

**“AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS  
WHO WITNESS BULLYING IN A SCHOOL IN UMLAZI.”**

**BY**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Education at the Faculty of Education, University of  
KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa.**

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## Declaration

I, Sthembile Emily Chili, hereby declare that:

i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

ii) This dissertation has not submitted for any degree or diploma at any other University.

iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sources from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.

b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.

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Mrs L. V. Jairam

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Date

## **Preface**

The research undertaken and described in this dissertation was carried out in the Department of Education, University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, under the supervision of Mrs L. V. Jairam.

This study represented original work by the researcher and has never been submitted in any institution including university. Where reference was made from other researchers and sources, it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many individuals have made contribution and provided assistance for this work. The role of Mrs L. V. Jairam as a supervisor for this work was highly appreciated. She promoted the work and provided guidance, assurance, professionalism and expertise. She assisted in a variety of ways right from the beginning up to the finality of the project.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the late members of the family: Bangelani (father), Canukile (mother), Sesaba (father-in-law) and Ngethembu (mother-in-law), and also my family members who are still alive: Nsizwazikhona (my loving and supporting husband), Thabisile, Yoliswa, Zakhithi and Qophelo (my loving and understanding children).

## **Abstract**

The issue of bullying in schools is an age old problem and it does not only occur in schools but even in the workplace. This study aims to explore the experiences of learners who witness bullying in schools and how this issue affects them psychologically, emotionally and academically.

This was a qualitative study and data was collected through open-ended interviews and focus group discussions. Data for this study was collected from learners from grades eight to twelve, who had witnessed bullying. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed and analysed, and data was categorised into themes.

The results of this study revealed that there were some psychological, emotional and academic problems that emanated from witnessing bullying. The trauma of watching bullying endangered the lives of the witnesses, psychologically and emotionally, meaning that it affected the way they reasoned out things. Some witnesses even pointed out that bullying compelled them to think with their hearts rather than with their minds. Ultimately, they made decisions that they regretted because they had taken those decisions when they were furious. The results also revealed that bullying negatively impacted on some learners' academic performance. Their studies deteriorated and some ended up repeating a grade.

The results of this study also revealed a lack of intervention by educators, parents and the Department of Education and more especially a lack of programmes that aimed at helping the witnesses. Witnesses of bullying in this study revealed that they were not given a voice about the issue of bullying, but seemed to be neglected despite the negative impact on them. When witnesses in this study watched bullying, their rights and freedom to think, behave acceptably and learn without disturbance were infringed upon. Witnesses in this study also proposed a number of effective and varied intervention methods.

It is recommended that educators should be equipped with skills of dealing with witnesses in bullying. Witnesses should be exposed to strategies that would help in instilling assertiveness to them, so that they would have a hand in the struggle of eradicating bullying altogether in schools. Policies implemented by both the Department of Education and the school should be reinforced.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Background, focus, aim, rationale and overview of the study

### 1. 1 Background and the focus of the study

It has been my observation and experience as the guidance educator at a high school that learners are exposed to bullying in many ways but in most cases the school authorities do not take any drastic steps to eliminate this problem. Most of the victims are new comers at school and they are from different grades. When I, as a guidance teacher, interviewed some of the learners who perpetrate bullying, I realised that there was a deep-rooted cause for their action. Some learners who witnessed bullying, showed signs of trauma and felt helpless in coping with the problem of bullying. Lodge and Frydenberg (1999) state that bullying and harassing are pervasive problems in schools and interventions to counter bullying are being regarded as a matter of high priority by educational authorities.

Lodge and Frydenberg (1999) also highlight the role of the bystander who is the witness of bullying. These authors point out that in most cases witnesses are too scared to report bullying and are themselves victims; yet they are threatened by the educators with punishment if they are found watching the act of bullying, as it is a belief that they encourage those who bully others. Bailey (2007) of the Democratic Alliance states that the level of bullying in our schools is so high that the Department of Education has reached a point where it is seriously considering banning scissors from school premises because it was found that learners use scissors to threaten and force other learners to do what they ask them to do.

Most of the scientific literature and media reports on social problems provide evidence of the fact that bullying is a global problem and that it does not only take place at school level, but also in the work-place. The focus of the literature has been on the bully and the bullied, but the voice of the witness has not been heard; it is neglected. The focus of my study therefore gives a voice to an important third person, the witness, in this domain of bullying. People need to be aware that bullying is not only the issue of the bully and the bullied, but those who witness it are also “part of the package”. This focus is congruent with Sullivan (2001) who supports the fact that in bullying incidents an important factor is that of the witness - the person who sees bullying happening – because the witness can play a significant part in reporting bullying to the authorities. The findings of this study will be available in the public domain for academic and research purposes.

## **1. 2 Aims and purpose of the study**

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of learners who witnessed bullying at a school in Umlazi. The main purpose of this research was to listen to the voices of those learners who witnessed bullying and how bullying affected them psychologically, emotionally and academically. Since the voices of these witnesses are often not heard by the school authorities and since the experiences and challenges faced by these witnesses are not acknowledged, this study aimed at making the school authorities aware of the effects of bullying on the witnesses, which will help the authorities, parents and policy-makers in the eradication of bullying.

## **1. 3 Key research questions**

The questions the researcher intended to address in the study were:

- What are the experiences of the learners who witness bullying?
- How do these experiences affect them psychologically, emotionally and academically?

## **1. 4 Research site/context**

This study was conducted at one high school (where the research was conducted), and where the researcher is working as an educator. The school is located within the Umlazi District about 10km from the city of Durban. The school is surrounded by an informal settlement from which most of the learners come. In this school there is a high rate of poverty. The majority of the parents of learners who come from these informal settlements are unemployed. The children of these parents coming to school on empty stomachs and the snatching of the provisions and stealing of the school's possessions or of other learners by these hungry children is a common problem experienced in this school. When these hungry children engage in this kind of bullying behaviour, it is easy to draw the conclusion that poverty could be a contributory factor to them bullying other learners.

## **1. 5 Rationale for the study**

Much of the literature focuses on the bully and the bullied, how bullying impacts negatively on the psychological, emotional and academic progress of the learners. Sullivan (2001) says that the bullied are affected emotionally, become afraid, alienated, angry, ashamed, depressed, disempowered, hurt, sad, stupid, sub human, being trampled on ugly and useless. He also points out that the physical effects of bullying become severe, when the learner suffers broken bones, broken teeth, concussion, damaged eyes and even permanent brain damage; the possible consequence of bullying is suicide. Sullivan (2001) also mentions that the bullied

person is affected psychologically and academically, meaning that he/she is faced with weakening academic performance, truancy and delinquency.

The gap in the literature on school bullying is that of neglecting the experiences of the witness, bystander or onlooker of bullying. I am referring to the learner who is not the victim of bullying, but only witnesses others being bullied. It is very important for me to understand their psychological and emotional status and to find out at what is to be done to remedy the situation. When surveying the literature, authors like Milsom and Gallo (2006) do not focus on the experiences of witnesses and how bullying affected them. They also point out that even the learners who are not the victims of bullying, need to be attended to, as few are aware of their situation. These authors add that about 70,5% of learners reported having witnessed bullying, but when the learners asked about reporting the incident, they responded by saying that in most cases they ignored it; however some responded by saying that they tried to stop bullying; and what is surprising was that some joined in when witnessing bullying in defence of the victim.

## **1. 6 Overview of the study**

Chapter one describes what bullying is, why it happens, intervention programmes that were introduced against bullying and what is being neglected. The aims of the study and the key research questions are given. The focus of the study is also described. The personal and contextual rationale that motivated the conducting of the research is also provided in this chapter. A brief discussion of what is expected in all five chapters of this study is also provided.

Chapter two provides the literature review on bullying as well as a description of the theoretical framework on which the study is based.

Chapter three, deals with methodological procedures of the study. It focuses on the research paradigm and the approach in which the study is located. It also discusses the sampling and the methods used to collect data. The chapter also clarifies ethical clearance and limitations of the study.

Chapter four concentrates on the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions that were audio taped. The data were categorised into themes.

Chapter five provides the findings and recommendations for teachers, parents, schools and the Department of Education.

## 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the background and the focus of the study, looking at the experiences of learners who witness bullying and how that watching bullying impacted on them psychologically, emotionally and academically. It also detailed the aims and the purpose of this study, highlighting an important person in the issue of bullying, the witness, and the fact that these witnesses of bullying should be given a voice so as to share their experiences. The rationale was spelt out, focussing on the gap in the literature that reports extensively on the bully, highlighting the effects of bullying on the bullied but is silent about the experiences of those who witness bullying. Although it is important to focus on the bully and the bullied, I believe that in order to gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon of bullying one need to consider an important third person in this trinity of bullying, the witness. He/She is an important person in this issue of bullying as he/she can play a significant role in eradicating bullying. The key research questions were also given and the research context was described, highlighting the context from which the bullies, the bullied and the witnesses come. It also mentioned at the significance of the study with regard to intervention programmes that would take into consideration not only the bully and the bullied but also the witness. The next chapter reviews the literature on bullying and outlines the conceptual framework of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Conceptual framework and literature review**

#### **2. 1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to bullying, focusing on issues such as: definitions of bullying, types of bullying, effects of bullying, gender differences in bullying and intervention programmes. It also looks at the deaths caused by bullying, reported cases of bullying and perpetrators of bullying. Some writers instead of using the word, witness, prefer terminology such as onlooker, bystander or watcher. This chapter also explores the theoretical framework utilised within this study.

#### **2. 2 Review of related literature on bullying**

Most of the literature deals with the experiences of the bully and the bullied and how those experiences impact negatively on academic, psychological and social issues. Researchers such as De Wet (2005) and Coloroso (2005) are quite aware that the witness is an important part of the issue of bullying. For that reason, they see it as important to equip the witnesses with the strategies to stop bullying behaviour but they neglect the very important part, which is, the experiences of learners as they watch bullying and how those experiences affect them at school, in the community and personally.

##### **2. 2. 1 Definitions of bullying**

Different scholars and authors give various definitions of bullying and all of them highlight the deliberate hurt of another person. Rigby (2004, p. 69) defines bullying as “a form of aggressive behaviour which is usually hurtful and deliberate: it is often persistent, sometimes continuing for weeks, months or even years and it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.” The term bullying is defined by Komro, Perry, Mortenson, Stigler, Bosma, Munson and Farbaksh (2004, p. 336) as a type of behaviour “intended to harm or disturb the victim and occurs repeatedly over time, including such behaviours as physical attacks or verbal name calling or threats”. Roberts (2006) confirms that bullying is an exposure to long term, repeated negative actions on the part of one or more persons and also says bullying is on the other hand often a combination of verbal and physical aggressions and aggravations directed from the bully toward the victim (the bullied). Roberts (2006) also adds that bullying often involves direct physical contact between the bully and the bullied and should be considered a higher



level of concern for interveners. Looking at what Rigby (2004) and Roberts (2006) say about bullying, watching it could affect the witness psychologically, emotionally and academically.

Other definitions highlight the imbalance of power in the issue of bullying. The Macmillan English Dictionary (2007, p.94) gives the meaning of bullying as “someone who uses his/her strength/status to threaten or frighten smaller or weaker people. Andrew Mellor, the manager of the Anti-Bullying Network at the University of Edinburgh (cited by Hurst, 2005 p. 8) describes bullying as an imbalance of power that exists over an extended period of time between two individuals, two groups, or a group and an individual in which the more powerful intimidate or belittle others. Bullying can be physical and psychological but physical bullying is not as common as the more subtle forms, such as social exclusion, name-calling and gossip. Lines (2008) defines bullying as the systematic abuse of power depending on the social and cultural context. The imbalance of power definitions of bullying by Mellor (2005) and Lines (2008) are suitable definitions as in all incidents of bullying the perpetrator uses his/her dominant power over the inferior or younger person to victimise him in a way that will instil fear. The witnesses might not be able to protect the victim, who is physically and verbally abused, and they may consider this as a failure on their part to protect the victim.

To me all of these definitions highlight the deliberate hurt of the bully on the bullied but are limited in the sense that they do not include another important individual, the witness, and the impact of the bully on the witness. These definitions mentioned above do not take into cognisance the experiences of witnesses of bullying and how they are impacted upon psychologically, emotionally and academically. It is therefore hoped that a new definition that includes the witness can arise out of this study and subsequent studies on bullying.

### **2. 2. 2 Types of bullying**

Bullying may manifest itself in different forms such as verbal bullying, like name calling, ridiculing, gossiping and threatening. Examples of physical bullying include punching, strangling, kicking, tripping and violent assault, whereas relational bullying (a non-verbal form) takes the form of excluding or turning away when the victim approaches or not being invited to the class party. Emotional bullying, also referred to as psychological bullying, refers to terrorising, extorting, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, peer pressure and ostracising. Oosthuizen (2005, p.20) mentions technological bullying which is when victimisation takes place via telecommunication networks such as e-mail, short message system/ text messages or picture messaging. By watching that kind of bullying where they are being humiliated by the perpetrator of bullying, might have a psychological feeling on their manhood.

### **2. 2. 3 Characteristics of bullying**

Garrett (2003) suggests that bullying is generally characterised by an intention or desire to hurt the victim repeatedly. He further states that in most cases, bullying occurs when the victim is vulnerable, displaying physical and psychological qualities which make him or her prone to victimisation, particularly when there is a lack of support, leaving the victim feeling isolated, exposed and scared. He confirms that the victim experiences anxiety, fear, depression, and is affected academically, suffers lowered self-esteem and in severe cases, commits suicide. Garrett (2003), Smith (2003) and Juvonen and Graham (2003) assert that bullying takes place when a learner is exposed repeatedly over a period of time to negative actions on the part of one or more learners. They say that it includes physical aggression, verbal harassment and public humiliation and that bullying occurs across ethnic groups and income brackets and cannot merely be seen as teasing, playful or a normal part of growing up. The witnesses of bullying might also experience fear of being the next victims and depression that could affect their academic progress and a low esteem of being unable to protect their school mates who are vulnerable.

According to Coloroso (2005), bullying is characterised as a conscious, wilful and deliberately - hostile activity that can be verbal, physical or relational in which the bullies get pleasure from the victims' pain. He also mentions that bullying is not about anger, or about conflict but it is about contempt - a powerful feeling of dislike towards someone considered to be worthless or inferior, combined with a lack of empathy, compassion or shame. De Wet (2005) refers to bullying as premeditated, continuous, malicious and belittling tyranny.

Tattum and Lane (1994) views bullying as being characteristic of longstanding violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself or herself in the actual situation. Some learners tend to bully others because their bullying behaviour has been inculcated as normal and is practised openly in the family and in society.

Sullivan (2001) has a different view of bullying and includes the witness in the issue of bullying. She says bullying is characterised by a cowardly act because it is done to cause hurt without fear of retribution and that it relies on those who are marginally involved, often referred to as witnesses, onlookers, observers or watchers, who do nothing to stop the bullying or become actively involved in supporting it. In most cases the spectators of bullying are the ones who might encourage the perpetrators to bully those who have been their targets because they (the targets) are young and powerless. Watching and screaming which is done by some witnesses and which appears as a sign of excitement, could encourage the bully.

## **2. 2. 4 Gender differences and bullying**

Most often the bullying of girls takes place because the bully is jealous of the bullied, in that the bullied is beautiful or intelligent. Sullivan (2001) says that bullying is sometimes premeditated and sometimes opportunistic, sometimes directed mainly towards and sometimes occurs serially and randomly. Sometimes jealousy could be transferred even to the witnesses and ultimately they tend not to interfere in the bullying because they enjoy watching the bullied suffering and feeling helpless.

## **2. 2. 5 Intervention programmes**

Tattum and Lane (1994 p. 7) argues that, "bullying is the most malicious and malevolent form of deviant behaviour practised in schools and yet it has received only scant attention from national and local authorities". Stephenson and Smith (1989) also point out that bullying has failed to claim the attention of educators' unions and schools have given it low priority compared to disruptive behaviour and truancy; it has been ignored by the educational research community, yet all who work in education will agree that it is widespread and persistent. Stephenson and Smith (1989) confirm that learners have a basic right to freedom from pain, humiliation and fear, therefore the schools have the responsibility to create a secure and safe environment for the learners who are in their care so that the parents may hand their children over with the confident knowledge that they will be protected from bullies.

