violence and aggression in society (Piotrowski & Hoot 2008: 357).

According to Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green (2001: 135), teachers are faced daily with the task of deciding whether a situation they witnessed or were told about was one of bullying, playing or an evenly matched confrontation. Results of this study indicate that teachers – given different scenarios of physical abuse, verbal abuse or social/emotional abuse viewed mostly the physical

conflict as bullying, even when it was not. Most teachers did not recognise verbal or social/emotional abuse as bullying, despite these types being the most reported by students (Hazler, et al 2001: 140).

2.7.6 Teachers' identification of bullies and victims

Identifying bullies and victims, or potential bullies and victims is often used as a strategy to prevent bullying and intervene when required. Teachers would observe for characteristics that are generally linked to the two role players. In the case of the bully, these include being physically more imposing than peers, combined with a domineering, controlling personality as well as an inclination to be short tempered. The victim, on the other hand, would generally be seen as a quiet, timid person, usually of inferior physical stature. Crothers and Kolbert (2008: 134) suggest that teachers should compile a list of students' names, and then categorise into three groups, bullies, victims and bystanders, or teachers should match students with particular behavioural traits related to role players in incidents of bullying. This should be followed up with individual intervention efforts. Piotrowski and Hoot (2008: 360) state that, through observation, teachers could identify bullies by their lack of remorse and reluctance to help or compliment others in student interaction.

Teachers could, however, be wrong in their identification of a bully and victims. General characteristics of bullies observed by a teacher in a student could just be a front to dupe the teacher, as often such students get along well with their peers. This could also be the case in the observation of 'victims'. Teachers have been known to react with surprise on hearing that a particular 'well behaved' child had been fingered for bullying or that a child that seems well adjusted and is academically sound had been identified as a victim. Beran (2006: 121) states that bullying may also occur in the absence of (generally accepted) characteristics, and that students often alternate between the two roles, making the identification of a student as bully or victim a difficult task. Mishna, et al (2005: 723) add that many teachers seem to assume that victims would not be assertive and that the bullying would affect their concentration and grades, which is often not the case. Factors that could hamper teachers' accurate identification of bullies and victims include: age of students;

frequency of contact with students; and nature of the behaviour (Mishna, et al.2005: 719).

2.7.7 Teachers' perceived seriousness of bullying behaviour

Teachers' perceived seriousness of bullying incidents has a major impact on how and if they intervene. Often, because of its overt nature, only physical bullying is perceived by teachers as important enough to warrant sanctions. The more covert forms of bullying- verbal abuse and social/emotional abuse- are often left to students to sort out themselves. According to Ellis and Shute (2007: 651), teachers' perceived seriousness of bullying incidents was directly linked to the likelihood of intervention and their empathy towards victims. Gender differences also play a significant role: male teachers tend to ignore social and verbal bullying to a greater degree than female teachers (Ellis & Shute 2007: 659). Yoon (2004: 40) states that the perceived seriousness of bullying incidents by teachers contributed to a reduction in bullying incidents and that by increasing teachers' awareness of the negative effects of bullying, the likelihood of interventions by teachers would be bolstered. By including discussions of the consequences of bullying in teacher training programs, it will boost teacher knowledge of bullying and increase empathy towards victims (Yoon. 2004: 40).

2.7.8 Teachers' attitudes towards bullying prevention and intervention

Teachers' attitudes to tackling bullying behaviour at schools have a profound impact on school climate and the rate of bullying incidents. Schools with teachers who adopt a mostly positive and proactive stance towards bullying prevention tend to have a lower prevalence of bullying than those whose teachers generally throw up their hands in defeat and leave the children to their own devices. Lee, Buckthorpe, Craighead & McCormack (2008: 172) state that bullying occurs at a lower rate when teachers discuss bullying with their students, are able to recognise bullying behaviour and show a willingness to deal with it, whereas a lack of teacher interest in bullying, resulting in an unsuitable reaction, causes bullying behaviour to be elevated. Conoley (2008:

219) says that homophobic attitudes among teachers lend covert support to the denigration of students not fitting the gender behaviour norms.

Also of great significance are teachers' attitudes to supporting their schools' bullying prevention programme. Their level of commitment to the school's program will strongly impact on the rate of bullying incidents. Mishna, et al (2005: 719) state that factors that play a role in whether teachers adhere to a bullying prevention programme include: their perception of the staff's participation in curbing bullying; their own experiences of childhood bullying; their emotional involvement; and the amount of programme information they read. According to Ellis and Shute (2007: 650), if a school's anti-bullying policy is in direct contrast to a teacher's moral stance, the likelihood of that teacher adhering to the programme would be reduced. Ellis and Shute (2007: 650) add that teachers' attitudes could be influenced by one of two moral reasonings: justice orientation – in which teachers are focussed on fairness and rules; or, care orientation - where teachers lean towards understanding relationships and the needs of others. The practical implementation of a school's bullying prevention programme could thus be supported by one school of reasoning and possibly alienate the other.

2.7.9 Teacher training and self-efficacy

Teachers are key to reducing the scourge of bullying and creating a positive school climate. Despite the worldwide outcry against bullying and its negative effects, there are still teachers who do not take action to curb this. Howard, Horne & Jolliff (2001: 183) state that some of the reasons for this inaction could include: teachers feeling that they are not qualified to deal with bullying; others believing that their intervention could worsen the situation; and some teachers not being fully aware of the magnitude of the problem.

Teacher training in strategies to counter bullying would be of benefit to many teachers struggling to deal with the complex dynamics of bullying. Teachers are not only left with a sense of frustration at their perceived inability to help, but many also carry a burden of guilt at abandoning victims of bullying. Many do attempt to intervene, but a lack of confidence in their ability to fix the

problem, coupled with the complexities of bullying incidents, cause many to despair. Howard, et al (2001: 190) state that a training program for teachers called, *Bully busting: A Psycho education Program for Helping Bullies and Their Victims*, is effective in expanding teachers' knowledge, developing their intervention skills, and empowering them to liaise with students in curbing bullying behaviour. Flynt and Morton (2008: 189) assert that teachers are generally unaware of the extent of bullying behaviour at schools and that they are mostly in agreement about undergoing training to boost their bullying prevention and intervention skills. Piotrowski and Hoot (2008: 357) add that in order for a teacher training programme to be successful, it should include specific methods to prevent violence and bullying and that the training should form part of an ongoing project with annual re-training. Beran (2006: 121) argues that besides their academic obligations, teachers need to be able to manage problematic behaviour and socialise students to adapt to societal norms. In order to achieve this, teachers need both pre-service and in-service training. Yoon (2004: 40) asserts that in order to increase teachers' self-efficacy, specific behavioural management methods should be presented to teachers in a training program.

2.7.10 Classroom behavioural management

Crothers and Kolbert (2008: 132) suggest that in order to effectively deal with bullying, teachers should view it as a behaviour management problem in order to create a classroom climate hostile to bullying.

A teacher's consistent enforcement of classroom rules and regulations is central to curbing anti-social behaviour in the classroom. If teachers keep students constantly engaged, it will minimise opportunities for bullying behaviour. Rowan (2007: 183) states that the combination of good management strategies and a well planned academic programme helps to reduce incidents of bullying.

In classroom behavioural management, students should be empowered to take an active role in preventing conflict. Rowan (2007: 185) asserts that students

should be skilled in techniques that enable them to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and that empower bystanders and victims to stop bullies.