Sullivan (2001) emphasises the ineffectiveness of teacher intervention. He points out that when educators intervene the outcome is not successful, the reason being that they respond irresolutely and half-heartedly to the problem that needs to be thoroughly followed through. He says that, that might be caused by the lack of understanding of what bullying is, or as investigators they are swayed by the deceit and lies, which are part of the bullying culture. According to Olweus (1993) a successful intervention on the part of the educators and the parents in the bullying of the learner, is to conduct an anonymous survey among the students with the bully/victim questionnaire. He suggests that educators should be made aware that they need to supervise learners during recess and lunch time because it is clear that most of the bullying occurs during these periods. He also says that the development of class rules and a talk to the bullied will help to reduce the problem of bullying.

Milson and Gallo (2006) talk about how to approach the problem of bullying, the needs of the bullied as well as being able to assess the school climate that is conducive for him or her to learn successfully. Conoley and Goldstein (2004) advocate school violence intervention programmes called individualised programming. They maintain that in this programme educators are asked which behaviour, impulsivity or hyperactivity, is the right one to target; they then look at whether their intervention will do harm or good and determine how intervention will be evaluated and the method of evaluation that will match the desired goal.

Other programmes are intensive services, which focus on the ratio of students to teachers of approximately 4: 1. In addition they mention comprehensive service, working with parents, as well as therapeutic crisis intervention and the use of the police.

Most of the literature above refers to the need for educators to intervene in reducing bullying in schools, but the question is: "Are they equipped with the skill to do that?" If educators are well trained, that can help to reduce the rate of death and disability which are some of the results of bullying. Shafii and Shafii (2001) say that a great deal of money has been spent on the support teams, psychological testing, in-service training of educators, special education projects and segregation of children with behavioural problems, but still schools are faced with a huge pandemic that is, bullying.

Tattum and Lane (1994) feel that educators are acquainted with the problem, but they need to acknowledge that bullying is a problem and take some drastic steps to reduce it. Bradshaw, Sawyer and O'Brennan (2007) say the vast majority of learners feel that the schools are not doing enough to prevent bullying, whereas most educators believe their prevention efforts are adequate. Learners think the educators' intervention sometimes worsens the situation. Knowles (2001) confirms that when educators intervene in the bullying problem, the situations become worse. In addition Knowles (2001) says the reason is that they are not well trained in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the bullying prevention programmes. He also mentions that for educators to understand intervention programmes, the programmes need to be integrated into the curriculum and the school structure and be included in the school policy, thus educators would be able to receive training. If educators have knowledge of dealing with bullying, witnesses could in turn acquire a skill of handling bullies.

The gap in the literature on school bullying is that of neglecting the experiences of the onlooker or witness of bullying. The researcher is referring to that particular learner who is not the victim of bullying, but only witnesses others being bullied; understanding their psychological and emotional status and what is to be done to remedy the situation is important. Milsom and Gallo (2006) point out that even the learners who are not the victims of bullying, need to be attended to, as no one is aware of their situation. The authors, Milson and Gallo (2006) add that about 70, 5% of learners reported having witnessed bullying, but when the learners are asked about reporting the incident, they responded by saying that in most cases they ignored or failed to do so. Some responded by saying that they tried to stop the bullying but what was surprising was that some joined in when witnessing bullying.

## **2. 3. Those involved in bullying**

Olweus (1993) contends that bullying is considered as a tripartite belief about the bully, the bullied and the witness. Most of the literature reviewed by the researcher focuses on the experiences of the bully and the bullied but disregarding how bullying affects witnesses. In other words, the experiences of witnesses of bullying are not virtually taken into cognisance in terms of how they are being impacted upon psychologically, emotionally and most importantly academically. It is therefore one of the main objectives of the study to investigate the practical experiences of witnesses as they are in most cases voiceless.

### **2. 3. 1 Bully**

Olweus (1993) defines bullies as aggressive towards their peers, they tease in a nasty way, taunt, intimidate, threaten, call names, make fun of, ridicule, push around, shove, hit, kick and damage the belongings of other learners. He further mentions that bullies are normally physically stronger or older than their victims. Roberts (2006) highlights the point that the aggression of bullies is learned through modelling from the home environment, media or the larger society and such behaviours are more likely to continue as adults, unless they are provided with reasons to change.

Sullivan (2001) identifies three types of bullies: confident bullies, who are physically strong, enjoy aggression, who feel secure and are of average popularity; anxious bullies, who are weak academically, have poor concentration and are less popular and less secure and bullies/victims, who are bullies in some situations and are bullied in others. Sullivan (2001) further highlights the observation that bullies often come from dysfunctional homes, where communication is minimal or non-existent there are poor relationships and a lack of love and support. According to Sullivan (2001), families with strong hierarchical power structures, where a father controls the child through harsh physical punishment, predisposes a child towards aggressive behaviour and similarly, families that do not provide monitoring and boundaries are likely to produce children with poor relationships skills and who know little except haphazard reactions and random anti-social behaviour.

Field (2007) argues that some learners, however, learn to bully from the role models at home and at school. She says that they are trained by unhappy, dysfunctional or broken families where love, acceptance and respect are either disguised or conditional and members tend to be bullies themselves. Field (2007) also talks about bullies whose parents are passive and who show little interest in disciplining them for their misbehaviours; these learners have no boundaries and they learn from their families how to enjoy watching victims suffer.

Rigby (2004) states that some learners bully others because they want to show off or maybe they are bullied at home or by other learners; they are often jealous of other learners or they may want to feel cool and tough; they are usually unhappy inside; they want attention or it is because their friends make them do it. Field (2007) talks about bullies as cold and aggressive, not kind with, facial muscles fixed and tense, mouth snarling, body language dominating and threatening, voice and words demeaning, hurtful and not friendly and one who plans an attack and reacts angrily if caught; he/she is not remorseful about hurting someone. Olweus (1993) confirms that many bullies induce some of their followers to do their dirty work while they themselves keep in the background. That strategy works for them because the bullied feel threatened.

### **2. 3. 2 Bullied**

When surveying the literature on the bullied, a number of scholars report on the characteristics that make a person vulnerable to bullying. Olweus (1993) describes the person vulnerable to bullying as an anxious, submissive, physically weak, lonely, insecure, abandoned, sensitive, unhappy, distressed, withdrawn and quiet person. They react by crying when attacked, not retaliating when they are attacked or insulted, looking upon themselves as failures, ashamed, unattractive and stupid. Those vulnerable to bullying suffer from low self-esteem and withdrawal. Olweus (1993) points out that the bullied does not have single good friend in his or her class. Other scholars, Tattum and Lane (1994), emphasise more or less similar characteristics described by Olweus (1993). They describe the bullied as weak, passive and socially ineffective, anxious, insecure and lacking in self-confidence and unpopular with other learners; they also highlight the point that the bullied may be in need of help in adjusting to school life and in participating in the activities of the peer group because sometimes they may return home from school without some of their belongings or show some deterioration in their school work; they are even afraid to go to school at all times. Field (2007, p.33) confirms that "the bullied has poor communication skills, limited eye contact, bad posture, jiggles around and mumbles."

Another scholar, Sullivan (2001), focuses on the harm caused by bullying on the bullied. Sullivan (2001) points out that the bullied is a primary victim of the bully. He or she is the direct recipient of the physical and psychological harm that is inflicted and those who are bullied severely tend to suffer long-term consequences. Sullivan (2001) further points out that emotionally, the bullied may feel afraid, alienated, disempowered, subhuman, trampled on and useless. Field (2007) supports the fact that the learner denies bullying despite symptoms of anger or sadness. Fields (2007) is supported by Sullivan (2001), when the author say, the physical effects of bullying are often severe: broken bones, teeth, concussion, bites, scratches, damaged eyes and even permanent brain damage.

With regard to the impact of bullying on the academic performance of the bullied, Roberts (2006) states that those who are bullied often cannot concentrate on their school work, they are distracted from educational goals because they are preoccupied with how miserable they feel as a result of their victimisation. Again, Roberts (2006) highlights the point that the bullied are distracted in their school work because they think about when and where the next abusive incident may occur and how they might be able to avoid it. The witnesses need to reassure the bullies that if they continue bullying other learners that case would be reported to the educators or they will not condone the next incident when another learner is bullied.

When surveying the reasons why learners are bullied, Roberts (2006) points out that learners are bullied because of certain reasons, such as social status, where the learner is victimised because he or she comes from a wealthy family and the bullies tend to say he/she thinks he or she is better than other learners; sometimes victims suffer because they come from poor families. Sometimes learners are victimised because of their special needs; the bullies make insensitive jokes and mock the victim about his or her physical impairments by imitating his/her body movements or vocal disability. Some are victimised because of their sexual identity and are harassed for being gay (Roberts, 2006). Witnesses of bullying need to intervene in such instances so as to lend a supporting hand and avail a shoulder to cry on for the victim. Another scholar, Sullivan (2001) noted that most of the learners who are the victims of bullying come from families under stress; marriage breakup, illness and larger families can create tension for a learner. He says such life events may make the learner sad and withdrawn or aggressive and angry and thus open to being victimised.

With regard to the reporting of bullying by the bullied, Sullivan (2001), points out that even in the face of unfair and excessive bullying, the learner tends not to report that they are being bullied because this is related to intimidation and fear of retaliation. Sullivan (2001) also states that the level of reporting the bullying incidents is low because the message from the peer group is that "ratting" is unacceptable; learners also tend to believe that bullying occurs no matter what and nothing can be done about it; there is real danger that if anyone tells, the bullies may retaliate and, lastly, the sense of hopelessness that is one of the effects of being bullied, makes it difficult for the bullied to do anything. The culture of not reporting the incidences of bullying also prevails among the witnesses, the reason being they are afraid of victimised by the bullies.

Sullivan (2001) also highlights that there are signs that one should look for in a child who is suspected of being bullied. He states that the child may show signs of anxiety, such as bed wetting and nightmares and may also develop headaches and stomach-aches, particularly in the morning when it is time to go to school or the child may come home with ripped clothes or bruises and cuts. He says sometimes the child may lose possessions and ask for extra money or even steal or receive cellphone messages or telephone calls which he/she seems sullen about and which he/she does not talk about if questioned. Sullivan (2001) also highlights the

observation that the bullied may be irrational and angry, depressed, sad and even threaten to attempt suicide. If intervention programmes are effective, the parents too could be trained and be equipped with skills of not only to notice the behavioural change on the victims but also on the witnesses.

### **2. 3. 3 Witness**

When surveying the literature on the witnesses of bullying, there are very few studies on this important but often overlooked group of learners who are affected by bullying. These learners who are neither victims nor perpetrators but who see bullying happening to their peers are very seldom mentioned in the literature. Olweus (1993) defines a witness as another important but often overlooked aspect of bullying, he/she is neither the perpetrator nor the victim but always follows a bully's lead and helps to harass or victimise a particular learner in class or school. The passive role of witnesses of bullying is mentioned in historical biblical literature. The book of Exodus in chapter 23: verses 1-2 warns against the passive role of witnessing bullying, "Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness. Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong....."

## **2. 4. Range of behaviours associated with bullies**

Lines (2008) describes the range of behaviours associated with bullies; some are certainly bullying behaviours, but others can depend on context and motive:

### **2. 4. 1 Heartless violence**

According to Lines (2008), extreme interpretation of the personalities indicates that, bullies appear to might have no remorse and can kill in cold blood. Sometimes bullying might end in death and a witness should not be the part of it but only intervene with the aim of protecting the victim.

### **2. 4. 2 Strategic bully**

Lines (2008) further says that this kind of bullying is not a once-off impulsive event but pre-planned and continual harassment by putting a weaker subject down and making them feel humiliated or tormented. These bullies often mimic someone with a handicap, name call endlessly, and persecute continually, one who is considered to be different from them or one who is not in the "in crowd." If the bullies attack the bullied by calling them names witnesses should not encourage them by joining in; joining in merely encourages the bully.



### **2. 4. 3 Bullying for approval**

Lines (2008) postulates that bullies in school engage in bullying because they want to be popular and they seek approval from peers. The witnesses need to understand that they should not approve the bullying behaviours.

### **2. 4. 4 Impulsive bullying**

This behaviour is not pre-planned and neither is systematic and it can hardly be understood as arising from a motive to dominate another weaker learner. This behaviour is impulsive in the sense that the bully acts without thinking (Lines, 2008).

### **2. 4. 5 Reactive bullying**

Lines (2008) argues that this kind of bullying behaviour is reflexive and has no preconceived outcome. Young learners may have to endure considerable torment from those they perceive as more powerful than they are, and it is as though they have reached their tolerance threshold and react violently out of pent-up frustration. It is very important for the witness to see that the bullied are not threatened; meaning it is their responsibility to stand up for the victim against the bullies. Again, they should not portray the idea to the bullies that they are entertained and approve of the negative action (bullying) but instead the witnesses need to give full support to the bullied.

The significant role that the witness plays is pointed out by Field (2007). He confirms that most bullying is conducted in front of peers and witnesses and some bullies are supported by their friends and deny the bullying to an educator. If the witness challenges the bully and condemns that behaviour, the bullying sometimes diminishes. The witness needs to change the bully's character and the school needs to train the witnesses to intervene fairly and responsibly in bullying incidents. According to Sullivan (2001) the witness is the third party in bullying and when watching bullying happening, they can feel afraid and unsafe, and even ashamed for not stopping the bullying or being attracted to the meanness and cruelty. He further states that when bullying occurs, the witnesses can choose to passively observe, to become participants in the bullying, to walk away or choose to intervene.

Witnesses, according to Juvonen and Graham (2003) rarely intervene in bullying yet this is one of the biggest challenges for effective anti-bullying intervention. According to Coloroso (2005, p.49-50), Garret (2003, p.78) and Sullivan *et al* (2004, p.19), witnesses are described as "the supporting cast in a play whose role is to aid and abet the bully through acts of commission or omission. They can stand idly by or look away, afraid to step in for fear of becoming a target themselves or they can actively or inactively encourage or join in the bullying."

Coloroso (2005) contends that if the witnesses stand by or look away, their self-confidence and self-respect are eroded as they wrestle with their fears and their guilt. These fears result in apathy, which can lead to contempt for themselves. By cheering on the bully, or actively participating in bullying, witnesses cause even more distress to the one being bullied and increase the chance of other witnesses becoming desensitised to the cruelty; they can even create the image of the bully as a popular, strong and daring role model, worthy of imitation. Garrett (2003) says witnesses may even experience feelings of guilt or helplessness for not standing up to the bully on behalf of their classmate, have nightmares about being the next victim or fear certain areas in schools.

Harrington (2010) speculates that witnesses were more likely to report symptoms of psychological stress like depression and anxiety than either bullies or victims. This is an indication that researchers are aware that the witnesses of bullying suffer the same as the victims but they had not sensed a need for deeper research into the problem in order to get to know of their experiences of bullying and getting to know how those experience affects witnesses in minds (psychologically), the way they react on certain issues (emotionally) and their performance at school (academically).

#### **2. 4. 6 Provocative goading by victims**

According to Lines (2008), most victims who provoke bullying may suffer form communication behavioural disorders such as ADHD or cognitive disorders on the autistic spectrum which lead them to display behaviour that inadvertently invites bullying. Some victims are not aware that they invite bullying through poor interpersonal communications. It is advisable for the witness to encourage and support the bullied to take a stand confidently in defending themselves. Ultimately, these behaviours should be reported to an enabling adult able to tackle the problem.

#### **2. 5 The role of the witness in bullying**

Witnesses play a role in perpetuating the cycle of bullying. Though they play the least - active role, witnesses are a critical element in bullying. Tracey (2004) and Coloroso (2005) assert that a deadly combination of bullying is a bully who gets what he or she wants from his or her target, such as a bullied learner who is afraid to tell, and witnesses who either watch, participate in the bullying or look away, and adults who discount bullying as just teasing, not tormenting. Witnesses tend to have the perception that “victims are at least partially responsible for bringing bullying on themselves.”

The role of the witness is crucial in the prevention of bullying. In most cases the learners bully to get attention and they also bully when there are other learners around, so as to enlist admiration and popularity or to feel powerful. Geffner, Loring and Young (2001) confirm that, witnesses who are helpless in the presence of another learner's victimisation, learn to be dominated and powerless in the face of force and intimidation and have important experiences in failing to defend the human rights of others. Geffner, Loring and Young (2001) also suggest that the reason for the failure of witnesses to report or intervene include their fear that they will be the next victim; other reasons are their uncertainty about how to help, their focus on the classroom activity, or their lack of confidence in obtaining educator support to stop the bullying, and their embarrassment and fear of retaliation. That might be reasons why the bullying problem is a recurring issue and not easy to eradicate because people like witnesses or people who might have power are afraid to intervene.

According to Rigby (2004) the majority of the school population falls into the witness category thus, if the majority can be empowered to be part of the solution and not part of the problem, safer and more supportive school environments can be created for all learners. Furthermore, Rigby (2004) says that many witnesses might endorse bullying behaviour quite unconsciously, through lack of action, either by ignoring the bullying situation because it does not affect them directly, or inadvertently leaving the target isolated by not inviting him or her to join their friendship group. Rigby (2004) also mentions that some witnesses are more overt in their endorsement of bullying behaviour, for example, they may laugh and make encouraging comments that spur on the bully and they may be less likely to report the bullying action because they say it is not their duty to alert the educators.

Witnesses have a major role in the eradication of bullying at school. When surveying the literature, one notices that very few scholars mention the role of the witness in the issue of bullying. Young (2009) and Craig, Pepler and Atlas (2000) focus on the witness. Young (2009) points out that if witnesses see someone else being bullied, they must not join in but they should always try to think of how they would feel if they were in that person's situation. Craig, Pepler and Atlas (2000) argue that peer bystanders are present in as many as 85% of school bullying episodes and Young (2009) encourages the witnesses not to approve of what the bullies do but what they should do is to invite those being bullied to join them and walk away from those bullying situations. Young (2009) also mentions that it is important for the witnesses to report bullying to the educator or the older learner at school or to any adult they trust in the community to enlist help, if the situation becomes very serious. Sometimes the witness does not have the courage to talk to the bully; Young (2009) says that the witness should write down exactly what happened and give information directly to the educator, the principal, parent or another adult he/she trusts - that information should not be shared with friends or classmates. Again, the witness has a choice: if afraid to face the bully, the witness ought to report the violent incidents, without giving his/her name, by calling the Crime Stop Unit. Again, Young (2009) mentions that if the bully is a friend of the witness, it is the

responsibility of the witness to talk to him about his unacceptable behaviour, to say he does not like the action (bullying) and also offer to help him/her change his ways by talking to a trusted adult and, furthermore accompanies him/her to the adult as a sign of support.

My concluding comments on the role of the witness is that although I concur with the above authors on the significant role that the witness ought to play in the issue of bullying, it is important that all learners receive some sort of education and training that will empower them to boldly take a stand against this problem.

## **2. 6 Deaths caused by bullying**

A number of authors have reported a number of deaths caused by bullying. There are a number of reported cases of learners mentioned in the scientific literature who had been bullied and who committed suicide because of the unbearable effects of bullying. Sullivan (2001) says that some victims end up killing themselves because they fail to stand up against acts of exclusion and isolation, humiliation, name calling, beating, spreading of false rumours and teasing. Although in many cases of bullying the victim might be affected psychologically, it can also result in suicide by those who are directly or indirectly involved. Locally, in the South African context, in reporting on the death of a 16-year-old grade 11 learner, Govender (2008) has highlighted the problem of bullying in schools. Durban Boys' High School learner, tragically died in hospital after a fight at a friend's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party at Amanzimtoti, Durban, South Africa. Govender (2008) reported that his jaw was broken in two places and his right cheek bone was fractured; an artery in his neck ruptured and a clot formed starving his brain of oxygen. He suffered a major stroke and was declared brain dead. According to Govender (2008), a 15-year-old schoolgirl in Johannesburg missed classes for a week after her father was shot in a hijacking. She expected fellow learners to comfort her but instead the traumatised 15-year-old was bombarded with more than 80 cellphone messages a day, accusing her of bunking school to have an abortion. Tattum and Lane (1989) report that bullying affected those who witnessed the violence and aggression that took place in Burnage High School, South America, where a 13-year-old boy was stabbed to death when he went to the assistance of others who were being bullied. Some of the learners, who are the victims of bullying are so traumatised and disempowered by the bullying that they often express a desire to die rather than suffer further humiliation and abuse.

Together with the above scientific reports of deaths caused by bullying, there are also a number of media reports (Phil, 2010; Patta, 2010) of deaths caused by bullying. Dr. Phil, who is a TV presenter of SABC 1 programme *Dr. Phil* reports on his son, Jay McGraw, who at one time, ran a huge anti-bullying awareness campaign in schools in the United States of America. Learners signed pledges vowing they would not bully. He had written a book about bullying. Dr. Phil in (2010) used his TV programme to alert the whole world about the deaths that were

caused by bullying. Another victim of death was an 11-year old boy and a learner at the New Leadership Charter School in Springfield, Durban, South Africa, who hanged himself on 24 August 2009. The reason for committing suicide was because of the bullying that he constantly experienced for a long time; he was told by the bully not to eat his lunch for the whole week and was also teased for being gay. The boy reported the incident to his mother and told her that he was going to hurt himself but when taken to school he was afraid to give the names of the perpetrators. Debora Patta, an e TV presenter, (2010) in her programme, *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*, reported the case of the educator who bullied a learner who ended up deciding to commit suicide by hanging himself by an extension cord in a backroom. A 13-year-old boy at Scottsville Primary School in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, struggled with his lessons. The educator always took him out of the class for minor offences like being unable to complete his homework. The boy complained to his mother that the educator hated him and did not allow him go to the toilet even if he needed to use the toilet desperately. He could not bear the humiliation and pain any more so he decided to take his life.

A South African newspaper, *The Post* (14 July, 2010) reports on the story of a Strelitzia Secondary School learner, 17 years, of Willowcreek Place, Isipingo Rail, who hanged herself and was found by her younger sister, 14, and a neighbour. Her school tie was found around her neck and tied to a burglar guard in her grandmother's bedroom. Her single mother, said her daughter had been slapped and kicked outside the school gates in May by another female learner, who said she did not like the look of her face. The case of assault was reported to the Isipingo Police Station but the matter was thrown out of court because a prosecutor informed the family that it was a 'petty issue'. The petty issue claimed her life.

Another South African newspaper, *Witness* (09 June, 2010) reported that a school girl plunged to her death from the third floor of her school building on 8 June, 2010 after she was allegedly teased about being too scared by several learners who had dared her to jump. A 14 year old and a grade eight learner at Mount View Secondary in Verulam, north of Durban, South Africa sustained severe head injuries in the fall and was declared dead on the scene.

Internationally, *The Telegraph*, a United Kingdom (UK) newspaper, reported that a 15 year old girl jumped off a bridge to her death after suffering years of extreme bullying at school because of her good looks. Her body was found at the bottom of a 40ft flyover which crosses the A30 at Illogan near Redruth, Cornwall, at 23h00 on 13 July 2009. Her mother, 45, claimed that her daughter killed herself after suffering years of abuse by female bullies who would spit at her, throw stones at her and call her names. She became very emotional, very fragile and eventually she decided to take her life. An 11-year old Merseyside, United Kingdom schoolboy, killed himself because of bullying. The child took an overdose of tablets which led to his death. He went to school at Wallasey School, a co-educational school in Moreton with 1 064 learners; the bullies there, by all accounts, made his life hell. The learner was a very intelligent young boy and had been involved in the Anti-Iraq War campaign in Liverpool, attending rallies and

even speaking at one before the war. His mother arrived home from work on 2 July 2003 at around 19h00 and found him slumped on the bedroom floor, (Kirkby Times News, UK newspaper, 03 July, 2003).

In an American newspaper, The Daily Mail, Jump (2001) reported the death of a 13 year girl, who committed suicide on 12 March 2010 by swallowing 40 painkillers. Basically, she was bullied to death for being overweight. A 15-year-old year old girl took her life at her home in South Hadley, Massachusetts, having been picked on by her school's 'mean girls' who called her an Irish slut, she was raped by two teenage boys, one of whom had been her first American romance and with whom she had sex when she was just 14 (The American newspaper, The Daily Mail, 31 March, 2010).

When comparing the scientific literature on reports of deaths caused by bullying with reported cases by the media one can say that media reports can be accused of being unscientific and sensational. However, in the absence of not much reporting in the scientific literature on deaths caused by bullying, these media reports play a significant role in bringing the issue of deaths caused by bullying to the forefront of the public's awareness.

## **2. 7 Reported cases of bullying**

Govender (2008) reports a study of bullying in South Africa, Gauteng schools which involved 12 700 primary and high school learners that found bullying to be one of the prevalent forms of violence in schools. Govender (2008) points out that research by Patrick Burton identified the increasing involvement of girls in bullying. In Govender's study (2008), Joan van Niekerk of Childline, a South African organisation that deals with the children who are abused, points out that at least 100 learners a year attempted suicide after failing to cope with bullying. Van Niekerk stated that the helpline received one or two complaints of bullying at schools every day and that the organisation received an increasing number of complaints about girls being bullied; abuse included mainly emotional and verbal bullying. KwaZulu Natal Childline office receives the highest volume of calls; it records about 1280 complaints of bullying a month. Govender (2008) stated that the high rate of absenteeism in schools in South Africa is caused by bullying. North West and Free State Education Departments indicated that 20 learners were expelled for bullying and the Free State Education Department forced 12 bullies to take transfers to other schools and referred five cases for possible prosecution.

## **2. 8 Perpetrators of bullying who face delinquent charges**

When surveying the scientific literature, one notices that the bullying act is perpetrated both by boys and girls with the intention of gaining personal satisfaction, social status in the eyes of

their peers who follow them or are afraid to oppose them and they gain domination over those who are less aggressive and vulnerable (Tattum, 1993). Tatum (1993) points out that in many instances the bullies are put before the court of law because of infringing the rights of other learners but that does not make them shy away from the act of bullying. Govender (2008) reported that in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, two teenage girls, aged 13 and 16 were arrested in Cato Manor on charges of assault. They attacked a grade 10 learner with a school belt, slapped and kicked her and allegedly tried to kill her. The victim could not stand the pain of bullying and later she attempted suicide by slashing her wrists.

Media reports, like Phil (2010), gave the list of boys and girls who were perpetrators of bullying in USA, Who were put before court and charged for bullying other learners: A 17 year boy of South Hadley, on charges of civil rights violations resulting in bodily injury, criminal harassment and disturbing a school assembly; A 16 year girl of South Hadley, on charges of civil rights violations as a youthful offender, and stalking as a youthful offender; A 16 year boy of South Hadley, on charges of civil rights violations resulting in bodily injury as a youthful offender; A 16 boy of South Hadley, on charges of violation of civil rights, with bodily injury resulting, criminal harassment, stalking and disturbance of the school assembly; A 17 year boy of South Hadley, who was charged with statutory rape, violation of civil rights, violation resulting in bodily injury, criminal harassment and disturbance of a school assembly and A 18 year boy of Springfield, on a charges of statutory rape.

When comparing the scientific literature on perpetrators of bullying who face delinquent charges with reported cases by the media one can say again that media reports can be accused of being unscientific and sensational. However, in the absence of not much reporting of perpetrators facing delinquent charges in the scientific literature, these media reports play a significant role in bringing the issue of perpetrators of bullying to the forefront of the public's awareness.

## **2. 9 Theoretical Framework**

In this study which explores the experiences of the learners who witness bullying, I chose to use both the bio-ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner and the social learning theory by Bandura. These theorists state that the child is influenced by his/her social environment. The ecological systems theory according to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) has evolved out of a blend of ecological and systems views of interaction between different levels of social context and individuals within them. Its main concern is to show how individual people and groups at different levels of society are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interrelating relationships. According to Bronfenbrenner, contexts are mediated by the individual's mind. In other words, both real and perceived aspects of contexts may influence human behaviour like bullying. Human beings (including the bullied, the bully and the witness), are a product of different systems. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory has relevance for this study,

since the bullied, the bully and the witness as human beings who influence and are influenced by the social systems of which they are part, as well as their experiences, interpretations and analysis thereof within these systems, can be better explained using ecological systems theory. The three contexts, namely the family, school and community and the interconnections between them shapes and influences the development of the bullied, the bully and the witness as human beings in their contexts. The ecological systems theory will thus serve as a framework for understanding the nature and influences of the experiences of learners who witness bullying. The social learning theory of Bandura (1977) emphasises the importance of observing and modelling the behaviour and the attitudes and emotional reactions of others. Bandura (1977) states that fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action. This means that if the learner grows up witnessing bullying at home and being told that if one witnesses bullying there is no need to report it because one would be showing signs of being a rat, this socialisation could teach the learner who witnesses bullying that there is no need to rush to an educator or an older person to report the act of bullying.

### **2. 9. 1 Ecological systems theory**

The researcher chose to use the ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework for this study. The ecological systems theory is used to understand the social relations of the learners in

different classrooms within the school and the relationships within the school's subsystems as well as between them and their general social context, according to (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) add that the ecological theory enables one to show how individuals and the groups, at different levels of the social context, are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships. In this study, this is reflected in how learners from different home backgrounds interact within the social context. Crotty (1998) argues that the ecological systems theory highlights how learners' actions are influenced by their social interactions.

Bronfenbrenner (2004) defines ecological systems theory as looking at the child's development within the context of the system of relationship that forms his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner (2004) defines ecological systems theory as consisting of layers, each having an effect on a child's development. He further postulates that the interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his or her immediate family or community environment and the societal landscape fuels and steers his/her development. He also adds that if one wants to study a child's development, one must look not only at the child and his/her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well. Environment sometimes might be so powerful in the mind-set of the witness, in the sense that he/she would copy a wrong that he/she sees around him/her. He/she might not intervene in preventing the



bullying being done by the perpetrator because he or she may have witnessed a person, in the family or environment, who was bullied without any intervention by others.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2004), the ecological systems theory that holds development which reflects the influence of several environmental systems and it only identifies five of those environmental systems:

- i) **Microsystem:** The setting in which the individual lives includes the learner's family, peers, school and community. It is in the microsystem that the most direct interactions with the parents, peers, teachers and members of the community take place. The learner is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings but someone who helps to construct the settings. It means that if the learner has constructed the setting in a negative way, the way he or she interacts with others may result in him or her being judgemental and subjective.
- ii) **Mesosystem:** This refers to the relationship between contexts, that is, the relationship between family experiences and school experiences and between school experiences and church experiences. If parents teach a sense of responsibility and rejection of wrong doing, the learner will be more likely to report cases of bullying.
- iii) **Exosystem:** This involves links between a social setting, in which the learner does not play an active role, and the immediate context. Sometimes, witnesses might have no control of the bullying situation so they are afraid to report as the bullies might threaten to bully them in return, or even to kill them if they dare contact the educators or parents.
- iv) **Macrosystem:** This level describes the culture in which the learners live. The learners may not report the bullying incidents that they witness because they might not see anything wrong in learners who are bullying others as they for example are used to stick fighting games which are part of their culture. The violence that is taking place in South Africa might be the cause of witnesses not seeing the urgent need of reporting bullying that is happening around them because of the experience that they go through in their society.
- v) **Chronosystem:** This is the pattern of environmental events and transitions over the life course as well as socio-historical circumstances. For example, witnessing bullying is one transition. The learners may at first, be negatively affected by witnessing bullying but

when they are used to witnessing incidents, they can become indifferent and accept it as part of their lives.

Looking at the nature of the study which requires the researcher to explore the experiences of learners who witness bullying, the ecological systems theory was of great help because it helped me to know and understand how the individual learner perceived and interpreted bullying, which may have been influenced by environments he or she had been exposed to. I was thus able to determine how the experiences of the individual learner in bullying affected him or her psychologically, emotionally and academically.

## **2. 9. 2 Social learning theory**

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. He also argues that individuals, especially learners, learn aggressive responses from observing others, either personally or through the media and environment. Bandura (1977) also states that learning could be exceedingly laborious, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions, to inform them of what to do. He states that many individuals believe that aggression will produce reinforcement and these reinforcements can culminate into reduction of tension, gaining of financial rewards or gaining the praise of others or building self-esteem.

Bandura (1977) postulates that the component processes underlying observational learning are:

- i) attention including modelled events like distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence and functional value as well as observer characteristics that include sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement;
- ii) retention including symbolic coding, cognitive organisation, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal;
- iii) motor reproduction including physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, accuracy of feedback and
- iv) motivation including external, vicarious and self-reinforcement.

According to Bandura (1997), social learning theory has been applied extensively to the understanding of aggression and psychological disorders, particularly in the context of behaviour modification. He further believes that aggression reinforced by members of the family is the most prominent source of behaviour modelling. He reports that these learners may use the same aggressive tactics that their parents illustrated when dealing with others.

Besides learners modelling the bad behaviour of their parents, Bandura (1997) believes that television is a source of behaviour modelling, saying that today films and television shows illustrate violence graphically. Violence is often expressed as acceptable behaviour,

especially for heroes who have never been punished. Since aggression is a prominent feature of many shows, learners who have high degrees of exposure to the media may exhibit a relatively high incidence of hostility themselves in the imitation of the aggression they have witnessed (Berkowitz, 1962).