2.7.11 Teachers' own childhood experiences of bullying

Every teacher would have experienced bullying as a child, whether as a bully, victim or bystander/witness. These experiences could have been of a minor nature, a traumatic experience or somewhere in between. Notwithstanding the level of seriousness, it impacts on the teacher's attitude to incidents of bullying at school. Wiseman (2003: 8) states that teachers should be guided towards understanding the link between their adolescent experiences of bullying and their attitudes to it in their own teaching. Tremlow and Fonagy (2005: 238) add that teachers who experienced childhood bullying, often grow up to be bullies. Mishna, et al (2005: 724) say that of a group of teachers who had experienced childhood bullying, several felt that their experiences had sensitised them to the complex dynamics of bullying and the need to be vigilant to signs of it. There is a limited body of literature on the impact of teachers' own experiences of bullying and its link to their classroom practices in this regard, but it is indisputable that a relationship does exist. Teachers are, after all, human beings with feelings, and the influence of past bullying experiences would be brought to bear in their daily encounters with bullying behaviour.

2.7.12 The South African context

Burton (2008: 2) refers to three fundamental characteristics of school violence in South Africa, namely: that violence in our schools is entrenched in the wider violent nature of our society; that violence is a phenomenon which has aspects of structure and culture within its makeup; and, that schools reflect the ongoing conflict in society.

Corporal punishment is illegal in schools under the South African Constitution. According to Sonn (1999: 18), many teachers are frustrated because the old methods of discipline are no longer relevant, corporal punishment has been outlawed and learners have become more demanding.

Another challenge facing South African teachers is the lack of parental involvement. Oosthuizen (2010: 81) states that a parent's participation in school activities helps to positively mould the child in terms of behaviour and scholastic achievements.

2.8 SUMMARY

The often seemingly insurmountable problems faced by teachers on a daily basis with regard to bullying is a reality. Not only do teachers have to unravel the dynamics that define, underpin, bullying, they often have to contend with a school climate not always conducive to the prevention of bullying. Then again, in order for teachers to make any meaningful contribution to bullying intervention or prevention, they have to be role models, reflecting a stance which discourages bullying.

Teachers also have the task of identifying bullying incidents if and when they occur. Failure in any of the above would render the teacher's endeavours to curb bullying less than effective.

Teachers' ability to perceive the serious nature of bullying impacts on anti-bullying strategies as well as the attitudes teachers hold towards the school's bullying prevention and intervention strategies. A marked difference in the beliefs of the teacher and the policy would lead to ineffectiveness in the policy implementation.

The degree of training received by in-service teachers as well as pre-service teachers would have a significant influence on teachers' self efficacy, and will directly impact on prevention effectiveness. This would also be linked to the effective classroom behavioural management of bullying behaviour. If teachers are able to effectively incorporate classroom behavioural strategies to deal with bullying, it would minimise disruptions and help to reduce the school's level of bullying incidents.

Teachers' own childhood experiences of bullying would undoubtedly impact on how they relate to incidents of bullying, either positively or negatively influencing bullying behaviour. Whether teachers, as children, had been bullies, victims, bully/victims or bystanders, their own experiences of bullying behaviour would play a part in their handling of bullying incidents as adults.

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology employed during the research project. The aim was to probe teachers' attitudes to bullying behaviour. To achieve this, I conducted the study within a qualitative framework, using interviews as my data collection instrument.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

'The type of text that will be produced in the report of a study will be an extensive "piece" of language that is cohesive and coherent and in which methods that complement each other feature in a design logic.' - Henning, et al, 2004: 31)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a case study that explores the attitudes of teachers to bullying behaviour. The research paradigm which frames the study is the interpretivist research paradigm. Given its exploratory nature, qualitative methodology was considered to be the most appropriate methodology to use. This chapter looks at the use of qualitative methodology in relation to this study and also outlines the strengths of qualitative research. The case study as research design is examined in detail. Data was collected from nine teachers as the unit of analysis and the method of data collection was the semi-structured interview.

3.2 AN INTERPRETIVIST FRAMEWORK

The specific epistemology which frames my qualitative research is the interpretivist research paradigm. Henning, et al (2004: 20) explain the construction of knowledge within the interpretivist paradigm as including descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding. These descriptions fit well with my study as it focuses on the individual teachers and their attitudes to bullying behaviour.

Henning, et al (2004: 20) further describe the interpretive theory of knowledge as the comprehension of phenomena through people's interpretations, which are directly linked to social contexts. This study of teachers' attitudes to bullying would be aligned with teachers' interpretations of the phenomena within their social contexts.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 133) assert that all qualitative approaches have two things in common. They emphasise phenomena in their natural environment and the phenomena are studied in a multifaceted form. Henning, et al (2004: 3) concurs, stating that the qualitative paradigm is intensely focussed on a multidimensional understanding within a natural location. Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 13) add that qualitative research takes place mostly in naturally occurring situations, unlike the controlled setting of quantitative research, and that qualitative research emphasises the multiple realities of subjects' perceptions. This research is primarily qualitative in nature and seeks an in-depth understanding of teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying behaviour.

The role of the researcher in qualitative methodology is of paramount importance. Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 14) view the researcher as an insider in the situation. Unlike quantitative research which is clinical and calculated in its methods, the qualitative researcher cannot be aloof from the subject. Instead, the context sensitivity of the qualitative researcher lies at the crux of qualitative research. Henning, et al (2004: 10) add that when a researcher in qualitative research starts a study, he or she joins the community of participants. My role as the researcher is certainly one of an insider. I am based at the institute where the study is being conducted. I am thus part of its context and a co-participant in the 'lived experience' of the participants.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 Case study

This study uses the case study approach as the principal research strategy. The rationale for using this method is its suitability to undertake an in-depth study of teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying behaviour.

Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 241) state that case studies, widely used in qualitative research, are detailed studies of a specific event, an organisation, etc. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 108) define a case study as a form of qualitative research in which in-depth information is collated on a single individual, programme or

event in order to learn more about something not well understood. Henning, et al (2004: 32) refer to a case study as any entity that can be restricted by fixed guidelines and reveals a particular dynamic and suitability, divulging data that can be confined within these limits.

Some of the hallmarks of a case study, according to Cohen, et al (2007: 253), are: it is linked to rich descriptions; it blends descriptions with the analysis of them; the emphasis is on individuals and an understanding of their insight; and, the researcher is an integral part of the research. This present study aims to capture rich descriptions via interviews with a selected sample of teachers at a high school in the Cape Metropole, and use these descriptions to do data analysis. The focus is on the individual teacher and his or her attitude to bullying. I am a teacher at the high school in question and thereby form an integral part of the research.

The aim of the case study, according to Henning, et al (2004: 32), is not just to describe the case for purposes of description, but to probe for patterns, relationships and the dynamics that urge such a study. The aim of this study is to seek out patterns and relationships around teachers' responses to bullying and to capture the dynamics of teachers' attitudes in this regard.

Gall, Gall & Borg (2007: 454) assert that the design of each case study is determined by the researcher carrying out the case study and it is specific to the phenomenon under scrutiny. They further state that at the core of design research is interpretation, and that the researcher's interpretation creates the structure of the study. These interpretive acts include the particular blend of questions and ideas that set the tone for the inquiry, the choice of focus of the researcher in order to place his or her study as well as the researcher's moulding of the meanings and understandings of a particular point of view, amongst others. There are, therefore, no standard designs for case studies, and my inquiry will be designed within my interpretive leanings.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 135) state that in a case study, the researcher also includes contextual information linked to the case, which could include information about the physical environment as well as any historical,

economic, and social elements that impact on the situation. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 136) add that by identifying the context of the case, the researcher assists the reader to make the generalisable link. I have done this by providing information on the school's demographics, the socio-economic climate, etc.

According to Henning, et al (2004: 41), the process of a qualitative case study is prioritised above the outcomes, and that a description of how, where, when and why things happen in the case form a vital segment of the inquiry. Henning, et al (2004: 41) add that the process and the outcome are linked and that the context and action form the unit of analysis. This present study will therefore, examine the setting, but focus on rationale and method. Also, the contextual setting in which the participants are situated will form an integral part of the study.

3.4.2 Interviews

Cohen, et al (2007: 349) state that the interview is an interchange of opinions involving two or more people on a point of shared interest and that the use of the interview locates human interaction at the core of knowledge generation. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 146) suggest that interviews could provide a return of useful information, including facts, people's beliefs and perspectives about the facts, feelings, motives, present and past behaviour, standards for behaviour, and conscious reasons for actions and feelings. Henning, et al (2004: 65) state that the purpose of a discursive interview is to not only analyse the content of the interview, but to delve into context, searching for meaning beyond the denotative understanding.

I used interviews as the data collecting instrument of my research. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information on teachers' attitudes to bullying.

As a research method, interviews enable the researcher to explore and collect information in some depth. The researcher can also ask further questions that will allow the extraction of much needed information. Furthermore, the researcher could ask respondents to clarify and expand on responses to gain further information.

I interviewed each of the nine teachers individually. The duration of each interview was half an hour and these were conducted each over a period of three weeks during the hour that teachers remain at school each day (non-contact time). The interviews were held in the school's book room, a relatively noise-free environment. They were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

I used a semi-structured interview format to ensure, firstly, that the crucial points of my study were covered, and secondly, that the more informal section of the interview was suitable to generate a wealth of valuable and in-depth data.

All participants in the interviews were informed of the procedures and purpose of the interviews. The interviewees had agreed to participate in the study and they had given their permission for the information obtained to be used for research purposes. I informed participants of their rights regarding the interviews, assured them of absolute confidentiality and pointed out their right to view the transcript immediately on completion and adjust if they felt the need.

3.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore teachers' attitudes to bullying at a high school in the Cape Metropole. Two central research questions guided the study.

The research questions basically focus on two aspects of bullying, namely how teachers view bullying and how they respond to bullying incidents and behaviour. The research questions are thus formulated as follows:

- a) What are teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying?
- b) How do teachers respond to bullying behaviour?

The key areas covered in the interview are:

- Teachers' own definitions of bullying and their perceptions of the characteristics of both bully and victim.
- Teachers' attitudes towards bullies and victims.
- Teachers' responses to direct bullying and indirect bullying.
- Teachers' beliefs about their ability to deal with bullying.
- Teachers' own experiences of bullying as a child and its impact on their current attitude and response to bullying.
- Teachers' emotional responsiveness and empathy towards victims.
- Types of teacher interventions in various bullying situations.
- Teachers' perceptions of the school's ability to respond to bullying.
- The impact of teachers' workload on the ability to respond to bullying.
- Teachers' commitment to learning more about bullying and dealing with it.

The objective of the case study is not merely to describe teachers' attitudes and responses regarding bullying, but to try to see patterns, relationships and the dynamics that warrant such an inquiry. Rich data will be collected in the semi-structured interview.

The results will be analysed using the following categories:

1. What are teachers' attitudes with regard to the various levels and degrees of bullying phenomena?
2. How do teachers respond to this diverse bullying behaviour?

Findings will be reported in a narrative format, considering the methodology cited and the literature review.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Henning, et al (2004: 101) hold up data analysis as the means to gauge the competence of a qualitative researcher and state that this process requires analytical craftsmanship and the ability to capture data comprehension in transcription. Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 237) describe data analysis in qualitative research as a process of successive approximations leading to a precise description and interpretation of the phenomenon.

The data collected in the interviews was thematically analysed which entailed attentive listening to the audio recording, searching through the transcripts and synthesising the data into codes, categories and themes. The different codes and themes were then compared and contrasted to test relationships.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cohen, et al (2007: 51) state that most issues around the ethical field are linked to procedural ethics, but that researchers have to bear in mind that ethics concern right and wrong, good and bad and that one has to keep in mind how the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes remain faithful to ethical principles and practices.

Gall, et al (2007: 459) make reference to four types of ethics that can be used in qualitative research. These include: utilitarian ethics, whereby researchers evaluate the righteousness of their decisions and actions by taking into account the end result; deontological ethics, in which researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions by alluding to absolute values, such as honesty, justice and fairness, among others; relational ethics, in which researchers evaluate the righteousness of their decisions and actions in terms of whether they reflect a caring attitude to others; ecological ethics, in which researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions with reference to the participants' culture and the larger social system of which they form part.

All research should aim at careful preparation which involves explanation and consultation before any data collection takes place. Research ethics requires clarity about the nature of the agreement which has been entered into with the research participants. Researchers using qualitative research methods are collecting data through human interaction and it is crucial that the interaction should be grounded on full consent and transparent information.

I requested permission from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct my study. This permission was subsequently granted. (Appendix B) I then met with the designated teachers. I then outlined the objectives of my research and their role in its

successful completion. I assured them of confidentiality and that their privacy and sensitivity would be protected. I clearly spelled out their rights with regard to the interview, which include the right to refuse to answer a question, the right to withdraw from the proceedings at any stage, the right to refuse to be audio recorded as well as their right to study the transcript and its interpretation and make amendments if necessary. I drafted a letter of consent (Appendix C) which was signed by the interviewees before the commencement of the interviews.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the rationale for the research and described qualitative research as well as the crucial role of the researcher in this type of research. The epistemology framing my research, the interpretivist framework, is examined for its suitability in my study. The case study and interview research methods as well as the data analysis used are described in this chapter. Finally, I point out the ethical considerations involved in this research.

In the next chapter, the data collected will be analysed. Qualitative data is subjective, interpretive, descriptive and holistic. To make sense of the data, the codes and themes that were revealed were compared and contrasted.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

“Bullying is something that is not really looked at in schools. It is such a potent thing that can work against a child, even in his upbringing, even in later years he ends up where he doesn’t want to be and especially people in jail are bullies or were bullied. It had this chain reaction on their lives...” – Teacher (Interview 2)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As previously stated, the aim of the study was to explore the attitudes of teachers at a high school in the Cape Metropole to incidents of bullying. The case study method was chosen. This chapter provides a detailed description of the case, an analysis of the issues and the researcher’s interpretation of the case. Henning, et al (2004: 41) state that case studies are used to probe for an intricate comprehension of the situation and meaning for the role players. The school context has been described in Chapter 1. The data has been analysed into themes under the headings of the two research sub-questions. Where applicable, data from the different sources has integrated, but differences have also been identified. Quotations from the respondents have been selected to illustrate each theme and provide a sense of the context at this particular school.

4.2 WHAT ARE TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES WITH REGARD TO THE VARIOUS LEVELS AND DEGREES OF BULLYING PHENOMENA?

The source of the data was the interview transcripts. Seven themes related to bullying were identified, namely:

- Teachers’ own definitions of bullying
- Teachers’ perceptions of characteristics of a typical bully and victim
- Teachers’ attitudes towards bullies and victims
- Teachers’ beliefs about their ability to deal with bullying
- Teachers’ perceptions of the school’s ability to effectively respond to bullying
- Teachers’ perceptions of the impact of their workload on their ability to respond effectively to bullying

- Teachers' commitment to the development of skills to effectively deal with bullying behaviour.

These themes are discussed below in more detail in order to highlight the respondents' views with relevance to bullying behaviour.

4.2.1 Teachers' own definitions of bullying

Teachers were prompted to define their understanding of what bullying is. Most definitions were congruent with the definitions found in the literature.