If witnesses keep on watching bullying scenes they might turn to be bullies themselves because they may think that it is an accepted behaviour. Seigel (1992, p.170) confirms that 'children learn to act aggressively when they model their behaviour after acts of adults, especially family members'. For example, the boy who witnesses his father repeatedly striking his mother will more than likely become an abusive parent and husband.

Vygotsky (1978) calls social learning theory a social development theory. He argues that social interaction in social development theory precedes development consciousness and cognition. These are the end products of socialisation and social behaviour. He also mentions that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) states that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, between people (interpsychological) and later on the individual level, that is inside the child (intrapsychological).

In his theory, Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the connections between people and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences. This theory helps one to understand that a learner's experiences are shaped by social environment and culture. That means that the way learners interpret their experiences as the witnesses of bullying is determined by the way they are culturally socialised.

The difference between Bandura and Vygotsky is that Bandura (1997) states that the child is influenced by his/her social environment. It means that it is the child's environment that socialises and moulds him/her ways of thinking and behaving whereas Vygotsky (1978) mentions that culture plays a very important role in the upbringing of the child. The child's culture is inculcated in the way that it develops the sense of respect and makes the child to regard the culture's sayings as utmost important in life. When I looked at both theorists, I realised that the witness's behaviour is motivated both by the social environment and culture.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has covered a brief review of related literature on bullying, touching on issues such as: what is bullying, who is involved in bullying, the types of bullying, the bullied and witness. Furthermore, it looked closely at the role that is played by the witness in the bullying situation, not only highlighted those learners who were bullied to death but also

mentioning those who were killed because of being the witnesses when they tried to intervene in the bullying. Reported cases of bullying, and those bullies who faced delinquency charges, were topics that were also discussed. The researcher concluded by focussing on a theoretical frameworks, putting emphasis on the Ecological systems theory and the Social learning theory, while at the same time paying attention to how these two theories explained experiences of learners who witnessed bullying.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research design and methodology**

#### **3. 1 Introduction**

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes valid research and which research methods are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. In order to conduct and evaluate any research, it is therefore important to know what these assumptions are. This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and also the design strategies underpinning this research study. Common philosophical assumptions were reviewed and presented; the interpretive paradigm was identified for the framework of the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the research methodologies and design used in the study including strategies, instruments and data collection and analysis methods, while explaining the stages and processes involved in the study.

The research design for this study is an interpretive case study that is analysed through qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to evaluate participants' skills of divulging information and also to determine their level of satisfaction at the end of the study. Face to face interviews and focus group discussions were used as data collection methods. Furthermore, the justification for each of the data collection methods used in the study was discussed. Finally, in order to ensure trustworthiness of the research, appropriate criteria for qualitative research were discussed and several methods that include member checks, crystallisation and triangulation were suggested and later employed. The chapter closed with representation of the major facets of the envisaged ethical considerations for the research design and limitations for the development of the study.

It needs to be highlighted that the main purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of learners who witness bullying in schools. This chapter focuses on the methodology procedures that were used to elicit answers to the two research questions, 'What are the experiences of learners who witness bullying?' and 'How do these affect them psychologically, emotionally and academically?'

## **3. 2 Research approach utilised in this study**

### **3. 2. 1 Qualitative approach**

According to Maree (2007), the qualitative approach is based on the interpretive paradigm and its emphasis is on understanding how people make meaning of phenomena in their environment. Qualitative research therefore acknowledges an interactive relationship between the researcher and the participants as well as between the participants and their experiences and how they have constructed reality, based on those experiences. This research study drew meaning from what the participants said about bullying regarding the way their environment, culture and beliefs are interpreted. Witnesses elaborated that their environment, culture and beliefs that are inculcated to them demand independence, meaning that if you fail to stand up for yourself in tough situations, you are showing signs of being a coward and which is a great embarrassment. Again, influences of the community discourage the situations where another person reports bullying incidents on behalf of the victim, because if you were caught doing that, you were regarded as a spy. Spies were taken and people who were very dangerous in the community in such a way that in some cases they were attacked and killed.

Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005) postulate that a qualitative approach is used for an in-depth inquiry and Bertram (2003) confirms that qualitative methods are concerned with a detailed and an in-depth analysis. The deep-seated information confided by participants as witnesses through interviews and focus group discussions on the dynamics of bullying was a testimony and proof of how a qualitative approach is of vital importance in the exposition and disclosure of validity from the interviewees. Through the use of qualitative approach, witnesses were able to open up and explored all what they wanted to say about how witnessing of bullying affect them, as well as the researcher got a space to probe so as to get relevant information. Using of qualitative approach in the study brought about trustworthiness because of the way information was obtained from the participants.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002), qualitative researchers stress the socially-constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied and the situation constraints that shape the inquiry. It is a systematic attempt to generate and use non-quantitative techniques that facilitate the understanding of socio-cultural contexts of educational processes and institutions. Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) confirm that qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world and they therefore want to study them in their natural setting.

According to McNeill and Chapman (2005), qualitative data takes the form of words rather than numbers. They go on to say that data collected in a qualitative way concentrates on presenting the quality of the way of life described rather than on presenting statistics. In this study data were collected from the learners from Grade 8 - 12 who had witnessed bullying at school.

### **3. 3 Research paradigm utilised in this study**

#### **3. 3. 1 Interpretive paradigm**

The study was located within the interpretive paradigm because it was aimed at getting to know how learners as witnesses constructed their experiences of being influenced by bullying as witnesses. Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005) contend that when working within the interpretive paradigm, the researcher will look at different places and at different aspects in order to understand a phenomenon; these phenomena and events are understood through mental processes of interpretation which are influenced by interacting with social contexts. The study has shown evidence of learners being influenced by multiple realities, and revealing that not a single reality of the phenomena differed across time and place.

Maree (2007) similarly states that interpretation focuses on people's subjective experiences, on how people 'construct' the social world by sharing meaning and how they interact with, or relate to, each other. The underlying assumption is that by placing people in their social contexts, there is a greater opportunity to understand the perceptions they have of their own activities. The uniqueness of a particular situation makes it important to understand and interpret the meaning constructed. Maree (2007) goes on to say that the human mind is the purposive source of origin of meaning. By exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomena we can begin to develop a sense of understanding of the meaning imparted by people in relation to phenomena and their social context. To relate to the study, the researcher looked at experiences of learners who witnessed bullying and how it affected their psychological, emotional and academic spheres.

According to Neill (2006), the interpretive paradigm rests upon idealism and the idealism holds the view that the world is creation of mind, which means the world, is interpreted through the mind. Neill (2006) explains the interpretive paradigm as a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving the comprehension of the whole. He further notes the underlying assumptions of interpretive paradigm; the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a phenomenon. The interpretive paradigm is critical of positivism because it seeks to collect and analyse data from parts of a phenomena.

According to Schwardt (1994 p. 118) the interpretive paradigm is “fundamentally concerned with the meaning and seeks to understand social members’ definition of a situation”; the relativist ontology of the interpretive paradigm assumes that reality is constructed and intersubjectivity through the meanings of understanding developments, socially and experientially. The researcher selected Zululiyaduma High School (which is the pseudo name) so as to understand the learners’ experiences of being witnesses of bullying; it was also important to gauge how the witnesses were affected by bullying psychologically, emotionally and academically and to know how authorities prepared the witnesses for taking a stand against bullying.

Spradley (1979) argues that the interpretive paradigm relies heavily on naturalistic methods i.e. interviewing and observation and the analysis of data. These methods ensure an adequate dialogue between the researcher and the participant and they interact in order to construct a meaningful reality collaboratively. Gephart (1993) asserts that the description of cultures based on intimate knowledge, participation, as well as ethnographically, link textual analyses when using transcripts or verbal protocol of meeting as data. He further argues that verbal or conversational data are collected to represent interactions naturally occurring in social settings. The researcher explored a part of the answer in her analysis of the experiences of witnesses of bullying as shared beliefs by learners. Interviews were conducted with the learners in which they were asked open-ended questions about their experiences as witnesses of bullying. Textual analysis was done where a text with data was drawn and analysed. The focus group was used in discussions, where even the shy learners were given a chance to share their experiences with other learners. Through interviews and focus group discussions, it was noted that the way participants reacted on witnessing of bullying was influenced by their culture.

Angen (2000) offers some criteria for evaluating research from an interpretive perspective; just to mention a few: validity becomes a moral question and must be located in the discourse of the research community culminating in a written account that develops persuasive arguments and carries out inquiry in a respectful manner.

### **3. 4 The Sample**

Sampling involves determining where and from whom data are collected. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) there are four important sampling procedures in qualitative research, namely, convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and dimensional sampling. Maree (2007) argues that sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for the study. Maree (2007) goes on to say that sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions.



### **3. 4. 1 Purposive sampling**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), purposive sampling is a tool that allows for the selection of people on the basis that they can contribute to and expand the researcher's database. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) highlight the point that subjects chosen for purposive sampling are chosen with the purpose of representing a location in relation to a key criterion. David and Sutton (2004) also confirm that in purposive sampling the participants are selected according to the researcher's own knowledge and opinion about which ones they think will be appropriate to the topic area. For that purpose, the researcher chose purposive sampling which allowed her to select only those learners who had witnessed bullying in the selected school in Umlazi. Selecting this school was also a convenience on the side of the researcher because she would not have to spend on transport and waste a lot of time moving to the venue of research.

The sample comprised of eight learners (three girls and five boys from Grades 6- 12). The choice of a greater number of boys was because in the selected school the majority of learners who witnessed bullying were boys. The power and logic of purposive sampling as it is referred to by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) emphasise that the researcher ought to select information-rich cases for an in-depth study, because studying a few cases in depth will provide deeper insights about the topic. In this study the researcher worked with eight learners who had witnessed bullying. That also allowed the researcher to listen to the voices of these learners who had had first-hand experience of witnessing learners being bullied.

### **3. 5 Tools used to collect data**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), common qualitative data collection approaches comprise face-to-face collection methods, such as observations, interviews and audio and video taping. This study used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions that were audio taped. The learners were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. The stimulus material was the learners witnessing a role play of the bullying scene which was followed by a focus group discussion using open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were used so that the respondent could share their experiences freely without being restricted by structured questions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) confirm that open-ended questions are flexible, allowing the interviewer (researcher) to probe so that she may go into more depth if she wants to clear up some misunderstandings. The authors again emphasise that these kinds of questions help the interviewer to go deeper and be able to get the maximum response.

Audio taping the responses of the learners were of great help because the tape kept the authentic and original words of the learners. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explain

that audio taping prevents the researcher from disturbing the respondent while busy responding to the question and reduces bias because the delay may lead to the researcher later forgetting some of the details.

### **3. 5.1 Interviewing**

Interviewing is another method widely used by researchers and it is particularly popular with qualitative researchers as it is considered by Clarke and Dawson (2003) to be the very backbone of the field of naturalistic research and evaluation. David and Sutton (2004) also confirm that interviewing involves asking people questions, but it is equally about listening carefully to the answers given. These authors distinguish between structured and semi-structured interviews as well as standardised and un-standardised interviews. In the study the researcher chose semi-structured interview.

#### **i) Semi-structured or open-ended interviews**

According to David and Sutton (2004, p.87) an semi-structured interview “seeks to emphasise the depth validity of each individual interview in an attempt to let the interviewee tell his/her story and so determine to a greater extent the flow of the dialogue”. Baker (1999) highlights the point that when semi-structured interview questions are asked, the interviewer should write down the answers, but obviously, there is a possibility for shifts in the meaning and emphasis between what the participants say and what the interviewer writes down. To avoid the problem of misinterpreting the actual words of the participants, I tape recorded the responses of the participants.

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to adopt a non-directive almost conversational style that allows the interviewee largely to determine the course of the discussion (Miller & Brewer, 2003). These authors are supported by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) when they say the semi-structured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom. Miller and Brewer (2003) also argue that semi-structured interviews enable the interviewer to see the world through the eyes of the interviewee and discover how they make sense of their experiences. The writers also state that semi-structured interviews are excellent for establishing rapport and allowing researchers to gain rich information about various phenomena. During an interview I was able to develop, adapt and generate questions and follow-up probes appropriate to the exploration of what witnesses of bullying felt.

### **3. 5. 2 Focus group discussions**

Flick (2009) describes a focus group interview as an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically six to eight people who participate in the interview for one and a half to two hours. In this study, I had eight participants that formed a focus group discussion. According to David and Sutton (2004), a focus group discussion is a group interview rather than a more stereotypical one-to-one interview. They further explain that the purpose of the focus group discussions is to use the interaction between groups of interviewees to generate discussion about the topic and, furthermore that it also holds out the possibility of giving the interviewee greater control of the talk as they bounce ideas off each other rather than simply respond to the interviewer. The researcher tape recorded the discussion of the participants as they were bringing forth both predictable and unexpected ideas.

Lewis and Ritchie (2003) talk about key features of focus groups discussions as a process where participants present their own views and experiences, but they also hear other people. They listen, reflect on what is said, and in the light of this they consider their standpoint further. These authors also argue that a focus group feature is the spontaneity that arises from the stronger social context. I was able to listen to the participants interacting with one another and sharing their experiences on the witnessing of bullying. According to Puchta and Potter (2004), one of the important aspects of running focus group discussions is to produce informality in the discussion. In the study, the researcher created a liberal climate, facilitating participants to contribute openly both their experiences and opinions. The researcher also channelled the participants so as not to drift and digress from what was discussed in the group.

Focus group discussions are synergistic (Stewart and Shamdasi, 1990), in the sense that the group works together: the interaction is explicitly used to generate data and insights. The focus group method was a powerful tool used by the researcher to gain insight into the situation where the witnesses explored their experiences as witnesses of bullying. The focus group presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life situations.

### **3. 6 Data analysis**

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of learners who witnessed bullying and how it affected them psychologically, emotionally and academically. In an attempt to answer the critical questions, data were collected and recorded during interviews and focus group discussions and documents were analysed. I also listened to the tape recorder to compare it with the verbal responses.

According to Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz (1991) there are many approaches to the analysis of data and ways in which findings can be presented. In keeping with the above statement this research sought to re-organise the raw data in an integrated flow, both from the interview and tape recorder. The first step was to focus and tease out emergent trends, insights, themes and ideas. Responses of the learners were arranged individually and then the analyses moved on to the next individual, looking at the coherence and integrity of the individual's response.

Bertram (2003) mentions that once data has been collected, it is organised into categories and when organising data being collected, some steps need to be followed: firstly, the researcher starts by recording the data set as a whole in order to get a sense of what is happening. The researcher writes down the ideas that come to him/her as he or she reads. Secondly, the researcher identifies the topics which emerge from the data. A topic is the descriptive name for the subject matter of a piece of text. The researcher writes down the topics in the margin. Thirdly, the researcher writes lists of topics that have emerged from the different data sets and sees if there is any duplication. He/she has now a set of topics with which to classify or categorise. Classification means that one puts similar aspects together in the same group. Lastly, the researcher then applies this provisional classification system to all the data sets. He/she may abbreviate the topic to a code next to the appropriate piece of data.

### **3. 7 Trustworthiness of the study**

According to Johnson (1997) in theory, trustworthiness, that is, credibility and validity of qualitative research can be considered from two different perspectives depending on the epistemological foundation of the research and the epistemologically based arguments of the evaluation. Ideally, both of the considerations are based on the same epistemological foundation. Again, Johnson (1997) adds that in qualitative research three types of validity can be discussed: first, descriptive validity which refers to the factual accuracy of the account as reported by the qualitative researcher. Second, interpretive validity is obtained to the degree that the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, intentions and experiences are accurately understood and reported by the qualitative researcher. Third, theoretical validity is obtained to the degree that a theory or theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data and is therefore credible and defensible.

Davies (2007) explains the concept of validity as relating to the question of whether the end-results of the researcher's analysis are accurate representations of the psychosocial or textual reality that the researcher claims it to be. Baker (1999) confirms that validity is a property of a measuring instrument for which the researcher wants to test. David and

Sutton (2004) also emphasise that validity involves the researcher undertaking some initial analysis of the measurement to check that it performs in the way that it would be expected to. Krefting (1991) suggested three criteria to ensure valid interpretation of data: truth value, (is measured by credibility, having an adequate engagement in the research setting so recurrent patterns in data can be properly identified and verified); applicability, (is established with transferability, allowing readers to be able to apply the findings of the study to their own situations) and neutrality, (researcher's perspective is natural biased due to his/her close association with the data, source and methods, various audit strategies can be used to confirm findings, (Bowen, 2009 and Miller 1997). Therefore the trustworthiness of interpretations and findings are dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached, (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher used data triangulation that was the use of face to face interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher also used participant feedback, where the feedback and discussion of the researcher's interpretations and conclusions were verified with the actual participants. The researcher also engaged herself in reflexivity, where self-awareness and critical self-reflection was done, so as to do away with researcher's biasness and predispositions because these may affect the research process and conclusions. Negative case sampling was attended to, just to locate and examine cases that disconfirmed the researcher's expectations and tentative explanation. Again, to ensure trustworthiness in this study the researcher collected data in the field over an extended period of time, meaning that data from both interviews and focus group were done twice. The researcher also used multiple theories like: ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (2004) and social systems theory by Bandura (1977) and perspectives to help interpret and explain the data. Discussions of researcher's interpretations and conclusions were also done with other people. This included discussion with a disinterested peer, with another researcher not directly involved. The peer challenged the researcher, enabling her to provide solid evidence for any interpretations and conclusions.

### **3. 8 Ethical considerations**

I first requested permission to conduct the research at a school in Umlazi. A written application, together with the letter, stating the purpose of the research, was sent to the principal. The principal was informed that the research was to be conducted using interviews and focus group discussions, aimed at exploring the experiences of the learners who witnessed bullying.

The consent letters were sent to the parents of the learners who were to participate in the research. The letters covered issues such as confidentiality, privacy, voluntary participation; learners' responses were verified by them before submission. Learners were also informed orally about the use of the tape recorder.

### **3. 9 Limitations of the study**

Although this research was carefully prepared, the researcher was still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. First of all, the research was conducted in only eight participants and had lasted for a month. One month was not enough for the researcher to observe the witnesses trying to intervene in bullying. It would be better if it was done in a longer time. Second, the research was done on only one school. It could have been better if it done on two or more school, just to get experiences of witnesses of bullying from other schools, especially in the ex- modern C schools where bullying is rival. Third, participants' overloaded school work, to some extent, might affect the results of the correlation between the participants' motivation to intervene of witnesses of bullying within the school premises and their performance in class regarding the work given to them by their educators. Sometimes they turned to have misunderstanding with their educators because they expected the witnesses to report any bullying incident to them as adult and forced witnesses to concentrate on their school work.

Participants were informed about the research, that they were protected, by ensuring anonymity or confidentiality, but with the focus group discussions, the researcher was unable to offer the degree of confidentiality that was available on a face-to-face interview. That had more than just ethical implications, as members of the group did not give full accounts of sensitive issues, thus weakening the depth validity of data collected.

### **3. 10 Conclusion**

This chapter dealt with research design and methodology of the study. Research design was discussed in length and highlighting its impact to the study. The reason of choosing interpretative paradigm was also mentioned. Sampling and tools used to collect data were discussed. The tools enabled the researcher to obtain data, interpreted and came to conclusion. Trustworthiness of data is an important issue, so researcher used so many yardsticks to ensure that the interpretations and conclusions of data were valid and reliable. Issues of ethical considerations were taken as utmost important especially in the protection of the confidentiality of the participants.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Findings of the study**

#### **4. 1 Introduction**

This study explored the experiences of learners who witnessed bullying at school and navigated some insight into the extent in which these learners were affected psychologically, emotionally and academically. The data were collected through unstructured interviews from eight learners, three girls and five boys from grade eight to twelve. They were also asked how they were affected by bullying as they witnessed it. Each learner was interviewed for approximately one hour and thirty minutes to two hours. The data collected were categorised into themes.

The focus group discussions were another tool that were also used to collect data from the learners and the data collected from the focus group discussions were compared to that of the semi-structured interviews. The focus group discussions also lasted for almost one hour thirty minutes. Again, the data generated were grouped according to themes which are to be discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **4. 2 Categorised themes for both unstructured interview and focus group discussions**

The generated themes that form the data analysis were:

- witnesses' general descriptions and personal understandings of bullying.
- the impact of bullying on witnesses' personalities.
- the impact of bullying on witnesses' experiences psychologically, emotionally and academically.
- the witnesses' intervention in bullying incidents.
- strategies used by witnesses to stop bullying.
- witnesses' attitudes towards bullies.
- advice that witnesses of bullying would give to bullies

## 4. 2. 1 Understanding of bullying by witnesses

Bullying is defined by most participants as a behaviour that frightens or hurts someone smaller or weaker. De Wet (2005) defines bullying as a general way of victimisation of a learner by another as he/she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions.

When participants were asked: “**What is your understanding of bullying?**”, the first participant responded by describing bullying as: “*Bullying is an abuse of emotional feelings to the victim.*” According to Rigby (2004), bullying is not random but a deliberate act, causing physical, psychological and emotional harm.

The second participant responded by saying: “*Bullying is when you treat another person in an awkward way and the victim feels uncomfortable about the action but has no guts of confronting the perpetrator because the victim is afraid.*” Supporting the idea, Rigby (2004) confirms that bullying is frequently defined in terms of power, either physical or through peer group status, intent to harm with frequency.

When participants responded to critical questions, unstructured interviews were used to collect data from the eight chosen learners. Some of the eight learners pointed out that bullying was an act that aimed at victimizing, humiliating, threatening, attacking, injuring, persecuting and intimidating a young person. People who were involved in bullying demanded respect forcefully. All participants also said that victimization had the aim of instilling fear even in the witnesses. Again, the harassment was done by their peers who were physically fit.

The first participant also responded by saying, “*It is when you treat another person badly because he/she is younger than you. You call him/her with derogatory or depersonalising names, beat or repossess his/her possessions. You sometimes force that person to do things that he/she does not like to do.*”

Bullying can either be direct, for example verbal and physical aggression or indirect, such as threats, insults, name calling, spreading of rumours, writing hurtful graffiti or encouraging others not to play with a particular learner; it also involves intended actions that lead to social exclusion or damage of a learner’s reputation or status in an attempt to get others not to socialise with the victim (De Wet, 2005; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

The same question was also asked to the fourth participant who responded as follows: “*It is an act that aimed at humiliating an inferior person, making him/her feel very small or very uncomfortable, unprotected and lonely. The perpetrators of bullying use their powers*



*wrongly because they reinforce fear to their victims as well as to the witnesses, so that they would never think of protecting the bullied.”*

The above response is similar to what is asserted by De Wet (2005), is that the victims of bullying often feel lonely and isolated from their friends and classmates and they may feel rejected, excluded, ignored, betrayed or being ridiculed in class by the spreading of nasty rumours.

#### **4. 2. 2 The impact of bullying on witnesses’ behaviour**

Bullying had a negative impact on witnesses’ behaviour because when they related their personal experiences of bullying, most of them changed their facial expressions. On the whole, witnesses expressed disgust and anger toward verbal and physical harassment of their peers. Girls felt sad, get upset, become angry and disgusted whereas boys felt indifferent about having witnessed verbal bullying.

Many witnesses of bullying expressed different feelings, including guilt, anger, confusion and lack of knowledge regarding what to do, and fear of becoming the next victim. When the second participant was asked: **“What is your feeling about bullying?”** she responded by saying that: *“I felt lonely and afraid that if I reported the bullying incident, I might be the next victim but at the same time I felt angry when I saw my peer being physically and emotion abused. What angered and frustrated me most was the inability to defend her.”* When the same question was asked to the fourth participant, she responded by saying, *“I felt like fighting the bully and really watching bullying developed that hatred in me.”*

Some participants showed their disapproval behaviour by frowning as they responded to the very same question. Lack of confidence was highlighted and it was also noted that they were reluctant to help the victim if other learners did not support the idea of intervention. The sixth participant responded by saying: *“No one else stuck up for her. If someone else had stuck up for her, I would have stuck up for her as well.”*

The witnesses as participants within the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions regarded emotional support as the only mechanism or therapy they could render to the victims. Unfortunately participants as witnesses lack the capacity to assist victims amicably and vigorously. The example of the eighth participant revealed unsuccessful attempts to prevent bullying: Below is a testimony of the aforementioned. *“They were pointing, laughing and calling him names. I tried talking to the bullies and telling them to stop teasing my friend, but they did not listen.”*

In contrast, and ironically, some responses indicated that not all witnesses were upset and eventually did not condemn bullying as some never saw anything wrong with it; as a result

they felt good and excited watching it. Strangely enough, some even said that in their community there is a game of sticks which was played with the aim of preparing a man to endure pain when faced with tough situations. This explicitly meant bullying was nothing compared to stick fighting. The third participant said: *“I shouted out loudly with excitement so as to encourage the bully to go on with victimisation, because to me it was a normal situation. Anyway, if you are man enough you need to be able to defend yourself without expecting other people to fight your battles.”*

### **4.2.3 Impact of bullying on witnesses’ experiences: psychologically, emotionally and academically**

#### **a) Psychological influence of bullying on witnesses.**

Two participants attested to the fact that witnessing bullying did influence them psychologically. They explicitly admitted that experiencing and witnessing repetitive bullying triggered a high level of psychological trauma. For instance, one participant pointed out that bullying incurred bad memories of complex emotions, pain, frustration, hurt, anger, sadness and suffering that lingered on for a long time before dissipating.

The question asked was: **“Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?”** The first participant replied by saying: *“Watching bullying provokes the desire for retaliation towards the perpetrator.”*

The eighth participant responded to the same question by saying: *“Angifuni ukuqamba amanga (I don’t want to lie). Looking at your classmate or a friend being victimised is traumatic and especially if you know that he/she will not get the help he/she is asking for. It makes you angry and useless if you are afraid to intervene because the bullies are the group of boys who are feared by everyone at school.”*

Participants also revealed that they felt useless when they could not help their friends when victimised by the bullies. The participants continued to say more about how they felt when unable to help their friends from bullies. Responding to the question of **“How did you feel when unable to help?”** the first participant said: *“After failing to help my friend I felt emotionally moved and disturbed as I had a fear that he would lose trust and dignity on me and regard me as a coward. Painful as it is, I have to admit it because I actually failed to protect him against the bullies. I have lost that respect my friend had for me, I feel empty inside.”*

The fourth participant responded to the same question by saying: *“It takes time to build your pride and reputation among your friends and classmates but bullies do not care about*

*that; they destroy all these in a second. They repossess all the powers you have by preventing you from intervening in their victimisation act and this is really pathetic and awful."*

## **b) How bullying influences the witnesses emotionally**

What was noted through the responses of the participants who witnessed bullying was that bullying had a short-term emotional impact to them. Participants attested that they became emotionally affected and disturbed when realising that they could not intervene in order to persuade the perpetrators to stop their deeds and let the victims off the hook and left unharmed. Some participants also protested that before witnessing bullying their emotional behaviour was normal but after watching it their emotional status changed, they sometimes became irritable and aggressive.

The following question was asked to the seventh participant: **"How does the act of bullying affect you emotionally?"** The response was: *"I felt guilty and bad when I saw how the boy looked up at me with that eye of asking for help but failing to help him or called the educator."* He continued saying: *"Sometimes I felt mad or angry that I was unable to help when my assistance was needed most."*

The sort of frustration felt by witness has an adverse impact on him/her in that he/she has no power to stop the bully. Witnesses may even find themselves indulging in substance abuse as they regard it as a solution to dealing with their emotions. This is supported by Rivers, et al (2009); they argue that witnessing the victimisation of peers can lead to the indulgence of substance abuse by victims.

On the other hand, the eighth participant said: *"I felt good about myself that I stood up for friends in trouble because my friends were part of me."*, most of the witnesses responded to the question by saying that they were really emotionally traumatised by the whole situation in the sense that they wished for the perpetrators to taste their own medicine. The fourth participant responded: *"I wish the perpetrators could experience what bad action they are doing to their victims and even when I saw them in class I wished like beating them. She added: "Sometimes I failed to concentrate in class because I was thinking of that traumatic action."* The first participant responded by saying: *"I felt like being with the victim all the time and when I saw him leaving the class during the lesson, I also asked the permission from the educator to go out as to protect him if it happened that the perpetrators were waiting in the toilet."*

### **c) The impact of bullying on the academic achievement of the witnesses.**

The data collected also revealed the feeling of all the participants interviewed and was that bullying had a negative impact on the academic achievement of the witness, which was not the case before. Some of the participants pointed out that their academic performance was outstandingly excellent before witnessing bullying but after being involved they drastically dropped academically. The second participant was asked the question: **What are your experiences of witnessing bullying?**, she responded by saying: *"It's really a trauma to watch bullying because even if you are not directly involved it affects you and make you lose your concentration in class and ending up failing your subjects."*

Responding to the same question, the fifth participant replied by saying: *"When you are a boy seeing your friend put inside the toilet basin it's like degrading and a challenge to your manhood. When you keep on thinking about this in class it takes away all your concentration and makes you to lose focus in the lessons especially as you gradually becoming agitated and irritable."*

Seeking clarity from the seventh participant the question was asked: **"Do experiences relating witnessing bullying impact on your education?"** He responded by saying: *"Yes, when I think of bullying in class I simply fail to concentrate and even when I study at home I lose the focus and understanding of what I am studying."* He added: *"My dream is to become a Chartered Accountant (CA) when I finish my grade twelve but now this lack of concentration makes me to drop from level six down to level four and educators as well as my parents are worried about what might be the cause of this sudden drop of marks. The thing is that I am not going to tell them the cause because I am afraid of becoming the next victim, in fact I won't dare interfere with what is happening because these boys who bully my classmate are a group."*

Supporting the participant above, the sixth participant replied as follows: *"Being afraid to intervene in bullying incidents traumatised me at school. I failed to participate in group works. I failed to submit my projects and homework in time because my focus of school work was somehow disturbed. I started playing truancy avoiding watch these bullying scenes forcefully. I did not study for my tests and my marks dropped drastically."*

Not all the participants were academically affected by bullying. Some said watching it had no negative impact on their school work because bullying was like an episode that they enjoyed watching. The third participant responded by saying: *"Watching bullying did not affect my school work; instead it made me to look forward to the next day, meaning that I did not bunk class. It really amused me to see the bullied being afraid of participating in the activities that are done in classroom. I did not feel pity for the victims as they were supposed to protect themselves so my school work was normal."*

This study was limited in the sense that the impact of bullying on academic achievement depended on learners' reports of how bullying affected them academically and not on a comparison of achievement prior to bullying with achievement after bullying.

#### **4. 2. 4 The witnesses' intervention in bullying incidents**

When most of the witnesses were asked about their level of intervention in the incidences of bullying, they stated that their intervention was minimal and limited because they were afraid that they might be attacked or become the next victims. The participants also pointed out that they were reluctant to intervene in the bullying incidences, saying that in most cases bullies were learners who were physically powerful. They could hardly risk intervening to protect the helpless victims.

Other witnesses responded by saying that they were afraid to personally face the bully but they reported the case to the adults and educators so that they could intervene in the incident but it did not help. The question asked was, "**How did you intervene in the bullying situation?**" The sixth participant responded by saying: *"I am afraid to intervene because the learners who bully others are a group of naughty boys who are powerful and feared by everyone at school. When they are reported to the authorities, the principal and educators, they do not take any drastic steps against them, instead they were told to notify their authorities about the bullying behaviour."*

Some participants reported that they retaliated to bullying by simply handling the matter in their own way but it did not help. The second participant said: *"I sorted it out on my own or I got back at the person who bullied my friend but I was too afraid to stand up for another boy because they might say I liked him. I did not know what to do."*

Other passive witnesses suggested that they did not feel empathy for either the victim or the perpetrator and experienced no emotional distress and apprehension. They also said that they tried to discourage the perpetrators by not watching the scenes. They thought that by doing so, the perpetrators would stop victimising other learners as they would run out of spectators but instead other witnesses were entertained by the whole situation. Whereas the interviewees that they saw nothing wrong with that. The eighth participant said: *"A man should be able to fend himself against his enemies without expecting others to fight his battles. If you don't learn to protect yourself now, how would you safe-guard your family in future, which will solely rely on your protection as their head?"*

Some witnesses believed that every man should be able to protect himself. They said no man should be protected by another man. They even called those victims 'weaky weakies'. In support of the above statement, the third participant replied to the question asked by stating: *"I shunt away from watching and laughing at these bullying scenes with an aim of discouraging the perpetrators, but instead they regarded me as a weak mum's boy."*

#### **4. 2. 5 Strategies used by witnesses to stop bullying**

The participants said that they implemented a number of strategies with the aim of discouraging the perpetrators. Others confirmed that some of these strategies failed to yield results when applied.