“Bullying takes place when one learner or a group of learners victimises another learner by trying to instil fear in that learner, the victim. They either assault the learner or break the learner down emotionally. They would like to be or feel superior to that learner.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

“It's a way of humiliating and intimidating the victim, making him feel small and unimportant....” – Teacher (Interview 1)

All the teachers agree that bullying behaviour is more than just physical assault; it includes intimidation, humiliation, teasing and can also be verbal and emotional. Some of the teachers believe that bullying usually involves a physically bigger learner bullying a smaller learner.

4.2.2 Teachers' perceptions of characteristics of a typical bully and victim

Each respondent had his/her own concept of what constitutes a typical bully. More congruency was achieved with regard to what constitutes a victim, however.

“He (the bully) will be very loud, he would like to be the centre of attraction, and it will look as if he is very secure, but he is not. The victims are usually very quiet, insecure introverts.” – Teacher (Interview 2)

“The bully would be physically bigger built. He’ll be angrier, more aggressive. He would have a history of fighting. In my opinion, that comes from the home setup... The victim (usually) has a soft, weak character...” – Teacher (Interview 8)

From these responses it was clear that a diversity of characteristics of a typical bully emerged. Some believe the bully to usually be a physically bigger learner. Some teachers see the typical bully as an aggressive, demanding, loud and verbally abusive type. Other attributes of a typical bully that emerged from the data are that he/she is a lonely individual with low self esteem, and who often comes from an abusive background.

Most of the teachers interviewed agreed that characteristics usually prominent in a typical victim include having a quiet nature, being submissive and lacking in confidence and self esteem. Other characteristics point to an individual who is usually an introvert and of a physically smaller build.

4.2.3 Teachers’ attitudes towards bullies and victims

Most of the teachers interviewed believe that bullies should be punished according to the school’s code of conduct in relation to the specific offence committed. Generally, sympathy and empathy towards victims were expressed by teachers.

“There should be a punishment. In some cases you will find out that the child needs counselling. You need to find out where it comes from, then you counsel.” – Teacher (Interview 1)

“The victim has to be encouraged. Motivate them that they must not allow the bullies to do these things to them. They should stand up for themselves. They do have rights too. Make them aware of that.” – Teacher (Interview 6)

A few divergent views included exposing the bullies in class, i.e. public humiliation, and speaking to the bully in order for him to see the error of his ways. Most teachers were also of the view that bullying behaviour stems from

a problematic family background, and that bullies would benefit from professional counselling.

Teachers interviewed generally felt empathy and sympathy towards victims. Most of them agreed that victims should receive professional counselling and support. A general recommendation was that victims should be taught life skills to empower them to deal with bullying behaviour.

4.2.4 Teachers' beliefs about their ability to deal with bullying

Respondents showed a general concern about their perceived inability to deal with incidents of bullying.

“I dealt with bullying previously and I did it effectively because it stopped in that one class. I don't think that I need to be work shopped about bullying.” – Teacher (Interview 1)

“There is still a room for improvement. I wouldn't say I am equipped to deal with bullying even though from my side I could be able to see the symptoms and the little signs. Given the opportunity to know more, I might even pick up some other things which I was not even aware of. If you stop learning, you stop growing.” - Teacher (Interview 7)

“No (I am not equipped). I would definitely welcome training.” – Teacher (Interview 2)

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that they did not have the ability to effectively deal with incidents of bullying and that they would welcome training in this regard. A few felt that they have some skills to deal with bullying, but that they do need further training. One teacher felt fully equipped to deal with bullying behaviour. This individual did not feel that further training was necessary.

4.2.5 Teachers' perceptions of the school's ability to effectively respond to bullying

The teachers interviewed highlighted the lack of authority and consistency on the part of the school when responding to incidents of bullying. A general concern was the lack of a policy dealing specifically with bullying.

“I don't think so. We don't have that many structures in place. ...we haven't identified that this is a major problem... We have the code of conduct dealing with discipline issues, but it is not good enough. It's just a general thing and we are not consistent in dealing with it.” – Teacher (Interview 4)

“No. They are not effectively responding to bullying behaviour. Nothing has really been done concerning bullying.” – Teacher (Interview 3)

“No. This school does not have structures in place. I haven't seen a policy on bullying. We're not very consistent on how we deal with bullying. At our school it is not seen as bullying, it is seen as an assault, as a criminal offence and the authorities are called in. Sometimes you don't have to call in the police; you need to get other organisations who can deal with the bully and the victim.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

School climate is integrally tied to the quality of the working life of the teacher, and, according to van der Westhuizen (2002: 148), factors such as a safe and healthy working environment and a participative organisational structure amongst others, are vital to creating a positive quality of working life. The majority of the teachers interviewed felt that the school does not have the ability to effectively deal with bullying behaviour due mainly to a lack of structures in place in the disciplinary code of the school. The lack of a policy on bullying prevention was also cited as a reason for the school's inability to curb bullying incidents. Teachers made reference to the fact that bullying incidents were mainly treated as isolated incidents and dealt with according to the code of conduct. This, they felt, left learners vulnerable to ongoing and worsening episodes of bullying. Teachers interviewed seem to implicitly acknowledge the lack of a safe and bully-free climate at school. This is evident

in the general response that the school does not have structures in place to deal with bullying.

4.2.6 Teachers' perceptions of the impact of their workload on their ability to effectively respond to bullying

Most of the teachers interviewed perceived bullying prevention and intervention as separate from their behavioural management of learners. Most felt that they were already overburdened with administrative work and were reluctant to deal with the administrative responsibility that comes with the effective prevention and intervention around bullying.

“Yes. It will definitely add to my workload.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

“If I have to be part of a team for bullying (prevention and intervention), it would affect my workload because of all the paperwork involved and the intervention process.” – Teacher (Interview 1)

“No (it does not affect workload). These are things that we can do so that we can have a better child...that they can deal better with their emotions. It might even help us.” – Teacher (Interview 4)

The current curriculum in schools is still a great challenge to teachers today. A key component of this challenge is the administrative burden which has been thrust on teachers. Thus, the whole-school approach to bullying prevention and intervention, with its consequent administrative workload, is not wholeheartedly supported by teachers. The majority of teachers interviewed felt that any effective response to bullying behaviour will negatively impact on their teaching workload. The general tone was that any measures to curb bullying would greatly benefit the learners, but teachers were not at all enthusiastic with regard to the administrative work that accompanies this. Two of the teachers interviewed felt that, notwithstanding the extra work required, they would welcome it because of the positive effects for the learners.

4.2.7 Teachers' commitment to the development of skills to effectively deal with bullying behaviour

Despite their reluctance to engage with the burden some workload that an effective campaign against bullying would entail, most teachers were eager to be involved in training workshops in this regard.

“I would definitely welcome training.” – Teacher (Interview 2)

“Yes. I would definitely be interested in training or workshops on bullying behaviour.” – Teacher (Interview 3)

All teachers, with one exception, felt that they needed training or workshops to deal with bullying behaviour, or felt they needed further skills training to complement their existing skills base. One teacher felt adequately prepared to deal with bullying behaviour and thus did not feel the need for any skills training.

4.3 HOW DO TEACHERS RESPOND TO THESE DIVERSE FORMS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?

The source of the data was the interview transcripts. Four themes were identified, namely:

- Teachers' responses to direct bullying and indirect bullying.
- Teachers' own experiences of bullying as a child and its impact on their current attitude and response to bullying.
- Teachers' emotional responsiveness and empathy towards victims.
- Types of teacher interventions in various bullying situations.

The above themes are discussed in greater detail below, emphasising teachers' responses to the various facets of bullying.