The eighth participant was asked the following question: **"What strategy do you use to stop bullying?"** he responded by saying: *"We reduced the attention to the bully by simply ignoring the bullying scenes and instead of making the bully think we enjoy what they were doing, we walked away from them."* He emphasised the point by saying that: *"We all know that bullies need an audience and who are harmless and passively watching. Actually watching victims being traumatised by their perpetrators encouraged bullying to continue but we stopped watching."*

Showing an attitude of responsibility the second participant added: *"We showed a sense of responsibility as witnesses by reporting bullying to responsible adults like an educator, principal and class monitors."* The fourth participant supported this by saying: *"We tried to reduce bullying by supporting the victim. We did that because we wanted to show the bullies that we were not on their side."*

#### **4. 2. 6 Witnesses' attitudes towards bullying perpetrators**

Most of the participants showed no remorse for the bullies instead they were angry that the bullies made the bullied feel humiliated in front of other learners. They stated categorically that they hated them for hurting and traumatising the victims, who were defenceless, and added that the bullies should be made to experience what they did to the victims.

The first participant was asked the following question: **"What is your attitude towards bullies?"** he responded by saying: *"I really hate bullies from the bottom of my heart and I pray that nature or somebody could punish them, I even wish them to fail at school."* The fifth participant said angrily, *"Even when I saw other people outside school attacking the bully, I will not dare try to protect him but I will be overwhelmed and encouraged them to beat him, so that he will experience the pain that is endured by his victims."*

## 4. 2. 7 Advice of witnesses to the bullies

Participants stated clearly that the bullies needed to be told that whatever they were doing to the bullied was unacceptable, especially because the act impacted negatively on the personality of the victim. Other participants mentioned that the witnesses themselves can also become victims by virtue of being affected by what takes place between the victim and the perpetrator.

The question asked was: **“What advice would you give to the bully toward their action?”** The eighth participant responded by saying: *“If I could be giving a chance to talk to the bully, I would tell him to stop what he is doing because it dehumanises and destroys the reputation and self-confidence of the victim.”* He also pronounced: *“I would ask him, how he would feel if his close relative is victimised and abused?”* The seventh participant responded by saying: *“I would tell the perpetrator to stop what he is doing to inflict pain to others. Sometimes bullying other learners can end up in a sour note as it can push some victims to the extreme of resorting to end their lives by committing suicide.”*

Most of participants had plenty of advice to give to perpetrators of bullying. When the above question was asked of the fourth participant she/he responded as follows: *“I will tell the bully that respect is earned and not achieved through cohesion therefore bullying others because they are powerless will never make bullies achieve any respect; instead it will brew and perpetuate an unnecessary everlasting hatred.”*

## 3. 3 Focus group discussions

In addition to the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, the focus group discussions were also used as a tool to collect data for this study. Participants were given a chance to answer the same questions that were asked in the interviews but there was no order followed; they just gave their answers randomly. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) a focus group discussion is seen as a form of group interview where there is an interaction within the group that discusses a topic supplied by the researcher, yielding a collective rather than an individual view. When the same questions were asked again of the focus group discussions, most of participants got an opportunity of stating information that did not give when they were interviewed, meaning that in the focus group participant were more open and free than in an interview.

Most participants agreed that being a witness left them traumatised. They were affected psychologically, emotionally in and some cases, even their academic abilities were compromised. Responses in the focus group discussions reflected similar views given in

interviews, though some disagreements arose among the participants, and some information was added.

The difference with the focus group discussions was that the participants were given a chance to answer in the presence of other participants. There were slight differences in the way the learners responded to the same questions asked in both the interview and focus group sessions as they were free seeing others giving their experiences of witnessing bullying. One noted a consistency in their responses in both the interview and focus group sessions. Sometimes a dialogue emanating from deliberations caused conflicting ideas among the participants and tempted them to deviate from responding directly to the question posed by the researcher. The participants were taken up by the dialogue among themselves in such a way that it took a long time for the researcher to intervene in the whole debate; the researcher ensured that her interference and intervening did not interrupt the discussion. Some participants digressed and as a result some conversations were not captured. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) state that the participants in the focus group discussions tend to interact with each other rather than with the interviewer such that the views of the participants can merge. The focus group interview lasted for one hour and thirty minutes.

The question of intervening when witnessing bullying incident gave rise to hot debate among the participants. Some felt it was the responsibility of the victim to learn the strategies of protecting himself/herself against perpetrators. Others looked at the issue from the other side of the coin as they thought it the responsibility of the witness to support and protect the victims of bullying since victims are rendered and deemed powerless and defenceless. It was also vehemently pronounced by some participants that most of the time perpetrators closed ranks to intimidate victims and make it very difficult for any individual to confront them.

The following question was then asked: **“What do you do to stop bullying?”** the sixth participant’s answer was: *“It’s not my responsibility to look after people who are old enough to fend for themselves. My hands are tight.”* He spoke in a way that made others feel as if protecting and supporting the victims of bullying was not the right thing to do. Fortunately other participants did see a need to support the victims and to them it is the only viable way of showing sympathy and humanity. The eighth participant responded by saying: *“A friend in need is a friend indeed. Supporting a person who is vulnerable and showing the sign of being weak is the only way of assisting him/her in rejuvenating and boosting his/her self-esteem and image.”* The first participant supported him by saying: *“If you are a true friend you need not to buy skelm (fame) from the people who victimise and traumatise others. One needs to always be there for those who are vulnerable and abused; in fact you need to be there through thick and thin for your friends.”*



## 4. 4 Conclusion

In this chapter, data generated from seven themes were discussed. It became clear and evident that most participants had experiences of being negatively affected by watching the activities of bullying perpetrated by bullies on the powerless and voiceless, wittingly or unwittingly. The study also revealed that it was not the bullied only that needed protection and attention but the witnesses of bullying also needed counselling as they are negatively affected and feel the impact psychologically, emotionally and academically. They therefore regard themselves as co victims that were caught in the cross fire amid between victims and bullied.

Through the research conducted, it pointed out that witnesses of bullying could play an integral role in fighting the scourge of bullying but with the collaboration of teachers and the school representative bodies. It is therefore worth mentioning that the ontology and epistemology applied to map findings of the study showed beyond reasonable doubt that it was not a secret that participants were aware of the victims relying on them and depending to their defence mechanism that would protect victims against bullies. Discussion of findings and recommendations for the research study are dealt with amicably and robustly in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion of findings and recommendations

#### 5. 1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings in order to ascertain what they reveal about the extent to which witnesses of bullying were adversely impacted upon psychologically, emotionally and academically.

#### 5. 2 Discussion of findings

According to the findings, most of the participants indicated unequivocally that watching bullying was not enjoyable at all because to them it was one of the highest forms of abuse and dehumanisation. They equated abuse to an infringement of one's human rights as it corrodes and erodes a person's dignity. Witnesses of bullying regarded it as an abusive act that caused irreparable damage as it was sometimes "contagious" and caused some victims to misdirect their anger and ends up paying revenge to innocent soft targets. Bullying destroys a victim's reputation and self-esteem. The lowering of self-esteem is confirmed by Coloroso (2005) who contends that if the witnesses stand by or look away, their self-confidence and self-respect are eroded as they wrestle with their fears and their guilt. Garrett (2003) also confirms that the learners, who are the victims of bullying experience anxiety, fear, depression, and they are affected academically, suffer lowered self-esteem and in severe cases, commit suicide. Witnesses felt pity for victims and pronounced that learners, who were victims of bullying, felt helpless and ridiculed particularly because they were bullied in front of their classmates. (It is even worse with boys as they are humiliated, dehumanised/ and depersonalised in front of the girls). Victims are seen by witnesses as the voiceless and that is why some of the witnesses regarded themselves as voices of the voiceless that were capable of taking a stand and being in cahoots with the victims in order to fight the battle collaboratively.

Most of the participants indicated that they were at times reluctant to intervene in the bullying actions because most of the time they were not taken seriously by educators when reporting acts and incidences of abuse taking place on the school premises. Young (2009) supports the fact of reporting bullying incidences by the witnesses to the authorities by mentioning that it is important for the witnesses to report bullying to the educator or the older learner at school or to any adult they trust in the community to enlist help, if the situation becomes very serious. One of the reasons mentioned for not reporting bullying was that neither teachers nor school authorities took the necessary steps. The learners who

witnessed bullying also pointed out that in some cases they were blamed and accused and even punished for allegedly instigating perpetrators to victimise and abuse others.

The interference of the witnesses is of utmost importance because they can report the matter to the educators or an adult so that drastic steps can be taken against this unacceptable behaviour and ultimately the bullying problem can be solved. When I interviewed some of the witnesses they responded by saying that they did intervene in the bullying situation but told the educators not to reveal their identities because they were afraid of being the next victims; however, the educators went against their promises and told the bullies about the learners who had reported them. Some witnesses confessed that bullying was a serious situation but they ended up failing to protect those who were being bullied. When surveying literature I found that Geffner, Loring and Young (2001) also mention that the reason for the failure of witnesses to report or intervene include their fear that they will be the next victim; other reasons are their uncertainty about how to help, their focus on the classroom activity, or their lack of confidence in obtaining educator support to stop the bullying, and their embarrassment and fear of retaliation. Participants as witnesses also said that another reason why they were reluctant to report perpetrators to educators was that their condition of anonymity was not always respected since educators did divulge to perpetrators the sources of information. In other words, reporting of perpetrators was never confidential. The whole saga of bullying was aggravated by threats to witnesses so they themselves felt unsafe, unprotected and vulnerable, fearing next victims of the bullies.

The study also revealed a lot of witnesses' personal experiences when watching bullying. Some highlighted the point that it was very disturbing emotionally to see one's class mate being abused or bullied by other classmate. Harrington (2010) speculates that witnesses were more likely to report symptoms of psychological stress like depression and anxiety than either bullies or victims. It was even worse when, as a witness one did not have the courage or means to intervene and protect the victims. Witnesses felt threatened, intimidated and afraid as there is no guarantee that they would escape abuse. When the witnesses of bullying fail to help the victim, this affects them emotionally and that is confirmed by Garrett (2003), when he says witnesses may even experience feelings of guilt or helplessness for not standing up to the bully on behalf of their classmate, have nightmares about being the next victim or fear certain areas in schools.

It has become explicitly evident that watching the act of bullying impacts both on witnesses and victims adversely. The participants asserted that bullying evoked unnecessary anger when harbouring grudges that provoked the desire for retaliation. According to Sullivan (2001) the witness is the third party in bullying and when watching bullying happening, they can feel afraid and unsafe, and even ashamed for not stopping the bullying or being attracted to the meanness and cruelty. Bullying evokes emotions. This simply implies that

the psychological aspect of the victims is impacted upon thereby hampering the educational progress of the affected retrogressively.

Ironically, the study revealed different responses from boys and girls. Although boys and girls as witnesses are affected in the same way psychologically, emotionally and academically there is a difference in their reaction, probably because boys are physically stronger, comparatively speaking. Boys sometimes intervene and come to blows with bullies in defence of the victim who may be a friend or as a defenceless person, whilst girls simply weep and sometimes shout loudly. However, the bottom line is the reaction of fellow classmates as witnesses becomes a stimulus to what they see as the abuse of the powerless by the powerful trouble mongers.

According to the findings, bullying is a form of violence that does not only affect the bullied immensely but the witnesses as well. It has come as a common and general view that bullying as an activity affects concentration and ultimately performance of both witnesses and victims alike. Cognitive thinking which calls for responding to thought provoking questions, becomes so challenging to the victims of bullying, both bullied and witnesses. Effects of bullying make the victims to fail to respond on questions that requires insight because of their mind disturbance, bullying cause lack of concentration. Coloroso (2005) confirms that those who are affected by bullying become absent minded and sometimes wish away the coming of breaks as it might mean a mayhem and torture. It implies that bullying has a direct consequence or effect in retarding one's reasoning and progress as it possibly makes a learner or victim to fail dismally at the end of the year. It is a serious and illegal act which needs to be dealt with by teachers, student representatives and the principal specifically once and for all to avoid the school being either an institution of torture or a no go zone.

Most participants put the blame on educators and the principal for bullying which they regard as a form of abuse of learners. Witnesses felt drastic steps ought to be taken by those responsible for learners' safety. It was learners' logical view that teachers and the principal had all the capacity to stop bullying on the school premises. Tattum and Lane (1994) feel that educators are acquainted with the problem, but they need to acknowledge that bullying is a problem and take some drastic steps to reduce it. In support of Tattum and Lane (1994), Bradshaw, et al (2007) states that the vast majority of learners feel that the schools are not doing enough to prevent bullying, whereas most educators believe their prevention efforts are adequate. Victims or witnesses contended that schools needed to be places of safety and protection otherwise successful learning and teaching would never be achieved.

### 5. 3 Recommendations

Intervention programmes should be introduced very early for learners so that they will be equipped with the skills needed when they are faced with the situation of witnessing bullying. This is supported by Salmivalli, Kaukiainen and Voeten (2005) when they say that indeed early interventions have been shown to be particularly effective in reducing psychological distress in extreme situations.

Learners should discuss the measures of dealing with bullying at class level so that they can formulate a code of conduct relating to it that will somehow eliminate the level of bullying among them. According to Salmivalli, Kaukiainen and Voeten (2005), on the basis of the participant role approach to bullying, three steps in curriculum; based preventive and prevention work against bullying have been suggested: The first step is raising awareness; this means discussing bullying with the whole class, starting by making learners aware of the discrepancy between their attitudes and behaviour. Class rules against bullying might be developed with the learners and that increases a high level of commitment to anti bullying behaviours on the part of the witnesses in particular.

This study revealed that witnesses of bullying could play a vital role in combating bullying in schools because they are quite aware of the victims and the perpetrators. It means that intervention programmes need to include and engage learners who are not the victims themselves but who are aware of victimisation which is taking place, as these learners can play a positive role in enhancing the school environment.

It is recommended that school psychologists should work with learners who witness bullying in order to identify and practise positive behavioural strategies to counter bullying, foster empathy or to build personal and interpersonal strengths so they can take on the role of defender rather than outsider. This is supported by Nabuzoka, Ronning and Handegard (2009) when they say that the witnesses of harassment may buffer learners who are the victims of bullying against negative socio-emotional effects such as negative self-perceptions.

Schools are not doing enough to address the bullying problems in schools and this includes not protecting the witnesses. Some of the witnesses of bullying suffer psychologically, emotionally and academically, therefore school psychologists or school councillors might have an important role to play by discussing (with learners and parents) the psychological, emotional and educational impact of bullying.

The designers of the curriculum from Department of Education could consider including anti bullying programmes in Life Orientation curriculum so that these valuable skills and strategies of dealing with bullying in schools should be learnt by every learner. One of the

issues that emerged in the study was that educators did not take up the matter of bullying when it was reported by the witnesses. Educators, therefore, should be made aware that bullying does not impact negatively on victims only but also witnesses. Educators should also be workshopped on dealing with the witnesses of bullying because in most case they are not listened to.

The participants also suggested that the schools needed to introduce peer educators so that if the learners were afraid to report bullying incidents to their class teacher they had another alternative which they thought was safer and confidential.

Intervention strategies have often focused on teaching victims of bullying more assertive ways of dealing with their aggressors, including fighting back (Nabuzoka, Ronning and Handegard, 2009). It was suggested that the same strategies had to be taught to the witnesses of bullying; hence they need these skills to protect themselves as well as the victims against bullies.

The guidance teachers have a vital role to play in equipping witnesses with the skills of coping with bullying. Teaching witnesses to cope with bullying may be one way of promoting peer support against bullying, given that the young who employ a productive style of coping at school are less inclined to support the bully and are likely to be more available for the bullied learner. Witnesses should be aware that by doing nothing they are condoning acts of aggression.

## **5. 4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the discussion of findings and recommendations for this study. It is clear from the data generated in the previous chapter i.e. chapter four, that there are different opinions about the experiences of the witnesses of bullying. All participants agreed that watching bullying traumatised them psychologically and emotionally and academically. It is now clear that the focus should therefore also be directed at witnesses because bullying does not only impact negatively on victims but also witnesses are affected. The Department of Education faces the challenge of implementing strategies in the curriculum that will protect the witnesses from being victims of bullying if the witnesses take a stand.

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## TRANSCRIPTS

### Participant one

#### 1. Tell me about yourself

*"I like to be with people and very protective to those who are close to me. I also like sport because it gives me that freedom."*

#### 2. What motivates you as a learner?

*"That competitive atmosphere we have as learners in my classroom."*

#### 3. Why did you choose to attend this school?

*"I chose this school because of classical music, infact I love music. This school is known of its outstanding results and study periods"*

#### 4. What changes would you make in this school?

*"I don't like uniform, corporal punishment and those learners who take away the food of other learners by force."*

#### 5. What is your understanding of bullying?

*"Bullying is an abuse of emotional feeling to the victim." "It is when you treat another person badly because she/he is younger than you. You call him/ her with derogatory or depersonalising names, beat or repossess his/her possessions. You sometimes force that person to do things that he/she does like to do. "*

#### 6. Have you ever witnessed bullying of either your classmate or a friend?

*"Yes, in many occasions."*

#### 7. Describe the bullying situation that you had witnessed.

*"It was my brother who was a newcomer at school. There was this group of naughty boys who did not spend much time in class, who were always outside smoking in the toilet. When my friend entered the toilet they told him that from that day he was supposed to pay them for using the toilet. They threatened him by saying if he dared not coming to the toilet everyday for a certain time they would go to his class and took him out. They also warned him that if he decided to tell an adult he was going to be a dead person. They show him a big knife then he was scared. That bullying went on for about three months without anyone noticing. My brother was always scared and sometimes dodged classes. One day my brother was caught stealing a huge some of money. When asked where he was taking the money to, he started by lying, but being pressurised he told the whole story. I was very angry because I*

*failed to recognise bullying that was taking place right under my nose and I felt underestimated by these boys.”*

**8. What is your feeling about bullying?**

*“I don’t like bullying, if I could have power over the bullies I will expel them away from school because they make learners to suffer.”*

**9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?**

*“It made me sick when I think that I was unable to protect my young brother from those abusive boys. It left me with a scare of hurt that would remain with me for a long period of time.”*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*“Yes, big time.”*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*“Watching bullying brought depression to the witness. Makes me lack love for school and my homework and also disturbs the proper working of my mind.”*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*“After failing to help my friend I felt emotionally moved and disturbed as I had a fear that he would lose trust and dignity on me and regard me as a coward. Painful as it is, I have to admit it because I actually failed to protect him against the bullies. I have lost that respect my friend had for me, I feel empty inside.”*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*“I felt like being with the victim all the time and when I saw him leaving the class during the lesson, I also asked the permission from the educator to go out as to protect him if it happened that the perpetrators were waiting in the toilet.*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*“Not always. It depends how close I am to that person. If my friend is bullied it made me to lose concentration in class and ended up failing to do complete my homework. Sometimes I sleep when the teacher teaches.”*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*“Yes, because to see other person suffering under the hands of another.*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*“By making the bully understands that bullying other learners is going to make him unpopular and other learners will hate him and sometimes go to an extent of organising outside to come and beat him after school.”*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*“Yes, it’s the right thing to do because you are saving the soul that is unable to protect himself.”*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*“After failing to help my friend made me feel emotionally disturbed and the fear that he would lose trust and dignity on me, he would now regard me as a coward. Painful as it is, I have to admit it because I actually failed to protect him against the bullies. I have lost that respect my friend had for me, I feel empty inside.”*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*“It’s not my responsibility to look after people who are old enough to look after themselves. My hands are tight.”*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*“I really hate bullies from the bottom of my heart and I pray that could punish them, may fail a school.”*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*“I will tell him to stop what he is doing because it’s not right and also reminds him that what goes around comes around.”*



## Participant two

### 1. Tell me about yourself.

*"I am open to people, meaning I communicate easily with other learners at school. I am a very shy person but who likes to help other people who are in difficult."*

### 2. What motivates you as a learner?

*"My loving friends, drama and karate lessons, which I take with an aim of protecting myself against these learners who troubles others at school."*

### 3. Why did you choose to attend this school?

*"I chose this school because of the high level of education and neat uniform. The learners always wear short hair, make them to look neat. I like study periods a lot because I am able to write my homework. Again, as I am coming from poor family I like soup kitchen which provides learners with food."*

### 4. What changes would you make in this school?

*"Lack of sports is what I do not like because when learners are engaged in sports that will bring unity among them. I also do not like those learners who abuse others."*

### 5. What is your understanding of bullying?

*"Bullying is when you treat another person in an awkward way and the victim feels uncomfortable about the action but has no guards of confronting the perpetrator because the victim is afraid." "When you give another learner bad names and beat him/her."*

### 6. Have you ever witnessed bullying of either your classmate or a friend?

*"Yes, my classmate bullied by another classmate."*

### 7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.

*"The bully kept on writing insulting words about the victim in the toilet so that other learners will read and laugh at her. The things that were written were that the victim should pray hard to God for the change of her ugly face. This took about three months without any interference. The victim ended up being afraid to go to the toilet because she knew that her name was scandalised all over the toilet walls."*

### 8. What is your feeling about bullying?

*"I felt lonely and afraid that if I reported the bullying incident, I might be the next victim but at the same time I felt angry when I saw my peer being physically and emotion abused. What angered and frustrated me most was the inability to defend her."*

### 9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?

*"It's really a trauma to watch bullying because even if you are not directly involved it affect you and make you lose your concentration in class and ending up failing your subjects."*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*"Yes, it does affect me."*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*"It affects me with my schoolwork and I fail to stand the sight of bullies and force me to change my personality."*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*"Bullying is always in my mind and makes me to be inactive, unwilling to participate even in when especially when bullies will also be the part of that activity."*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*"Sight of bullies makes me to have that urge to fight uncontrollably."*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*"I lose focus and concentration in class and my year marks are affected tremendously and I do not think I am not going to make it at the end of the year."*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*"Yes, but I was afraid myself although it made me guilty not to defend the victim because I knew in most cases she was afraid of the bully."*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*"I sorted it out on my own or I got back at the person who bullied my friend but I was too afraid to stand up for another girl because they might say I liked her. I did not know what to do."*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"Yes, I think it is a brilliant action to take because even the victim will have a shoulder of support to lean on and again will feel safe."*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"I tried my best to help the victim because I know she relies on me for safety but in the cases where I fail to intervene I really feel guilty."*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"We showed a sense of responsibility as witnesses by reporting bullying to responsible adults like an educator, principal and class monitors."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*"I hate them and afraid of them too."*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*"To tell them to stop what they are doing because it hurts the victims so much and that what they are doing is so painful that it will sometimes cause the victim to commit suicide."*

## Participant three

### 1. Tell me about yourself

*"I have an ability to listen to others and very protective to my friends."*

### 2. What motivates you as a learner?

*"Independence and freedom that I see from the people who have completed their studies and looking at my friends getting along perfectly without any fight motivates me a lot."*

### 3. Why did you choose to attend this school?

*"I chose this school because of the discipline that is practised at this school. It is also known for its excellent results and most of the learners who completed their grade 12 are in tertiary education."*

### 4. What changes would you make in this school?

*"I do not like those learners who talk ill in the absence of my friends and also deal severely with those learners who ill treat my friends."*

### 5. What is your understanding of bullying?

*"It is when you force another person to do what you command him/her to do because you have more powers over." "It is when you treat another person badly because you have more powers over him/her."*

### 6. Have you ever witnesses bullying of either your classmate or a friend?

*"Yes, my friend."*

### 7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.

*"It started with a minor fight between my friend and another boy and it augmented and became a huge thing that was then joined by others. The boy's friends started traumatising my friend by telling him that if he did not want to be beaten by their whole group he had to give them his pocket money everyday. They also told him that if he reported the matter to the teacher they would make him to model naked in front of other learners after school. This incident went on for a long time without any interference because we as learners we were afraid of these boys, they were dangerous they carried knives to school."*

### 8. What is your feeling about bullying?

*"I shouted out loudly with excitement so as to encourage the bully to go on with victimisation, because to me it was a normal situation. Anyway, if you are a man enough you need to be able to defend yourself without expecting other people to fight your battles."*

### 9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?

*"It was a traumatic situation watching your friend crying like a baby."*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*"No, because I think I was strong enough to stand against the bullies."*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*"The only thing that I felt inside was the anger of looking at my friend being bullied and unable to protect himself."*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*"Watching bullying does not affect me at all."*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*"No, it does not impact on my emotions because I enjoy the whole scenario."*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*"Watching bullying did not affect my school work instead it made me to look forward to the next day, meaning that I didn't bunk class. It really amused me to see the bullied being afraid of participating in the activities that were done in classroom. I didn't feel pity for the victims as they were supposed to protect themselves so my school work was normal."*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*"Yes, I was only forced by circumstances because my brother was threatening to quit the school and commit suicide. Otherwise I don't mind if a person is bullied."*

**16. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"It is right only if protect a vulnerable person."*

**17. How did you intervene?**

*"I intervened by beating the bully, that was the only language that was understood by the bullies."*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"I blamed myself and felt angry when I failed to protect my friend because I took it as if I was not strong enough to protect my friend."*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"I would do to stop bullying is make sure that the victim is strong enough to stand for himself against the bully."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*“Bullying is not the right thing to do but again it’s not my responsibility to protect the cowards. When we grew up there was a game of sticks which were played by the boys with an aim of preparing them for situations like these.”*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*“I would warn the bully not to dare touch my friends because I will do what it takes to protect them against the bullies. When it comes to my friends I am protective.”*

## **Participant four**

### **1. Tell me about yourself.**

*"I am open to people, I talk with anyone. I am shy to people I am not close to but talkative to those I know. I am a good listener if a friend wants to listen to."*

### **2. What motivates you as a learner?**

*"At school, my class teacher is supportive, caring and easy to communicate with. At home, my parents always motivate me about the importance of the school."*

### **3. Why did you choose to attend this school?**

*"My mother chose it for me but I also have no problems with it. I like it because of good results and discipline that is excised to learners."*

### **4. What changes would you make in this school?**

*"If I were the principal of this school those learners who don't respect on others and those who give bad names, I would expel them from school."*

### **5. What is your understanding of bullying?**

*"Bullying is an abuse of emotional feelings to the victim." "It is an act that aimed at humiliating an inferior person, making the victim feels uncomfortable, unprotected and lonely. The perpetrators of bullying use their powers wrongly because they reinforce fear to their victims as well as to the witnesses, so that they would never think of protecting the bullied."*

### **6. Have you ever witnessed bullying with either your classmate or a friend?**

*"Yes, my classmate."*

### **7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.**

*"This group of these boys were teasing this boy because he was unable to pronounce other sounds. They call him names, saying that he was gay. These rumours were spread all over the school, saying that other learners should avoid sitting near him because they were not safe. When he had to give the answer in class, these boys would make a noise like that of a female. They also put stones in his bag, saying that they want to see how manly he is. In some instant they wanted to undress him because they want to check his genital organs. Of late he was always withdrawn in class, no longer participating."*

### **8. What is your feeling about bullying?**

*"I felt like fighting the bully and really watching bullying developed that hatred in me."*

**9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?**

*"My experience are sour I don't want to talk about bullying because it provokes some feelings of anger in me and feel like stabbing a person to death."*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*"Watching bullying definitely affects the witness negatively. It traumatises you."*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*"It affects you at school, failing to cope and provokes that anger and hatred feeling in you."*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*"It takes time to build your pride and reputation among your friends and classmates but bullies do not care about that, they destroy all these in a second. They repossess all the powers you have by preventing you from intervening in their victimisation act and this is really pathetic and awful."*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*"I wish the perpetrators could experience what bad action they are doing to their victims and even when I saw them in class I wished like beating them. Sometimes I failed to concentrate in class because I was thinking of that traumatic action."*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*"It doesn't impact so much at school although I experience some lack of concentration."*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*"Yes, but was blamed by the bullies saying that I want this boy reprimanding me that I won't work since this boy is a gay, he only interested to other boys."*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*"I intervened by telling the bullies that what there were doing was not acceptable and they don't stop it I was going to report them to the principal. I wouldn't dare try to quarrel with them I was afraid of them."*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"Yes, it is the right thing to do because by intervening you are helping that soul who can't help himself."*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"It takes time to build your pride and reputation among your friends and classmates but bullies do not care about that, they destroy all these in a second. They repossess all the*



*powers you have by preventing you from intervening in their victimisation act, this is really pathetic.”*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*“We tried to reduce bullying by supporting the victim. We did that because we wanted to show the bullies that we were not on their side.”*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*“I don’t like them, I hate them. I wish they one day have a taste of their own medicine, be confronted by other tough boys who will beat them.”*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*“I will tell the bully that respect is earned and not achieved through cohesion therefore bullying others because they are powerless will never make bullies achieve any respect instead it will brew and perpetuate an unnecessary everlasting hatred.”*

## **Participant five**

### **1. Tell me about yourself**

*"I am a sensitive person when it comes to my friends. I do not entertain what bad other people do to them. I hate and fail to stand a person who makes jokes out of a one's weaknesses."*

### **2. What motivates you as a learner?**

*"Better changes among young, especially when youth realises the importance of education. It motivates me a lot when I see a young black person being prosperous in life and occupying great position in the community through education."*

### **3. Why did you choose to attend this school?**

*"I like drama as I want to be watched on one of TV Channels soon. I like a school with discipline because a young people we tend to go out of track and we need strong adult who are going to torn the way for us."*

### **4. What changes would you make in this school?**

*"Changes that I will implement if I am given a chance will be to eliminate girl in the study groups because boys end up fighting over them instead of concentrating in their studies. Enforcing unity among the learners will be another important issue to focus to because it develops a sense of brotherhood in them."*

### **5. What is your general of bullying?**

*"Bullying is calling a person by bad names, hitting or making him/her do something he/she doesn't want to." "I can personally define bullying as treating someone in a very unpleasant way by using your power or strength to hurt or frighten him/her. Bullying can either be verbal especially among girls or physical among boys."*

### **6. Have you ever witnessed bullying with either your classmate or a friend?**

*"Yes, a girl in the study group."*

### **7. Describe the bullying situation that you had witnessed.**

*"I our study group there were boys and girls from around the school because we studied after hours. There was this new member in our study group who recently joined us. As time went on we realised that the boy was harassing one of the girls in the group. We talked with him and thought that the issue was over. The boy was still going on with harassment of proposing love to this girl. The boy wanted to gain a crowd by influencing other boys against this girl. They beat her using belts claiming that she was an embarrassment in the group for*

*the fact that they caught her outside the school after study having sex with another boy. They insulted her, calling her by all bad names, forcing her to kiss them all, instructing her to come with food and money during study as a way of apologising to us all. They threaten her and us that they needed not to hear about that outside the group”*

**8. What is your feeling about bullying?**

*“I was afraid to be in that study group but I had no choice. I ended up not benefiting from studying, we were watching the boys harassing our friend and not allowed to intervene, it really traumatised me in such a way that I am not keen anymore to be in a study group.”*

**9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?**

*“When you are a boy seeing your friend put inside the toilet basin is like degrading and challenge of your manhood. When you keep on thinking about this in class it takes away all your concentration in the lessons and brings anger and feeling of retaliation.”*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*“Yes, you know when you witness bullying and being prevented from intervening that kills you inside. It changes your personality you become an angry person and also affects your progress at school.”*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*“As I have said, bullying destroyed you emotionally, affects you at school. You become afraid to take part in the discussions that are taking place in class because you are afraid and angry.”*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*“Watching bullying makes feel numb and lose the logical thinking.”*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*“If you are a witness of bullying you are sensitive, defensive, suspicious and always angry. You lose trust on people thinking that all are the same.”*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*“When you are a boy seeing your friend put inside the toilet basin it’s like degrading and a challenge to your manhood. When you keep on thinking about this in class it takes away all your concentration and makes you to lose focus in the lessons especially as you gradually becoming agitated and irritable. I really don’t like watching bullying. At first my marks were going okay at school but after that incident of bullying I failed to concentrate in class and I started to obtain marks below 40% and my class teacher was worried about my sudden drop down. She called me just to know the reason and through interrogation from her I ended up telling him the whole story.”*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*"Yes."*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*"I intervened by reporting my class teacher."*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"It is the right thing to intervene in the bullying incident because you are saving the soul of the person who can not save himself/herself."*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"I was hurt and felt like crying because I thought that I was supposed to protect her but I couldn't. I tried to talk to the bossy boys but they didn't listen instead. They continued with what they were doing. I attempted to convince others to expel them from our study group but it was unsuccessful."*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"The strategy that I used to stop bullying incident was to report the perpetrators to the educator."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*"Even when I saw other people outside school attacking the bully, I will not dare try to protect him but I will be overwhelmed and encouraged them to beat him, so that he will experience the pain that is endured by his victims."*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*"I will tell them to stop what they are doing because bullying hurts the victim as well as the witness. I will also remind them that whatever bad you do to another person will come around to you. Some day they will be looking for a job and only to find this person they are victimising today occupying high position and he will have all the power to pay back his revenge."*

## **Participant six**

### **1. Tell me about yourself**

*"I like to be with my friends all the time. I am a jovial person who likes to laugh a lot and give respect to those who give me one. I stick to what I believe in and I don't care what other person says. I am also sensitive and empathetic but to a certain limits."*

### **2. What motivates you as a learner?**

*"I don't like to be those people who are failures. I like to be independent. The only thing that will bring about change in my life is education. Seeing young people driving their porch cars and living in beautiful houses really motivates me."*

### **3. Why did you choose to attend this school?**

*"This school is rated among top 20 schools in KwaZulu Natal which obtain excellent results. This is because of non-optional study that took place in the morning from 6h30 to 7h15 and also in the afternoon from 15h00 to 16h00. In addition, all my siblings are now in higher positions they were educated in this school."*

### **4. What changes would you make in this school?**

*"By not allowing grade 12s to be monitors because they need a lot of time with their books. Introducing all these game that were played in the past as we know that healthy body produces healthy mind. Karate will be another game that I will introduce because learners need to know how to protect themselves against thugs as they are supposed to be school in the early hours as well as in life in general."*

### **5. What is your understanding of bullying?**

*"It is when you force another person to do what he/she doesn't like to do by hitting or calling him by bad names." "It's when you use your powers wrongly by commanding another person to do your wishes."*

### **6. Have you ever witnessed bullying of either your classmate or a friend?**

*"Yes, my brother was the victim of these pathetic bullies."*

### **7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.**

*"It was during break time, my brother answered a cellphone and they saw it. The next thing they called him and demanded him to give the cellphone to them but he refused and threatened them to report the case to the authorities. That day they simply pretended to apologise. After that they waited for him unaware in the toilet forcing him to repeat his word of wanting to report them. They told that from that day he was got to bring them*

money at school. At home we are not given so much to carry to school because we come from a very poor background. He gave them what little he had to them and he was left hungry as he had no money to buy food. This continued for a long time and he did not report it to anyone. Until one day he was accused of stealing the money at home and in his classroom. Then the bullying was exposed but it destroyed him a lot and I also blamed myself for failing to protect my younger brother.”