4.3.1 Teachers' responses to direct bullying

The diverse response around direct bullying highlights the school's lack of clarity in this regard.

"I'll call both parties. I would want to hear both sides of the stories, as to what happened. I take it from there. Obviously one would be suspended. The parents would be called in, tell them this is the situation, this is what is happening; we are going to take this further." - Teacher (Interview 1)

"I need to find out how long this thing is going on, try to get to the bottom, how it started. If I can't manage to solve this problem, I would go to someone who is more equipped with children with bullying (problems)." - Teacher (Interview 2)

"Get the police and the parents in. Make him understand that what he is doing is wrong." – Teacher (Interview 8)

Teachers interviewed were asked about how they would respond to a scenario which they witness, where one boy physically assaults another (and the teacher discovers that it is an ongoing situation). The responses varied from the teacher just calling the parties involved to one side and speaking to them (with the implication that the bully would be warned and threatened with more serious repercussions if he did it again), to suspension of the aggressor (with the assumption that due process was followed), to the summoning of the police in order to lay charges of assault and have the learner arrested and later released into his parents' care.

Three of the teachers interviewed believed that the bully and victim should be spoken to and that the bully should be warned. One interviewee intimated that the bully should be suspended from school for his transgression. Two respondents were of the opinion that a person trained to deal with situations of bullying should be called upon to resolve the issue, whether a teacher at school or a member/s of an outside organisation. One teacher questioned the often used excuse that they "were just playing". "To me, if you are playing, how

come you are hurting the other person.” One respondent suggested that all the teachers who teach the bully and victim should be called to a meeting where they should be informed of the transgression and together a solution to the problem should be arrived at. Another teacher felt that the parents of the learners involved as well as the police should be called in. The implication of this action is that the victim and his parents should lay a charge of assault against the bully. This would then result in the bully being arrested by the police and taken to the police station. He would later be released into the custody of his parents. This view was in direct contrast to that of another teacher who voiced reservations about calling in the police as a solution to the bullying problem. This teacher felt that professional help was required and that the laying of a charge of assault was too drastic and would not be helpful in the long term.

4.3.2 Teachers’ responses to indirect bullying

Teachers’ responses to indirect bullying also showed up inconsistencies in dealing with bullies and victims.

“Find out if it is true. The person spreading the rumour, interview her and ask her why she is doing it... Get the parents in... There are legal circumstances.... defamation of character.” – Teacher (Interview 8)

“I normally speak to the girls, as it happens a lot. Just speaking to them is not effective. Tomorrow the same thing happens and they have been spoken to every day, but it keeps on happening and they keep on doing it.” – Teacher (Interview 3)

“I would address the class she (the bully) is in. I will generalise it, not mention any names.... It is a form of bullying. The person is not going to stop unless you let them know that what they doing is wrong. It is a form of warning to that person that spread the rumours.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

Teachers interviewed were asked about how they would respond to the following scenario: A girl comes to you to complain that another girl has been

spreading rumours about her – that she (the victim) sleeps around with boys. The rumour monger, when confronted, admits to this. The responses varied from just telling the rumour monger to stop, to warning the bully of the consequences which could include accusations of defamation of character that could result in court proceedings.

One respondent felt that the appropriate response would be to tell the bully to stop spreading rumours. A few respondents agreed that the girls involved should be called together to try and solve the problem. However, they differed as to the effectiveness of this response. One teacher did not say whether or not this might effectively sort out the problem. Another admitted that this response does not help and that the bully will continue to spread rumours, regardless of the warning given. A third respondent admitted that she was not sure of its effectiveness but that she hoped it would solve the problem. A few respondents felt that a deeper probing of the issue was required and that the teacher should find out the reasons for the bully's actions, which might include envy and jealousy. One teacher felt that the issue should be addressed in the class of which the bully is part, to educate learners about the harm caused by the spreading of rumours and to send out a warning to the bully. Two of the respondents agreed that an appropriate form of action would be to address the bully and explain to her the possible serious consequences of her actions, which might include being sued for defamation of character in a court of law. One teacher agreed that the school's code of conduct might not address the problem and that a policy in this regard should be drawn up.

4.3.3 Teachers' own experiences of bullying as a child and its impact on their current attitude and response to bullying

Only a few of the teachers interviewed said that they had been bullied as a child, and only half of this number felt that it impacts on how they respond to incidents of bullying.

“Yes, when I was a young boy, especially at primary school, I was exposed to bullying behaviour. I make sure that bullying doesn't continue. I'm more protective to the victim and also trying to find out why is this one continuing to

bully this one. Maybe they are also being bullied themselves.” – Teacher (Interview 7)

“I was the bully. From what I know now, I realise bullying is wrong. I could see how the victims felt at the time. I agree it would affect how I react now.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

“I was bullied a lot. I was a very quiet person and I never defended myself. It was emotional bullying in high school. It affects the way I am as a person today.” – Teacher (Interview 4)

The majority of teachers interviewed said that they had not experienced bullying as a child and thus it did not impact on their attitudes to bullying situations. Four of the respondents, however, related having experienced this phenomenon. Three of them said that they had been bullied. Two of these teachers conceded that it definitely impacts on how they respond to bullying behaviour. The third teacher felt that, despite being bullied as a child, the experience does not impact on how she responds to bullying behaviour today. One respondent acknowledged that she had been a bully as a child. She said that she has since seen the error of her ways and agrees that this childhood experience certainly impacts on how she responds to incidents of bullying.

4.3.4 Teachers’ emotional responsiveness and empathy towards victims

Most of the respondents agreed that they felt empathy towards victims, with a few even extending this to bullies. They felt that bullies were often ‘victims’ of circumstances who needed help.

“Yes, I have empathy towards victims. I recognise the symptoms of bullying, the cause of bullying. I also have empathy towards bullies.” – Teacher (Interview 1)

“I don’t think I have a strong response. If there was, I would have done more for the victim.” – Teacher (Interview 3)

“What I went through I wouldn’t want another child to go through.” – Teacher (Interview 4)

Three of the teachers interviewed agreed that they felt empathy, not only for the victim, but the bully as well. One felt that both bully and victim needed help. Another felt that she would rather help the victim, but she realised that both needed help. The third respondent felt that the bully also had emotional scars and needed empathy and sympathy from teachers. One teacher felt a sense of detachment from both bully and victim. She admitted that if she had stronger feelings towards the plight of victims, she would have done more than she currently does to sort out incidents of bullying. Two of the teachers interviewed appeared to have more empathy, the one relating that she would not like to see learners subjected to the same abuse she was subjected to while still a learner at school. The other teacher refers to feeling ‘passionate’ about helping the victim. He would encourage the victim to speak out. He also adds that doing so would discourage the bully, who, if left unchecked, could go on to committing crimes of a more serious nature.

4.3.5 Types of teacher interventions in various bullying situations

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that physical assault warranted more urgent intervention than indirect bullying, but they differed with regard to the punitive measures that should be applied to physical bullying and indirect bullying.

“I’ll have an immediate response to the assaulting type of bullying. I’m not saying that the others are not as serious, it is serious. In most instances the other types of bullying does more harm than the physical assaulting. I would get into the physical assault first, just to stop it.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

“There are different types of bullying. The physical assault is definitely serious as it can leave physical damage also.” – Teacher (Interview 6)

“I would consider hitting more serious than name calling.” – Teacher (Interview 9)

Most of the teachers interviewed considered physical assault to be more serious than indirect bullying. One respondent felt that a bully involved in a physical confrontation should be suspended while stating that a bully involved in spreading rumours, should merely be spoken to. Another believed that bullies involved in physical assault should possibly be dealt with by a trained individual, while a bully involved in a non-physical altercation should be brought together with the victim to solve the problem. A further respondent felt that in the case of bullying of a physical nature, all teachers teaching the affected learners should be called to a meeting to arrive at a solution, while bullying of a non-physical nature merely requires the teacher to discuss the issue generally in class as a form of warning to the bully. A few teachers felt that all types of bullying should be dealt with in a similar vein. However discrepancies also appeared, in the kinds of responses. One teacher was of the view that bullies should be spoken to and warned, while another felt that teachers should discuss the matter and consult the school's code of conduct and, if necessary, draw up policy with regard to the type of infringement.

4.4 SUMMARY

The first section of this chapter on data analysis dealt with teachers' opinions with regard to the various levels and degrees of bullying phenomena. Most teachers agreed that a working definition of bullying has more components to it than mere physical assault. Teachers interviewed were in general agreement that bullies were usually physically bigger, and that a typical bully is someone who is loud, aggressive, demanding and verbally abusive. Victims, on the other hand, were generally seen as quiet, submissive and lacking in confidence and self-esteem. Most respondents advocated punishment, but generally agreed that counselling would benefit bullies. All teachers concurred when they felt empathy and sympathy for victims. They mostly agreed that victims should receive counselling and be taught skills to empower them. Most of the respondents felt that they were unable to effectively deal with bullying behaviour and that they needed training in this regard. The majority of teachers interviewed agreed that the school lacks the ability to deal effectively with bullying behaviour due to the absence of a policy specific to bullying and teachers' role in this regard. Most of those interviewed felt that the implementation of measures to deal

effectively with incidents of bullying would impact negatively on their administrative workload. Most teachers were receptive to receiving any skills training to deal with bullying behaviour.

The second section of the data analysis focussed on teachers' responses to the many forms of bullying. Teachers differed vastly in their responses to how to address bullying of a physical nature. They ranged from merely speaking to the bully, right through to the drastic measure of calling in the police to lay a charge of assault against the offender. Indirect bullying also elicited a diverse range of responses, from speaking to the bully, to threatening the offender with a defamation suit. One of the teachers who advocated that the bully should be spoken to, admitted that in her experience, it rarely helps to curb the behaviour, while another teacher said she always hoped that it would solve the problem. Most of the teachers interviewed did not experience bullying as a child and thus the influence of their childhood experiences on how they would respond to bullying would be minimal at most. The respondents generally exhibited an emotional responsiveness and empathy towards victims, with a few showing concern for the wellbeing of the bully as well. Most teachers exhibited that bullying of a physical nature was more serious than indirect bullying and warranted a more vigorous and immediate response.

In Chapter 5 the findings are discussed and a deliberate effort is made to link them to previous research which relates to bullying and teachers' attitudes and responses in this regard.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Not enough time and energy is spent on this issue across the spectrum. If the teachers, governing body (members) and learners knew more about bullying, what it is, what can be done and the interventions that can take place, there are a lot of cases that can be solved without calling in the authorities (the police) and without giving a child a criminal record. At the end of the day, these are children, their behaviour stems from somewhere, and it’s at the root where we have to address the problems. We must not look at the surface, at what the child has become. We must see what is behind that behaviour and we have to address that.” – Teacher (Interview 5)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the findings and link them to previous research which relates to bullying phenomena and teachers’ responses and attitudes in this regard. Thereafter, the limitations of the study are briefly discussed, followed by some recommendations. The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes of teachers at a high school in the Cape Metropole to incidents of bullying. The following questions guided this particular study:

- What are teachers’ attitudes with regard to the various levels and degrees of bullying phenomena?
- How do teachers respond to the diverse forms of bullying?

5.2 TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES WITH REGARD TO THE VARIOUS LEVELS AND DEGREES OF BULLYING

5.2.1 Teachers’ own definitions of bullying

All of the teachers interviewed appeared to be conscious of the fact that bullying entails more than just physical aggression, and that intimidation, humiliation, name calling and teasing, amongst others, also constitute bullying. A few teachers, however, still held the view that bullying necessarily entails a physically bigger child pitted against a smaller one. This is in contrast to

international research, which points to any child becoming either a bully or a victim.

According to Sullivan (2006: 42), children can easily distinguish between play fighting and bullying, whilst teachers often confuse the two. Only one of the teachers interviewed mentions play fighting, where she queries whether one learner hurting another can be justified as play fighting. None of the other teachers makes reference to this type of behaviour at school, which in my experience is quite a common occurrence at the school and is often disguised as ‘only playing’, when, in reality, many learners are subjected to all forms of abuse. Hazler, et al (2001: 135) state that teachers are faced daily with the task of deciding whether a situation they had witnessed, or were informed of, was one of bullying, playing or an even matched confrontation.

In the absence of an anti-bullying policy, as is clearly the case at this school, teachers’ definitions of what constitutes bullying are critical in an assessment of teachers’ attitudes to bullying behaviour. If teachers, for example, do not define ongoing teasing as bullying, this could, in all likelihood, be dismissed by them as not serious enough to warrant intervention. Naylor, et al (2006: 555) state that most teachers do not define social exclusion as bullying and are unlikely to intervene, despite evidence revealing this type of bullying to have serious psychological repercussions for victims. This appears to be the case at this school as none of the teachers interviewed made any reference to this type of bullying.

5.2.2 Teachers’ perceptions of the characteristics of a typical bully and victim

Diverse views understanding of what constitutes the characteristics of a typical bully emerged from the data collected. These included bullies being aggressive, loud, demanding and verbally abusive. Also mentioned was that bullies thrive on attention and are often controlling. Varnava (2002: 2) refers to bullies as attention-seeking individuals who bully in order to get recognition and approval. Sullivan (2006: 18) says that bullies are often controlling, hot-tempered and lack empathy. A few teachers also made reference to the bullies having underlying issues or a troubled background. This is also referred to by

Lines (2008: 76), when he states that bullying behaviour often stems from a home lacking emotional warmth, being severely bullied and doing likewise and violent relationships, among others.

Characteristics of a typical victim as expressed by the respondents included victims being usually quiet, submissive, and lacking in confidence and self-esteem. Csoti (2008: 23) includes timid behaviour in social situations as being one of the traits that increase in the risk of victimisation. Sullivan (2006: 58) speaks of passive victims who appear to be submissive and who appear to have a poor self-image. One teacher remarked, “The one that bullies the victim, he sees that the other one is the prosperous type. Because of jealousy, that causes the one to be a bully...” – Teacher (Interview 6). This correlates with the findings of Rigby (2002: 138), who states that a positive trait of victims that makes them targets for bullies is that they are perceived as being successful.

5.2.3 Teachers’ attitudes towards bullies and victims

Teachers generally agreed that bullies should be punished but that this should be tempered with counselling sessions in order to help them solve any underlying issues that might be impacting on their behaviour, as well as a probe into any background deficiencies that could be the root of their problems. This ties in with a generally held view that no child is born a bully and that it is a learned experience which could make any child become a bully. One teacher asserts, “The one thing can lead to another. Today it’s bullying, and tomorrow it’s something else. It builds up to more serious crimes, it starts here, at the bottom, and it builds up.” – Teacher (Interview 6). This is in line with the views of Sullivan (2006: 16), who states that bullies, mostly boys, go on to other anti-social behaviour and many end up as criminals.

With regard to victims, teachers generally felt empathy and sympathy for them. There was a general consensus that victims should be counselled and supported, and that they should undergo life skills training in order to empower them. The rationale behind this is to prevent them from remaining victims and taking these negative consequences through to adulthood. Sullivan (2000: 27) suggests that victims could develop difficulties in forming good relationships

and tend to lead less successful lives. One teacher concurs, saying, “The victim should be approached... It will continue until... for the rest of their lives.” – Teacher (Interview 4).

5.2.4 Teachers’ beliefs about their ability to deal effectively with bullying behaviour

Most teachers felt that they were not equipped to effectively prevent and intervene in situations of bullying and agreed that any skills training in this regard would be welcome. This correlates with the findings of Flynt and Morton (2008: 189), who assert that teachers are generally unaware of the extent of bullying behaviour at schools and that teachers are mostly in agreement about undergoing training to boost their bullying prevention and intervention skills. A few respondents believed that they had some skills to enable them to deal with incidents of bullying, but they agreed that their skills base could be upgraded. One teacher felt that she was fully equipped to effectively handle bullying behaviour and thus did not want or require any training in this regard.

In order for teachers to be effective in preventing and intervening in incidents of bullying, they need to be able to recognise them of bullying. This includes recognising the behaviour itself as well as recognising those prone to becoming victims or bullies. Piotrowski and Hoot (2008: 357) state that teachers and their responses to bullying hold the greatest potential for reversing the scourge of bullying, but that teachers, however, require training in order to recognise bullying behaviour, understand its causes and take deliberate steps to challenge it. Despite the worldwide outcry against bullying and its negative effects, there are still teachers who do nothing to curb bullying. Howard, et al (2001: 183) state that some of the reasons for this inaction could include teachers feeling that they are not qualified to deal with bullying, others believing that their intervention could worsen the situation and some teachers possibly not being fully aware of the magnitude of the problem. This appears to be the case at the school being studied.

The degree of training received by in-service teachers as well as pre-service teachers would have a significant impact on teacher efficacy and would lead to more effective bullying prevention. This would also be linked to the effective classroom behavioural management of bullying behaviour. If teachers are able to effectively incorporate classroom behavioural strategies to deal with bullying, it would minimise disruptions and help to bring down the school's level of bullying incidents.

5.2.5 Teachers' perceptions of the school's ability to deal effectively with bullying behaviour

Most of the respondents agreed that the school does not have structures in place to effectively deal with bullying behaviour. According to them, it does not have a policy in place dealing with the prevention and intervention regarding bullying. Bullying is usually treated as isolated incidents of physical assault, name calling, spreading of rumours, etc.

School climate is integrally tied to the quality of the working life of the teacher, and, according to Van der Westhuizen (2002: 148), factors such as a safe and healthy working environment and a participative organisational structure amongst others, are vital towards creating a positive quality of working life. The majority of respondents felt that the school does not have the ability to effectively deal with bullying behaviour due mainly to a lack of structures in place in the disciplinary code of the school. The absence of a bullying prevention policy was also cited as a reason for the school's inability to curb bullying incidents. Teachers made reference to the fact that bullying incidents were treated mainly as isolated incidents and dealt with according to the code of conduct. This, they felt, left learners vulnerable to ongoing and worsening episodes of bullying. Schools are responsible for providing a safe and supportive school environment where all students can participate equally, without discrimination and fear. In the absence of such an environment, the social aberration of bullying will flourish. If this negative environment continues, bullying can become ingrained in the school culture and become self-perpetuating, affecting all aspects of school life. Whether this is the case already is a moot point. Respondents seem to implicitly acknowledge the lack

of a safe and bully free climate at school. This becomes evident in the general response that the school does not have structures in place to deal with bullying. Responses seem to indicate a sense of resignation. It also lends credence to the idea of a perceived lack of participative structure at the school. Schools allowing such an untenable situation are often referred to as dysfunctional schools.

5.2.6 Teachers' perceptions of the impact of their workload on their ability to deal effectively with bullying behaviour

Most of the respondents felt that any measures to effectively deal with the scourge of bullying would impact negatively on their administrative workload. Two teachers admitted that such measures would add to their workload, but felt that the potential to benefit the learners would in turn lighten their overall work load as they would experience fewer disciplinary problems.

There are many challenges facing teachers in South Africa today. The curriculum which accompanied our political democracy is still a great challenge to teachers. A key aspect of the challenge is the administrative burden which has been thrust upon teachers. Thus, the whole-school approach to bullying prevention and intervention, with its consequent administrative work load, is not wholeheartedly embraced by teachers. This appears to be the general feeling of respondents.

5.2.7 Teachers' commitment to the development of skills to effectively deal with bullying behaviour

All teachers, barring one, felt that training in dealing with incidents of bullying was required and would be well received. The one exception was the respondent who felt that she was adequately skilled to deal with bullying behaviour and would not want nor require training in this regard.

5.3 TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE DIVERSE FORMS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

5.3.1 Teachers' responses to direct bullying

Teachers' responses to how they would deal with incidents of direct bullying varied from getting the parties involved in the conflict together to resolve the issue, to the more radical reaction of summoning the police in order to lay charges of assault against the bully.

These individual approaches in which the teacher acts in isolation to deal with bullying, goes against the methods of the whole-school approach, seen as a more progressive way of confronting challenges at school. This method would ensure a level of consistency in teachers' responses to bullying and would send out an even stronger message to bullies that their actions are universally condemned and that they face consistent punitive measures for their transgressions. An effective whole-school approach to prevent bullying lightens the burden of the teacher in terms of his/her manner of responses to incidents of bullying. With policy in place and a code of conduct governing bullying prevention and intervention, as well as a supportive school community in support, teachers would be able to effectively and consistently deal with bullying behaviour. There does not appear to be a whole-school approach in place at the school. This is borne out by the inconsistencies to be found in the teachers' suggested responses to direct bullying.

5.3.2 Teachers' responses to indirect bullying

In the case of a scenario involving the spreading of malicious gossip, the suggested responses of teachers varied from addressing the parties involved and hoping for the best, to threatening the rumour monger with a defamation of character suit.

The lack of uniformity in the responses highlights once again the need for this school to develop policy with regard to bullying behaviour. This should be accomplished via a whole-school approach.

Because of the overt nature of physical bullying, it is perceived by teachers as important enough to warrant sanctions. The more covert forms of bullying, which includes the spreading of gossip, are often treated lightly, or left to learners to sort out themselves. According to Ellis and Shute (2007: 651), teachers' perceived seriousness of bullying incidents was directly linked to the likelihood of intervention and their empathy towards victims. A possible solution to this might be to make teachers aware of the impact of indirect bullying on victims. This ties in with Yoon (2004: 40), who states that by increasing teachers' awareness of the negative effects of (indirect) bullying, the likelihood of interventions by teachers would be boosted.

What is of greater importance, however, is that beyond theory, teachers need to recognise all types of bullying in its real form and take practical steps to intervene. Mishna, et al (2005: 724) state that the disparity between teachers' definitions of bullying and how they perceive real life situations suggests that, although a clear definition is central for education, intervention and research, teachers need to be able to unravel the complex dynamics of an incident and recognise whether or not it is bullying.

5.3.3 Teachers' own experiences of bullying a child and its impact on their current attitudes and responses to bullying behaviour

Most respondents said that they had not had any experiences of bullying and that any impact on their current attitudes to bullying would be minimal if at all. Three teachers said that they had had personal experiences of bullying and conceded that those childhood experiences has a definite influence on their attitudes to bullying.

These findings appear to be at odds with the literature which suggests that every teacher, if not most teachers, would have been exposed (as a child) to an experience involving bullying, whether directly or indirectly. These experiences could have been of a minor nature, a traumatic experience or somewhere between. Notwithstanding the level of seriousness, it invariably impacts on how the teacher responds to incidents of bullying at school.

Wiseman (2003: 8) states that teachers should be guided to understanding the link between their adolescent experiences of bullying and their attitudes to it in their own teaching. Tremlow, et al (2005: 238) add that teachers who experienced childhood bullying often grow up to be bullies.

5.3.4 Teachers' emotional responsiveness and empathy towards victims of bullying

Teachers generally responded that they felt compassion and empathy towards victims of bullying behaviour, with a few extending these feelings towards bullies whom they felt were often influenced by adverse circumstances. One teacher reported feeling an emotional detachment from victims. She explains that if she had felt more compassion for victims of bullying, she would have responded with more vigour than she currently does.

5.3.5 Types of teacher interventions in various bullying situations

Most teachers felt that bullying of a physical nature required a more urgent and serious response. However, some teachers conceded that other non-physical types of bullying such as name calling, teasing, spreading rumours, etc., could also negatively impact on the victim, both in the short term as well as affect them later in life.

Teachers would mostly link physical assault to bullying because of its overt nature, but some would likely exclude other more covert forms of bullying. Given the emphasis that teachers at this school have placed on containing bullying of a physical nature and the 'lighter' intervention strategies for non-physical types of bullying, this appears to be the case at this school.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Given that this was a case study, it created some limitations. The following points can be regarded as limitations to the study:

- The study was focussed on only one (high) school and the findings are not generalisable to all teachers.
- Besides the literature, I only drew on the insights of nine teachers at the school.
- My role as a researcher might at times have been overshadowed by my own views and experiences as a teacher.
- I also had very little experience in conducting interviews and therefore did not probe the respondents to disclose more information so that the research findings could possibly have had different answers and results.

5.5 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are the result of my perception of the school's situation, and may not necessarily be carried over to another school's context.

If the findings reflect the reality of this school it would be desirable to:

- Encourage more reflection and conversation amongst the staff and parent body with regard to bullying.
- Initiate a training workshop involving the staff, parent body, learner representatives and interested members of the broader community on bullying prevention and intervention.
- Develop a whole-school approach to bullying prevention, from which an anti-bullying policy could be drawn up.
- Involve an NGO to train a group of teacher volunteers in skills of bully/victim counselling and support.
- Incorporate anti-bullying strategies and discussions into every subject/learning area.
- Train teachers on effective classroom behavioural management to reduce bullying within the classroom.
- Set up workshops on anti-bullying strategies for all learner leaders and representatives in order to infuse an anti-bullying culture within the learner body.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further studies should be done in the Cape Metropole, and need to be conducted using bigger samples. There could possibly be a comparative study done between two or more schools from different areas and backgrounds for the purpose of cross-context comparisons. The results might be more generalizable than the present study. If bullying behaviour is to be successfully reduced, it would require all teachers to be alert to incidents of bullying in all its forms and constantly aware of its possible re-emergence in various forms. The parent body as well as the broader community should also be actively engaged in order to fight the scourge of bullying on all fronts.

CONCLUSION

Certain findings in this study stand out as important enough to warrant attention. These include, amongst others, the general lack of skills training with regard to bullying prevention and intervention amongst the teachers interviewed. The impact of this inability to recognise and deal with bullying cannot be underestimated. Also significant is the school's lack of policy and structures to curb the scourge of bullying. Lastly, teachers have indicated positively in terms of training in the field of bullying prevention. This enthusiasm is tempered, however, by their general aversion to taking on the administrative workload that goes hand in hand with the effective curbing of bullying behaviour.

The study highlighted the teachers' understanding of their role in bullying, the priorities that they deemed important and the practices they employed (or did not) to confront the bullying phenomena at their school. The study suggests that there is a need for teachers to actively engage in conversation about the phenomena of bullying and how to successfully challenge it. It is hoped that this study has not only helped to shed more light on issues around teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying, but that it will help to open up opportunities for further research of a comparative nature.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARTICIPANTS

NO.	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1.	How would you define bullying behaviour?
2.	What would be the characteristics of a typical bully and a victim?
3.	How do you feel about bullies and how do you feel we should deal with them?
4.	How do you feel about victims and how do you feel we should deal with them?
5.	How would you respond to this scenario? Direct bullying: You witness one, how would you respond to this scenario? Direct bullying: You witness one boy physically assaulting another boy, and you discover it is an ongoing thing.
6.	How would you respond to this scenario? Indirect bullying: A girl comes to you to complain that another girl has been spreading rumours about her – which she sleeps around with boys. The rumour monger admits to this.
7.	Do you feel equipped and able to deal with bullying behaviour or do you feel that training is required?
8.	Did you experience bullying as a child? If so, would you say that it has affected how you react to bullying behaviour? How?
9.	Can you describe your emotional responsiveness towards victims? To what extent do you feel empathy towards the victim?
10.	How would you intervene/respond in each of the following bullying situations: a) physical assault b) name calling c) cyber bullying?
11.	Does your school have structures in place to deal with bullying? Are they able to effectively respond to bullying behaviour? If yes -how? If no - why not?
12.	Would you say that your teaching workload affects how you intervene in bullying situations?
13.	Would you be interested in training/workshops on bullying behaviour or do you feel you are adequately prepared to deal with bullying behaviour?
14.	Do you feel that bullying is not a serious problem and that learners should be left to sort it out themselves?
15.	Do you have any further opinion or comment on the topic?

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF CONSENT



Navrae
Enquiries
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IMibuz

Dr RS
Cornelissen

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Telefoon

Telephone (021) 467-2286

IFoni

Faks

Fax (021) 425-7445

IFeksi

Verwysing

Reference 20090529-0044

ISalathiso

Mr Barry Morgan
111 Rouxton Road
LANSDOWNE
7780

Dear Mr B. Morgan

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO BULLYING AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20th July 2009 to 30th September 2009**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.

Wes-Kaap
Onderwysdepartement
Western Cape Education
Department
ISebe leMfundo leNtshona
Koloni

11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

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

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen

for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

DATE: 25th June 2009

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APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS

Letter of Consent

10 August 2010

I (a participant in the study: *Teachers' attitudes to bullying at a high school in the Cape Metropole*) hereby agree to participate in the study mentioned above.

I have been informed of the procedures and purpose of the interview.

I also hereby give my permission for the information obtained from the interview to be used for research purposes.

I have been made aware of my rights regarding the interview, and I have been assured of absolute confidentiality.

I have the right to view the transcript immediately on completion and reserve the right to request an adjustment if I felt it was needed.

I also have the right to refuse to answer a question, withdraw consent, as well as to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice to myself.

Participant's name.....

Signature..... Date.....

APPENDIX D: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT	AGE	EDUCATION QUALIFICATION	TEACHING EXP.(YEARS)	MARITAL STATUS	DEPENDENTS	SCHOOL DUTIES	POST LEVEL
1	45	B.ED (HONS)	9	SINGLE	2	FUNDRAISING	1
2	59	P.T.D. 3	35	MARRIED	2	STOCKTAKING	1
3	50	P.T.D. 3	30	SINGLE	0	GRADE HEAD - GRADE 8	1
4	51	B.A. (HDE)	31	MARRIED	2	EDUCATION SPECIALIST	2
5	41	B.ED (HONS)	12	MARRIED	3	SUBJECT HEAD-GEOGS	1
6	53	H.D.E. 4	31	MARRIED	2	FINANCIAL OFFICER-SGB	1
7	36	B.ED (HONS)	6	SINGLE	1	SUBJECT HEAD-L.O.	1
8	30	B.COMM. (HDE)	9	SINGLE	0	GRADE HEAD -GRADE 11	1
9	35	H.D.E. 4	13	MARRIED	2	FUNDRAISING	1