**8. What is your feeling about bullying?**

“No one else stuck up for her. If someone else had stuck up for her, I would have stuck up for her as well.

**9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?**

“Bullying is one of those incidents that I don’t take them into consideration but the abuse of my younger brother broke my heart, it was left bleeding with deep wounds.”

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

“Witnessing bullying doesn’t affect me that much instead I really enjoy it but that one of my younger brother left me empty, lonely and very angry because I took it as if those boys were fighting me directly.”

**11. How does it affect you?**

“It affected me emotionally, at school and ability to think logically. The more I thought about bullying the more I was destroyed internally.”

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

“I lost the grip of thinking but only contemplate about evil thing that I wished to fulfil.

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

“I was always angry and sensitive wanted to fight with anyone who would talk something that I don’t like. I was always involved in trivial fights at school because I was full of anger inside.”

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

“Being afraid to intervene in bullying incidents traumatised me at school. I failed to participate in group works. I did not submit my projects and homework in time because my focus of school work was somehow disturbed. I started playing truancy avoiding watch these bullying scenes forcefully. I did not study for my tests and my marks dropped drastically.”

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

“I had no choice but to intervene for the sake of my brother.”

**16. How did you intervene?**

*"I was afraid to intervene because the learners who bullied others were a group of naughty boys who were powerful and feared by everyone at school. When they were reported to the authorities, principal and educators did not take any drastic steps against their bad act, instead they were told who notified the authorities about the bullying behaviour. I also shunt away from watching and laughing at these bullying scenes with an aim of discouraging the perpetrators but instead they regarded me as a weak mum's boy."*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"A man should be able to fend himself against his enemies but don't expect others to fight his battles. If you don't learn to protect yourself now, how would you safe guard your family in future, which will solely rely on your protection when you are their head?"*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"I was hurt I even felt like quitting the school and also ran away from home because my brother won't have any confidence on me."*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"It's not my responsibility to look after people who are old enough to look after themselves, my hands are tight. But for my brother it was important to apply some strategies of reporting the matter to the older people because he threatened of committing suicide."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*"I don't like bullying because it destroys both the victim and the witness."*

**21. What advice would you give to the perpetrators?**

*"I will tell them to stop bullying other learners because they might never know damage that they cause to the lives of the victims, they really killed them alive. That they don't gain respect by ill-treating other learners."*

## **Participant seven**

### **1. Tell me about yourself**

*"I like to be with people. I don't like to see other people suffering because other are advantage of them as they cannot defend themselves. I also like laughing with other people but my laughing is kept to a certain limit."*

### **2. What motivates you as a learner?**

*"Passing on of my eldest sister who was a breadwinner motivated me to see the importance of education. At school, my motivates me a lot they are a pillar of strength they keep on telling me that my family background shouldn't be my scapegoat of leaving school."*

### **3. Why did you choose to attend this school?**

*"I thing that education is the only weapon for fighting poverty, then I needed a strong school that would give me the high level of education. Again, this school arranges bursaries and scholarships for those learners who come from poor backgrounds."*

### **4. What changes would you make in this school?**

*"I will arrange some donation for those learners who come from disadvantaged background so that they won't be discouraged by the places of their birth. I will also see to that no one is taking advantage of their background and abuse them. I will run some workshops for those learners who bully other at school so that they realise the importance living in harmony with other learners."*

### **5. What is your understanding of bullying?**

*"Bullying is treating someone in a very unpleasant way by using strength or power. It includes hostility and aggression towards the victim." "Bullying can be calling names, hitting or making a person to do something he/she doesn't want to do. Bullying is always cruel."*

### **6. Have you ever witnessed bullying with either your classmate or a friend?**

*"Yes, my friend."*

### **7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.**

*"The bullied was a learner in grade eight who was a newcomer. This group of grade twelve learners harassed that boy by forcing him to write their Life Orientation notes for all of them. That was an occasion that took place every day. If it happened that he had also a lot of work to do he had to pay another learner to do it for him. If he decided to absent himself from school they beat him for inconvenience they claimed. The boy was sick and tired of being abused he started to play truancy and absenteeism. His change of behaviour was noticed by*



*other educators and he was called for questioning but at first he denied everything because those boys threaten him not to tell anyone about bullying. He had to free himself from the chains of those boys by reporting them.”*

**8. What is your feeling about bullying?**

*“I felt bad and guilty that I was supposed to have protected that boy but simply took thing for granted.”*

**9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?**

*“My experiences about watching bullying are bad. Though I tried by all means to forget the incident but it is always in my mind. Bad memories are more provoked when I have to meet the perpetrators.”*

**10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?**

*“I was hurt and emotionally disturbed by the whole situation especially when the victim came to me crying complaining about painful hand.”*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*“It affected me at school because in class I lost concentration thinking of this little boy.”*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*“I had some bad dreams for almost three months without telling anyone at home and school, reason being I was afraid that my friends would laugh at me or my sibling would consider me a coward. I was always dreaming as if these bullies are attacking me.”*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*“I feel guilty and bad when I see how the boy looks up at me with that eye of asking for help but failing to help him or call the educator. Sometimes I feel mad or angry that I am unable to help when my assistance is needed most.”*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*“Yes, when I think of bullying in class I simply fail to concentrate and even when I study at home I lose the focus and understanding of what I am studying. My dream is to become a CA when I finish my grade twelve but now this lack of concentration makes me to drop from level six down to level four and educators as well as my parents are worried about what might be the cause of this sudden drop of marks. The thing is that I am not going to tell them the cause because I am afraid of becoming the next victim, infact I won’t dare interfere with what is happening because these boys who bully my classmate are a group. ”*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*“Yes, I had to protect the young boy.”*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*"I influenced the boy to report the case to one of the educators at school or any other adult who would take a responsibility."*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*"It is the right thing to do because you are helping the victim who has no strength of doing it on his/her own. Again, if you intervene to bullying cases you are setting your conscience free."*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*"I felt guilty that as a monitor I made a vow one day that I won't be part of corruption that will take place with the school premises and outside but I will report it without any hesitance."*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"The matter was reported to the educator because of my influence and promise to stand by the boy no matter what."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*"I don't like bullying with all my heart if I could be an educational authority I will expel all these learners who perpetrate bullying in school. They not only destroy the victims but witnesses are also affected when bullying took place."*

**21. What advice would you give to the bully?**

*"I would tell the perpetrator to stop what he is doing to inflict pain to others. Sometimes bullying other learners can end up in a sour note as it can push some victims to the extreme of resorting to end their lives by committing suicide."*

## Participant eight

### 1. Tell me about yourself.

*"I like to help others who can't help themselves because they are weak. I don't like to socialise too much."*

### 2. What motivates you as a learner?

*"I like to mingle with successful people; they motivate me. At school I involve myself with learners who like their school work."*

### 3. Why did you choose to attend this school?

*"It's well known of its discipline and high rate of pass in grade 12."*

### 4. What changes would you make in this school?

*"I would change the bad behaviour of other learners."*

### 5. What is your understanding of bullying?

*"It's an aggressive behaviour which is carried out repeatedly and over a long period of time."*

*"It's when an arrogant person tries to intrude to the life of another person unwelcomed. He/she will try to rule it, forcing down his demands."*

### 6. Have you ever witnessed the bullying of either your classmate or a friend?

*"Indeed, I had witnessed one."*

### 7. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.

*"There were these boys who were intimidating other learners, demanding respect from them. These boys pushed others inside the toilet seat, forcing them to drink toilet water. But they ended up sticking with one boy whom they called a 'wrong turn' because he was ugly. They forced him to drink that dirty water, claiming that he was going to change. Learners were afraid to go to the toilet until we decided to report them to the educators."*

### 8. What is your feeling about bullying?

*"They were pointing, laughing and calling him names. I tried talking to the bullies and telling them to stop teasing my friend, but they did not listen."*

### 9. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?

*"It was really a bad situation watching a person forced to drink dirty toilet water, the toilet that is used by public, it was disgusting."*

### 10. Does witnessing affect you negatively?

*“With bullying you cannot escape trauma and when you watch it worsen your situation, as perpetrators would expect the witnesses to suppose their action of bullying. If they are not supported, then as a witness you are automatically their enemy.”*

**11. How does it affect you?**

*“Bullying affected my progress at school, my thinking capability and my personality.”*

**12. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?**

*“Angifuni ukuqamba amanga (I don’t want to lie). Looking at your classmate or a friend being victimised is traumatic and especially if you know that he/she will not get the help he/she is asking for. It makes you angry and useless if you are afraid to intervene because the bullies are the group of boys who are feared by everyone at school.”*

**13. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?**

*“I felt good about myself that I stood up for friends in trouble because my friends were part of me.”*

**14. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?**

*“These boys were in my class so I was afraid to participate because they threaten whoever is active in class, saying that he/she thinks that is better off. As a result I ended up failing to concentrate in class because also the action of drinking toilet water was always on my mind and I again, lacked behind in the submission of homework and projects.”*

**15. Did you intervene in the situation?**

*“I shunt away from watching and laughing at these bullying scenes with an aim of discouraging the perpetrators but instead they regarded me as a weak mum’s boy.”*

**16. How did you intervene?**

*“A friend in need is a friend indeed. Support a person who shows signs of being weak is the only way of boosting his/her esteem and image.”*

**17. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?**

*“It is the right thing to do because you are protecting the victim and trying to stop this bad behaviour of ill-treating other learners who are afraid to do it for themselves. Again, you are cleansing you conscience that you did not join to the wrong doing.”*

**18. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?**

*“I felt guilty as if there is something which I was supposed to do but I had ignored it. I felt like I have failed myself in life.”*

**19. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?**

*"We reduced the attention to the bully by simply ignoring the bullying scenes and instead of making the bully think that we enjoy what they were doing, we walked away from them. We all know that bullies need an audience and who are harmless and passively watching. Actually watching victims being traumatised by their perpetrators encouraged bullying to continue but we stopped that watching."*

**20. What is your attitude towards bullies?**

*"I do not like what is done by the bullies because they make the victims to suffer under them."*

**21. What advice would you give to bullies?**

*"If I could be giving a chance to talk to the bully, I would tell him to stop what he is doing because it dehumanises and destroys the reputation and self-confidence of the victim. I would ask him, how he would feel if his close relative is victimised and abused?"*

## APPENDIX A

### Interview and focus group questions

The following questions were used both in the interview sessions and focus group session, the reason being, I wanted to see whether there were differences and similarities in the way the participants responded in both situations.

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What motivates you as a learner?
3. Why did you choose to attend in this school?
4. What changes would you make in this school?
5. What is your general understanding of bullying?
6. What is your personal of understanding of bullying?"
7. Have you ever witnessed bullying of either your classmate or a friend?
8. Describe the bullying situation that you witnessed.
9. What is your feeling about bullying?
10. What are your experiences about witnessing bullying?
11. Does witnessing affect you negatively?
12. How does it affect you?
13. Do experiences of bullying affect you psychologically?
14. How does the bullying act affect you emotionally?
15. Do experiences of bullying impact on your education?
16. Did you intervene in the situation?
17. How did you intervene?
18. Is it the right thing to intervene in the bullying situation?
19. How did you feel after failing to help your friend from the bully?
20. What strategies do you use to stop bullying?
21. What is your attitude towards bullies?
22. What advice would you give to the bully?

## APPENDIX B

P1141 Umlazi  
P.O.Umlazi  
4031  
03 June 2010  
Tel: 031 9065101 (h)  
Cell: 0725178349

The Principal  
P. O. Box 54542  
Umlazi  
4031

Dear Sir

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.**

My name is Sthembile E. Chili, who is the educator at your school. I am currently doing my M. Ed. research on Experiences of learners who witness bullying at school, with the University of KwaZulu Natal in the Department of Psychology of Education. I will be looking at how the learners who witness bullying are affected socially, psychologically and academically. One high school will participate in this study and your school is the only one. The research involves interviewing eight learners, preferably those who have witnessed bullying. The interview will involve five boys and three girls ranging from grade six to twelve. I will interview learners individually and in focus group. The interview will take place after lunch. I intend to do my best not to cause any disturbance to the smooth running of the school daily activities.

I will appreciate it if you could inform me when I should visit your school. It is my plan to complete data collection by 28 August 2010.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully  
S. E. Chili (Educator)

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM

My name is Sthembile E. Chili. I am an educator at model High School and post graduate student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting my research on Experiences of learners who witness bullying at school.

Your voluntary participation in this research will be highly appreciated. You have not been coerced to participate and are free to withdraw at any stage of the interview if you feel uneasy and not willing to go on with the interview. Participation will be in the form of an interview and focus group. If you agree to be part of the research, please have the consent form below completed by you (if above 18 years old) or your parent/guardian (if below 18 years old), and returned.

All information will be treated as confidential. No names will be recorded without prior agreement to ensure anonymity of all participants.

### CONSENT LETTER

I, ..... (Full Name Printed) parent/guardian  
of ..... (Name of Child) consent to his/her  
participation in the research project.

.....  
SIGNATURE

.....  
DATE



## IFOMU LEMVUME

Igama lami ngingu Sthembile E. Chili, nginguthisha esikoleni nomfundi wasenyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natal ophokweni lwaseEdgewood. Ngenza ucwaningo kwezengqondo, oluphathelene nezimvo zalabo bafundi ababona kuhlukunyezwa abanye.

Ukuzinikela kwakho ukuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo kungaba yinto encomekayo kakhulu. Okufanele ukwazi ukuthi awuphoqiwe ukuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo, lokho kukwenza ukhululeke ukuhoxa noma inini uma uzwa ukuthi akusavumelani nawe ukuqhubeka. Uma uzibandakanya nalolucwaningo uyophendula imibuzo oyobuzwa yona kodwa ayi ngempopo.

Uma uvumelana nokuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo, ngicela ugcwalise lelifomu elingezansi (uma uphezu kweminyaka eyi 18 ubudala) noma ligcwaliswe umzali/umnakekeli (uma ungaphansi kweminyaka eyi 18 ubudala). Kuyobongeka ukuba ulibuyise uma usuqedile ukuligcwalisa.

Uyanikezwa isiqiniseko sokuthi konke okushiyo kuyogcineka kuyimfihlo. Kuyaqiniseka futhi ukuthi akukho gama lamuntu elizoshicilelwa phansi ngaphandle kwemvume yalabo abazobe bebambe iqhaza kuloluchwaningo.

## IFOMU LEMVUME

Mina, .....(amagama aphelele) umzali/umnakekeli ka.....(igama lengane) ngiyavuma ukuba abe yingxenye yogcwaningo.

.....  
ISIGINESHA

.....  
USUKU

## APPENDIX D

### LETTER OF DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the  
research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE