BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGEMENT AT A LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

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DECLARATION

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As the supervisors, we approve this thesis for submission.

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Co-supervisor

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20 Dec 2023

Signed: _____ Doctor Cynthia Z Madlabana-Luthuli Date: _____

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved daughter, Zanna Christina Singh. I hope that this knowledge will one day be able to safeguard her against any form of bullying.

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"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

(Romans 8:37)

I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for igniting a passion within my heart to set the captives free.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Workplace bullying (WB) is a universal phenomenon often attributed to physical violence and/or psychological abuse, which may have devastating consequences for both the individual/s and organisational wellness (Du Plessis, 2017). However, a lacuna in the research on the phenomenon of bullying was identified within the research domain. Up to the date of completion of the research study, there were no comprehensive anti-bullying policies and intervention guidelines in place at the study site to effectively eradicate bullying.

Objectives

The study aim was to gain insight into employees' and managers' feelings and experiences of WB at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. This objective included the need to obtain a deeper understanding of how employees and managers construct their experiences and cope with WB, and to obtain their recommendations to prevent and manage its occurrence. Furthermore, all objectives of the research study worked together to develop substantial intervention guidelines to reduce and eliminate bullying within the said municipality.

Method

A qualitative, explorative single case study was the research approach adopted. Purposive sampling was used in this study and ten employees and ten managers were interviewed at the selected municipality. Semi-structured online interviews on Microsoft Teams, Zoom and journaling were used to collect data for the study. The data obtained were analysed through Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), document analysis and the researcher's journal. The theoretical frameworks of Foucault and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model contributed to further explicate the research findings.

Results

WB was commonly understood and experienced as a frequent and intentional abuse of power and authority, with vertical bullying and mobbing being the most prominent types of bullying

experienced in the municipality. The research findings revealed that although WB was rampant across the municipality, the awareness of the phenomenon was notably poor.
Common manifestations of WB included workplace aggression, social and job isolation, harassment, victimisation, undermining, humiliation and intrusion. As discussed in the study, results revealed that victims experienced various negative consequences of WB. At an organisational level, it became evident that WB severely impacted on the wellness of many employees and the local municipality as a whole. Overall, bullying created a toxic environment through a multitude of unacceptable and inappropriate abusive cause-and-effect practices and activities that exacerbated the spread of WB at the selected research site. Emotion and problem-based coping mechanisms employed by victims were identified as effective coping mechanisms in response to WB.

In addition, leadership accountability and consequence management were required to eliminate WB. Various approaches were recommended for the victims to prevent and manage the phenomenon in the municipality.

Conclusion

The data analysis indicated that the employees and managers interviewed experienced WB as a prominent feature of their workplace environment at the municipality. Despite their assertive and resilient approach, employees and managers grappled with the deleterious consequences of WB on their psychological, physical, social and organisational well-being. The development of multi-level interventions was recommended to prohibit bullying at the municipality. It was further recommended that a number of proactive measures were to be implemented to effectively prevent and manage WB.

Key Terms: *workplace bullying; local municipality; victim; perpetrator; experiences; intervention*

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HR	Human Resources
HSSREC	Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
IT	Information Technology
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RP	Research Participant
RQ	Research Question
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SALGBC	South African Local Government Bargaining Council
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAPS	South African Police Service

SIT	Social Identity Theory
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
WB	Workplace Bullying
WBI	Workplace Bullying Institute
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

People are an important resource and backbone to ensuring organisational productivity and effectiveness in the workplace. The employer's contractual obligation is to ensure a safe workplace for employees to work, whilst organisational members are responsible for rendering their services to the employer during working hours (Salin & Hoel, 2020). However, when employees and managers perceive or identify a lack of fulfilment in their employer's contractual obligations in the employment contract, this can give rise to interpersonal conflict, which, if not dealt with timeously, equitably and constructively, can escalate into workplace bullying (WB) (Branch, 2008).

Bullying may contribute to the breach of the employment contract (Kakarika et al., 2017) as it creates a toxic work environment (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). This in turn may lead to negative emotions, psychological strain as well as reduced job satisfaction, work engagement, performance, commitment, financial losses, turnover and turnover intentions (Salin & Hoel, 2020). One distinctive theme regarding the understanding of WB lies most notably in the creation of a power imbalance between victim and perpetrator, which can occur vertically from managers to subordinates, upward from subordinates to managers and horizontally across co-workers. This imbalance may result in the victim feeling defenceless in response to frequent exposure to WB (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

This power imbalance inherent in the victim-perpetrator relationship of WB also has a bearing on the reporting and under-reporting of the phenomenon in organisations, which consequently impacts on the level of intervention that management and the leadership of organisations can undertake to manage and prevent WB. Hence, WB is both an organisational issue that affects the employee and an employee issue that affects the organisation.

It is therefore crucial that organisations ensure that Line Management and Human Resources (HR) as the champions of workforce employee management issues, along with Organised Labour, Ombudsman, Safety Committees, and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), are empowered to perform their functions towards preventing and managing WB. Accordingly, these stakeholders can then facilitate re-negotiations of the employment contract to provide employees with a voice and rebuild the foundation of trust between employees and the employer that is lost when the employment contract is violated through WB.

Given the pervasive spread and deleterious consequences associated with WB along with the impetus to limit the spread of this phenomenon in organisations, WB is the focus of this thesis.

1.2. Background, Context and Theoretical Framework

WB is regarded as a universal phenomenon at work (Thiam, 2018). It is a growing phenomenon across industries and occupations (Pietersen, 2007) albeit a relatively new topic to be understood in the field of organisational psychology research. It is therefore not surprising to find that WB has been recognised as a severe problem by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Query & Hanley, 2010). Consequently, this phenomenon has received substantial attention in promoting a deeper insight into WB in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Canada and the United States (Thiam, 2018).

WB negatively impacts on individual and organisational health and well-being. At an individual level, it may lead to psychological and physiological ill-health, somatisation, aggression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and substance addictions (Du Plessis, 2017; Siskha et al., 2018). At an organisational level, it may result in reduced productivity, lowered morale, ineffective team relations, reduced organisational commitment, higher employee sick leave absences, exit and replacement costs, compensation fines and legal costs (Salin & Hoel, 2020).

A survey conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in South Africa discovered that 78% of the population experienced WB at least once during their employment (International Labour Organisation, 2004). Ongoing research has since revealed an astounding increase of WB, ranging from 54%-100% in South Africa (Njaka et al., 2020). This has necessitated a more in-depth approach to combat this rampant spread of the phenomenon in South Africa.

According to Pilch and Turska (2015), WB has resulted in victims and witnesses feeling highly unsettled. Witnesses should therefore form part of the understanding of WB in organisations, as they have been shown to, on the one hand, inhibit WB in an active or constructive manner, and on the other hand, also exacerbate WB through passive and destructive behaviours (Paull et al., 2012).

According to Francioli et al. (2018), understanding WB through the lens of victim's and witness's experience in particular, has been minimal to date, and ongoing research from these perspectives may be necessary to address adequately the phenomenon. This is particularly significant, as the effect of WB is experienced differently by individuals, bystanders and victims (Báez-Leon et al., 2016), thereby providing the opportunity to investigate and understand the phenomenon in an organisation through different lenses. In this regard, lacunae in the literature related to the lived experiences of WB as viewed through the lens of the victims and witnesses were the definitive basis to further explore the topic of WB vide this thesis.

A study by Cooper et al. (2004) suggests that in comparison to the private sector, the occurrence of WB is more widespread in the public sector. Despite there being vast research conducted on the antecedents and consequences of WB (Carroll, 2018), the thesis focussed on an exploration of the experiences and emotional responses of employees and managers regarding WB, because less was known about the construction, antecedents, personal experiences and ramifications of WB for victims and witnesses, and in this thesis, within local municipalities.

Local municipalities, being responsible for the provision of various necessary services for people in a given area, are known to employ people of various socio-economic statuses at all organisational levels, ranging from unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, supervisory, management, senior management and executive management. It was suggested that engagement between members at all levels of the organisational hierarchy with varying power differentials at individual, group and organisational levels of local government municipalities, could provide fertile ground for WB to flourish, and thus formed a crucial component to be studied to provide deeper insight into the narratives of WB by employees and managers in this context.

It is suggested that the frequent, dynamic interactions between employees and managers can reveal individual as well as situational and organisational antecedents, consequences and moderators of WB. This study specifically examined experiences of employees and managers of WB within a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, which assisted in the development of substantial intervention guidelines to manage and prevent WB in this organisational context.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power as a discourse through the analyses of text and social interactions was utilised for this research. This framework enabled an understanding into employees' and managers' construction of WB, and the motivation perpetrators used to justify and legitimise their participation and actions in WB (Groves, 2016). Foucault's discourse on power relations also provided insight into the influence of institutional power (Foucault, 1982) and the practices and norms that gave rise to WB, applicable also to the selected local municipality. The second theoretical framework utilised was the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) which provided insight into the WB as an occupational stressor and the consequent psychological impact on victims. It also provided insight into the personal and workplace resources employees and managers had at their disposal, which assisted in reducing the negative impact of WB on the health of victims.

A qualitative research approach was utilised as it explored a sensitive topic of WB (Fahie, 2014), enabling the participants to express their thoughts and emotional state of mind in their own words and critically reflect on WB (Schurink, 2005). This approach promoted and generated different beliefs and views that added to the South African local government knowledge base on WB investigated through this study. The qualitative research design was an exploratory case study that provided a thorough and multifaceted investigation of a sensitive and complex topic of workplace bullying, where the boundaries between context (local government) and issue (WB) were often blurred and presented numerous variables (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews in the form of online interviews on Microsoft Teams and Zoom were utilised to gather a detailed account of the participants' narratives on workplace bullying. Data was analysed with Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam IPA, a qualitative data analysis method that focused on how individuals attributed meaning to their experiences of WB.

1.3.Problem Statement

WB occurs globally with a reported prevalence of 24.7%-46.5% in Britain (Hoel & Cooper, 2000); 28%-46.8% in the United States (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) and 3%-15% in Europe (Zapf et al., 2011). It is therefore not surprising that 68% of executive management considered WB a serious problem (Davies, 2019) because of its adverse effects on overall organisational productivity, victims and bystanders (Eriksen et al., 2016). Consequently, up to 80% of people-related organisational costs include worker compensation claims, health-related claims, increased turnover, reduced productivity and absenteeism due to WB (Cooper et al., 1996). A study by Kline and Lewis (2019) in Europe revealed that WB costs amounted to twenty-eight billion pounds, whilst organisations in the United States spent 1.15 trillion dollars per annum on depressive and anxiety disorders due to WB (Michalak & Ashkanasy, 2020). The ill- health experienced by victims and witnesses due to bullying were exacerbated by a lack of adequate information on WB preventative measures (Einarsen et al., 2018).

Notably, there is a lack of a mutually agreed upon working definition of WB (Carroll, 2018), and a dearth of defined indicators to label a circumstance as WB across industries (Carroll, 2018). Furthermore, differences in methodological approaches and measures used along with different organisational contexts, differing cultural beliefs, dissimilar values and varying legal systems contribute to the ambiguity on what construes WB or not, in different countries, industries and organisations.

According to Smit (2014), inequalities in employment are often addressed reactively through collective bargaining and dispute-resolution mechanisms. These structures do not offer victims and eyewitnesses the necessary protection at the onset of WB, where these individuals would have already experienced negative consequences of bullying. Consequently, HR and Line Management are not sufficiently capacitated to identify, manage and prevent WB (Mokgolo, 2017) in a proactive and timeous manner.

Smit (2014) also emphasised the ambiguity created in South African legislation as to whether WB should be dealt with in terms of a violation of dignity or harassment, or both. Whilst there may be some resemblance in both harassment and WB behaviours (non-verbal or verbal abuse, insults, mockery, job and social isolation), specific forms of harassment focus on a specific

innate individual attribute, such as gender, race or disability, whilst WB occurs irrespective of these said target attributes. Thus, harassment is considered an umbrella term that encompasses both sexual harassment as well as individual occurrences of more serious forms of abuse (Salin & Hoel, 2020).

However, most definitions of WB agree that WB indicates negative incidents or behaviours that are repeated over a prolonged duration (on a weekly basis within six months or longer); where unequal power differentials exist between a less influential person or victim and a more influential person or perpetrator of WB, resulting in the victim becoming less able to withstand the onslaught of WB and experiencing severe ill-health and reduced well-being (Notelaers et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding the recurring elements of what WB is and is not guiding the initial understanding of this phenomenon, the researcher will endeavour to obtain constructions of WB from the research participants as it occurs naturally within the lived realities at the research site. This will contribute to the South African working definitions of WB and particularly, to the limited knowledge base of how WB is understood in the local government environment.

Furthermore, there is a paucity of knowledge on the experiences and responses to bullying by the employees and managers in general, at South African local municipalities. Cunniff and Mostert (2012) examined WB across a range of industries in South Africa and found a prevalence rate of 31.3% of bullying experienced by participants, with the highest levels of direct bullying from the local government industry. However, the local municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal did not form part of the study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012), which limits the generalisability of their findings.

It is suggested that the organisational hierarchy, coupled with the ongoing power struggles between leadership and political administration within local government entities, create ideal conditions for WB to flourish (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). The support and endorsement of WB through the organisational culture and leadership of local government organisations have resulted in the silent acquiescence and perpetuation of WB by organisational members (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016).

According to Ndevu (2019), a power imbalance exists between leadership, managers and employees at South African local government municipalities through the monopolisation of knowledge, resources, job opportunities and poor involvement of employees in decision-making, which are forms of WB as cited in Carroll (2018) that result in employees experiencing reduced organisational trust, productivity and poor service delivery.

According to authors Cheteni and Shindika (2017), there is a crisis of ethics in South African local government municipalities, due to insignificant value being placed on ethics and the reinforcement of ethics thereof by leadership in these organisations, which increases the risk of WB in this context. Studies reveal that a lack of adherence to legislation and regulations within the South African local government industry has resulted in poor governance, corruption and maladministration, thus perpetuating the spread of WB in these contexts (Ijeoma & Nzewi, 2016; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016).

It therefore becomes crucial to investigate antecedents of WB that have culminated in the experiences and consequences of WB for victims at the research site.

Given the limited academic knowledge base on organisational members' narratives of WB within local municipalities in South Africa, it necessitates further investigation and exploration of WB at a local municipality in South Africa. This will augment the current knowledge base on WB to assist in providing intervention guidelines to prevent the spread of the phenomenon within this context. It is suggested that local municipalities in South Africa are well positioned to enable collaboration between organisational leaders, employees, trade unions, civil society and the government to prevent and hopefully eradicate WB.

1.4. Research Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following objectives within a South African local municipality:

1.4.1. Main Research Objective

- To explore how employees' and managers' construct, experience and cope with WB at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4.2. Sub-Research Objectives

- To gain insight on constructions of WB by employees and managers.
- To understand the employees' and managers' experiences of WB.
- To explore the causal factors that employees and managers believe contribute to WB.
- To explore the coping mechanisms used by employees and managers to deal with WB.
- To explore the employees' and managers' recommendations to prevent and manage WB.

1.5. Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions pertaining to a South African local municipality:

- How do employees and managers comprehend the phenomenon of WB?
- How do employees' and managers' lived experiences of WB contribute to the knowledge of WB?
- On the employees' and managers' understanding, what are the factors that initiated WB?
- What are the coping mechanisms used by employees and managers to respond to WB?
- How can WB be prevented and managed through the application of the lived experiences of employees and managers?

1.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) HSSREC/00002133/2020 of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa (Appendix A) and the local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix B). Ethical commitment towards research participants were demonstrated through transparency as well as respect for participants' rights, needs and desires. This included remaining sensitive to uphold their right to human dignity, privacy and autonomy throughout the study. Accordingly, voluntary participation with the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without any negative consequence was emphasised.

Written informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study. This included outlining the nature and purpose of the study, benefits and potential risks for participating in the study. For instance, it was anticipated that the interview questions could possibly induce feelings of discomfort or negative memories. Accordingly, participants were afforded the autonomy not to answer any interview question that could potentially make them feel uncomfortable. In addition, debriefing and referrals to an independent employee wellness service provider were extended to the participants. Confidentiality and anonymity of information provided by the participants were maintained through the use of codes and neutral referents of the organisation in which WB was investigated. The way in which participants' data would be handled was also clearly communicated, which included the storage of their data in a cabinet under lock and key and password protected computers with access control. Furthermore, the participants' data were not shared with anyone outside of the research team (researcher and both supervisors). Detailed ethical procedures are expounded on in Chapter 3.

1.7. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, background, context and theoretical framework for the study, along with the problem statement, a working definition of WB, research objectives and need for the study, research questions, the ethical considerations underpinning the study, as well as the overview of research chapters contained in the thesis.

Chapter 2 provided a review of WB literature according to its history, defining behaviours, dynamics, issues and related concepts at individual, social and organisational level and included the aforementioned theoretical frameworks of the study for the interpretation of findings within the literature.

Chapter 3 presented the methodology utilised in this study, detailing the qualitative research approach that informed the researcher's methodological choices.

Chapter 4 presented the master themes and sub-themes that emerged from the collected data as well as an integrated discussion of the research findings in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 5 presented the overall research findings, study contributions and limitations as well as recommendations for future research and a final conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of relevant published works on WB, to gain insight into the phenomenon by perusing the works of scholars and writers, to trace, inter alia, its history, reviewing the construction of WB and exploring the characteristics of WB behaviour. This chapter also investigates the relevance and application of theoretical frameworks to understand WB as a process in a holistic manner, as well as identifying the causations and consequences of WB on both individuals and organisations. The chapter also explores the coping resources that could potentially serve as buffers against the negative consequences of WB.

2.1. The History of Workplace Bullying

Research on WB was initiated within Scandinavia, Germany and the United Kingdom. European research studies construct WB from a target perspective, where a victim is singled out and does not have the necessary coping mechanisms against bullying arising from processes used by the perpetrator to place the victim in a lesser position (Einarsen et al., 2011).

In the 1990s, Leymann (1996) conducted a study on bullying and conflict among working adults. He identified a practice he named mobbing, which largely described insulting behaviour by a grouping of organisational members towards an employee at work (Duffy & Sperry, 2012). He noted that mobbing was a deeply entrenched practice in organisational aspects such as work design deficiencies and psychosocial workplace dynamics such as leadership practices (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Subsequent to this, a growing interest in WB has been noted within the United Kingdom, France, Canada and the United States (Thiam, 2018). In the 1990s, Andrea Adams provided a public audience with in-depth insight into WB; her work subsequently contributed greatly towards establishing WB as an employee relations concern in Britain (Yamada et al., 2018). A nationwide study by Hoel and Cooper (2000) in Britain revealed that 24.7% of respondents perceived themselves to be targets of WB with 46.5% of respondents reporting witnessing incidents of WB over a period of five years.

Gary Namie and Ruth Namie founded the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) in the United States of America and conducted scientific surveys on WB that informed the American vocabulary and mental health treatment (Yamada et al., 2018). According to Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), between 28% – 46.8% of US employees were victims of WB. Alarming rates in the pervasiveness of WB have also been reported in recent years within under-represented countries in the literature, including South America and Asia (León-Pérez et al., 2021). A review of research by organisational psychology researchers in the last few decades revealed that almost 95% of individuals were bullied within five years of their organisational tenure (Einarsen et al., 2011; Pei et al., 2020), suggesting that WB required further consideration and urgent attention in organisations.

Within the South African context, Susan Marais-Steinman is regarded as the pioneer for generating awareness on WB. Steinman and Herman (1997) had published a book entitled "Corporate Hyenas at Work" which provided a typology of bullies at the workplace. In 1998, Steinman had conducted an Internet communication survey to explore the prevalence of WB across economic sectors. Her findings revealed that workplace violence is present in all economic sectors with 78% of South Africans experiencing victimisation at least once during their careers (Steinman, 2003).

Charlotte Pietersen explored interpersonal behaviours in bullying in the South African labour environment. According to Pietersen (2007), racial tensions between management and subordinates were noted, with subordinates reporting feelings of a lack of acknowledgement, discrimination, obstructionism and isolation arising from their encounters of WB. Subsequent to this, WB has generated interest amongst South African scholars, researchers and practitioners whom have explored the phenomenon in different ways. A study by Kalamdien (2013) explored the prevalence of WB within the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) whilst Leo et al. (2014), examined the role of gender in WB.

The focal areas in the study of WB have evolved from a pre-dominant target perspective towards a multi-disciplinary approach, ranging from sociology, communications theory, labour relations, law and medical science (Einarsen et al., 2011). This inter-disciplinary approach of WB has the potential to deepen the existing knowledge base on the phenomenon more extensively. For example, recent studies explored the negative impact of WB on employee

wellness (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016); WB, personality, work engagement and turnover intentions (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Omar 2017); emotional intelligence as a mediator on WB (Nel, 2019) as well as employees' perceptions and experiences of WB (Botha, 2019).

However, according to Pietersen (2007), the prevalence and effect of WB in South Africa is yet to be fully understood, and thus research on WB in this context is recent but is developing gradually.

According to El Ghaziri et al. (2021), public sector employees in comparison to private sector employees across the world are more susceptible to experiencing WB. This is largely attributable to the public sector organisations having a bureaucratic structure, a large workforce composition, higher unionisation, a service oriented approach, and being devalued by the public. However, there is a scarcity of research pertinently investigating the feelings and experiences of WB amongst employees within the public sector, this being particularly evident in South African local municipalities.

According to Madumo and Koma (2019), there are 257 municipalities in South Africa inclusive of 205 local government municipalities, whereas the province of KwaZulu-Natal has fifty local government municipalities (Govender, 2011). A study by Masuku and Jili (2019) emphasise that the overall function of local government, that is, to provide public service delivery, identify specific public needs, determine avenues to meet public needs and ensure the realisation thereof. Thus, local municipalities have a constitutional mandate to organise and manage their administration, budgeting and planning processes to give prominence to the fundamental needs of the community, and to elevate the social-economic empowerment of the community (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

It is further suggested that these local municipalities adopt a collaborative and consolidated approach with relevant stakeholders such as political parties and ward councillors to achieve its constitutional mandate. However, this may not always be possible due to the constant risk of potential regime changes faced by South African local municipalities, the introduction of new political leadership, ideologies and strategies that differ from the philosophies of local government administrative leadership (Rolland, 2018).

It is therefore suggested that the advancement of WB in local municipalities in South Africa needs to be understood within the broader political landscape. Consistent with international literature on WB in the state sector, the South African civil services as discussed *supra*, is an environment that increases the possible risk of WB, often ascribable to the insidious quest for power and dominance amongst the hierarchies of political leadership and professional leadership (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007).

According to Masuku and Jili (2019), politicians of the ruling political party in South Africa influence the selection and deployment of its members into local municipalities and specific departments as a reward for their loyalty to the party in their fight against the Apartheid regime. However, political deployments have occurred in the absence of a merit system within selection processes for roles in these municipalities (Masuku & Jili, 2019). This demonstrates reward power as indicated earlier by Raven (1992) as well as the abuse of political powers in the appointment of administrative personnel within local municipalities. Correspondingly, instances have been reported where municipal officials have utilised political processes to overturn council procedures (Masuku & Jili, 2019). The abuse of authority and undue influence by politicians towards administrative leadership in local government is also revealed when political leadership assert the "what, when and how, to do what is supposed to be done by administration" (Masuku & Jili, 2019, p.6).

It is therefore inferred that the misuse of authority by politicians result in power imbalances between the perpetrator (politicians) and victims (administration of local government), resulting in abusive leadership and the destabilisation of local government administration in not being able to fulfil its mandate of providing efficient and effective service delivery to the public. Empirical support has been provided for power imbalances as a central characteristic of WB (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019) and abusive leadership as a behavioural manifestation of WB (Peng et al., 2019). Thus, the risk for the advancement of WB in local municipalities is often due to political interference.

The study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) revealed that vertical bullying from supervisors to employees were notably prevalent within South African local government structures. However, these findings by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) cannot be generalised to a single local government organisation, as the percentage of their sample comprise local government amidst

a range of other industries, as well as the provincial location of their research participants is not specified.

Therefore, this study is qualitative and endeavours to reduce this perceived gap in WB related research, based on the data analyses and responses of the participants' understanding, experiences, manifestation, effects, coping mechanisms and available redress mechanisms of WB within a local government organisation in KwaZulu-Natal.

To understand the feelings and experiences of WB by employees and managers, it becomes important to first understand how WB has been conceptualised over time, as well as the behaviours underpinning WB to identify an experience or incident as WB.

2.2 Defining Workplace Bullying

Many scholars have debated the construct of WB quite extensively and in accordance with the researcher's knowledge and review of published works in this study, there is no universal conceptualisation of WB. The conceptualisation of WB is based on distinct behavioural criteria between targets, victims and perpetrators for behaviour to be classified as WB. For example, workplace bullying is labelled variously as, inter alia, "moral harassment or *harcèlement moral* in France and Belgium; *harcèlement psychologique* in Quebec; mobbing in Scandinavia and Germany; and bullying in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia" (Thiam, 2018, p.19). By comparison, victimisation, violence and harassment underpin the conceptualisation of WB in South Africa (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; Momberg, 2011; Pietersen, 2007). The different behaviours attributed towards WB are suggestive of differences in the conceptualisation of WB over time.

However, it can be suggested that the subjective voice has given rise to the vast definitions of WB, thereby increasing the difficulty to have agreed-upon criteria to classify an incident as WB (Carroll, 2018). This could be attributed to WB being a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, resulting in increased difficulty for organisations to identify, categorise and manage bullying behaviours, which further exacerbates the spread of the phenomenon in organisations. Accordingly, Thiam (2018) emphasises the importance of maintaining objectivity, which can contribute towards creating consistency in the definition of WB. An objective definition of WB is provided by Einarsen et al. (2010) as "Harassing, offending, or

socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about 6 months)" (p.22). This definition quantifies the persistent incidents of WB and duration of WB. This places the emphasis on frequency in the definition of WB, as bullying in the workplace includes consecutive, multiple conflict incidents, whilst frequency is not a prerequisite for conflict at work (Zapf et al., 2011).

This suggests that WB cannot be regarded as a single occurrence, but is repeated and enduring over time towards targets or victims of WB in organisations. However, Lee (2000) asserts that attaching a period to the conceptualisation of WB neglects the importance of a once-off incident that could be considered to be severe enough to constitute WB. In the South African context, similar acts of wilfully endangering the safety of others in the workplace are deemed to be a severe form of misconduct which can result in dismissal, following South Africa's Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995). However, Mokgolo (2017) asserts that conflict needs to be an engagement in repeated, unreasonable behaviour which is the pre-requisite for such behaviour to be classified as WB. This suggests that the escalation of conflict over time can result in WB but is not deemed to be WB in and of itself.

The second prerequisite for an incident to be defined as WB is the apparent power differentials and defenceless nature of the victims, which is exacerbated by the victims' belief that they do not have sufficient influence and authority over WB (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Thus, an incident cannot be regarded as WB if both parties (victim and perpetrator) are equally capable to defend their self-worth (Einarsen et al., 2011). In contrast, interpersonal conflict may have a power differential between both parties, but this power differential is not mandatory for the situation to be labelled an interpersonal conflict.

The third prerequisite for an incident to be identified and defined as WB are negative social acts or behaviours associated with WB. The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised is a widely used, validated tool that includes five behavioural dimensions to classify a situation as WB:

> (1) overt physical intimidation and aggression (e.g., being shouted at), (2) excess of supervision (e.g., excessive monitoring of your work), (3) social isolation (e.g., being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work), (4) impossible job demand (e.g., being exposed to an unmanageable workload), and (5) job isolation (e.g., someone withholding information which affects your performance) (Carroll & Hoel, 2007 cited in Carroll, 2018, p.8).

However, a critique is that definitions of WB do not report a threshold on the negative behaviours that must be reached before an incident can be classified as WB, which further highlights the need for maintaining objectivity in creating working definitions of WB (Thiam, 2018).

It is also evident that the negative social behaviours associated with WB contrast with the conceptualisation of conflict, meaning that conflict between individuals manifests after one individual feels hindered or annoyed by another individual (Van de Vliert, 1997). Studies have also shown that behaviours in interpersonal conflict are not necessarily destructive, but can also be helpful, whereby parties involved in interpersonal conflict, engage in problem-solving as a conflict management strategy to resolve conflicts whereas the opposite holds for incidents of WB (Ayoko et al., 2003).

The fourth important element encapsulated in the working definitions of WB includes intentionality, where the perpetrator intends to injure the victim (Einarsen et al., 2011; Leymann, 1996). This can be ascribed to the repeated, enduring nature of WB over time, indicating acceptance or justification of engaging in negative social behaviours towards victims on the part of the perpetrator, that perpetrators would not be unaware of the negative consequences of their behaviours towards victims of WB over time, leading victims to perceive that perpetrators have malicious intent to harm them (Zapf et al. 2011).

An example of intent in WB behaviour by perpetrators is obstructing the training or promotional opportunities of others (Du Plessis, 2017). Conversely, intentionality within interpersonal conflict differs from intentionality in WB, in that before the behaviour is enacted,

parties receiving the conflict have little details or facts that could further the belief of intentional injury by the other party, and that intention to harm only reveals itself during the manifestation of conflict (Baillien et al., 2017). Additionally, intention to harm cannot always be identified in interpersonal conflict as both parties at times engage in problem-solving towards conflict resolution and such behaviour does not display an intent to harm (Baillien et al., 2017). Thus, intentionality is not always considered to be a distinctive characteristic of conflict between parties, which may be regarded by organisational members as normal, or incorporated into work engagements that can be resolved, and are not done with the intent to harm another. However, intentionality is a consistent element in WB definitions.

Notwithstanding the critique on the definitions of WB, the afore-mentioned studies provided an introductory level of insight into the phenomenon. It may also guide organisations in terms of identifying WB and developing strategies to curtail WB.

2.3. Important Characteristics of Workplace Bullying Behaviours

2.3.1. Persistence

Thiam (2018) reports that it is impossible to regard a single incident as WB due to the ambiguity of the situation and insufficient information available. Distinguishing WB as being persistent, repeated harmful behaviour over time as opposed to an isolated incident, implies that day-to-day conflicts and disagreements that occur in the workplace cannot be regarded as WB per se.

According to Zapf and Gross (2001), conflict can be a single incident that can be resolved fairly quickly and may even have positive outcomes for the parties involved in the conflict, whereas bullying entails repeated episodes of the conflict that are enduring over time and have negative outcomes for the individual subjected to such conduct. This is supported by Amendola (2019) who recognises that employees cooperate not by choice over lengthy periods where disagreements are inevitable and can escalate into a situation of bullying over time. This highlights the importance for organisations to differentiate and identify WB from possible workplace conflict and the behaviours associated with each within the context in which they occur, to enable relevant measures and strategies to be implemented timeously to prevent and uproot behaviours that may give rise to WB.

2.3.2. Power

The use of power in organisations can yield positive or negative results, depending on the motive. Accordingly, power can be utilised to achieve organisational objectives such as maintaining productivity or fulfilling personal interests at the expense of others and the organisation at large (Mokgolo, 2017). According to Raven (1992), different forms of power exist between management and subordinates, which include power vested in one's position in the organisation, enforcement power, charismatic power, information as a source of power, reward power and expert power. According to Foucault, power can be understood in terms of the purpose of organisations, which is to develop and enforce organisational statutes, strategies, and structures to create networks of power, as well as control the dominant discourse through the use of the continuous discipline (Stokes & Clegg, 2002). An example of discipline is surveillance, which takes place by continuously subjecting organisational members to observation, believing that organisational members will naturally self-regulate and mould their behaviour to be used for the collective benefit of the organisation (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015).

Thus, it can be inferred that power differentials exist across the organisational hierarchy within a manager *vs* subordinate relationship, where managers exercise coercive power through the authority vested in their positions whilst their subordinates are influenced to submit to such authority. This is supported by several researchers where a power disparity exists between the victim and perpetrator relationship and where the victim is rendered defenceless against WB from the perpetrator (Sheehan et al., 2018; Yamada et al., 2018).

In the context of supervisor *vs* subordinate relationship, abusive supervision can be understood as the constant unfolding of contentious physical and non-physical behaviours towards subordinates. The hostilities include behaviours such as ridicule, appropriating credit for their work, invading their privacy (Peng et al., 2019), intentionally causing a negative outcome on a project, refusing requests for time off, purposefully withholding information and subjecting an individual to public humiliation for self-enhancement (Kovach, 2019).

In some organisations, victimisation by managers is validated and rewarded as a means to ensure optimal work performance from employees, whilst managers simultaneously reward employees through promotional or empowerment opportunities for good performance

(Kovach, 2019). Thus, rewarding is being demonstrated in these interactions as a form of coercive power to influence and sustain employee motivation to achieve the desired organisational outcomes.

However, the notion of downward bullying neglects the subordinate's cognitive appraisal of the situation in terms of constituting the behaviour as abusive supervision and bullying in terms of persistent hostility or isolated events of hostility from their supervisors, which would not be regarded as bullying. The subjective construction of WB by victims, has been corroborated by other researchers in being integral to the consequences of WB for such individuals (Amendola, 2019; Peng et al., 2019). It also disregards the influence that subordinates have in choosing how to respond to WB from their supervisors.

According to Mokgolo (2017), the victims of WB may try to confront the bully about their actions to resolve the problem or may broaden their influence by lodging a grievance and mobilising the support of trade unions to assist in their defence against the bullying inflicted on them. Peng et al., (2019) reported that subordinates' experiences of fear, anger and anxiety as a result of WB could give rise to counter-aggressive behaviour at work. It is therefore suggested that victims would respond through either avoidance behaviours (being defenceless in the hope that the bullying will discontinue), assertive behaviours (constructive confrontation with the bully to resolve the matter) or aggressive behaviours in the organisation, depending on their appraisal of the situation.

WB can also take place in an upward direction, from subordinates to superiors. Examples of upward bullying behaviours include subordinates refusing to accept or complete work delegated to them by their supervisor, lack of punctuality, abscondments, spreading malicious gossip, hiding or refusing to provide information and falsify accounts of victimisation from their manager (Birks et al., 2014). This suggests that bullying from subordinates is a passive-aggressive behaviour directed at their superiors to manipulate the power play to their advantage, thus avoiding consequences as a result of poor work performance and tarnishing the professional reputation of their managers.

According to D'Cruz and Noronha (2016b), the purpose of bullying by subordinates is to utilise coercion and structural power to promote individualism and entrepreneurialism, to assist the

career advancement of subordinates in the workplace. It can therefore be inferred that referent or charismatic power can be utilised as a means to obtain legitimate or positional power in the organisation. When subordinates exercise such power, it can result in superiors experiencing a loss of positional power and a loss of power by being subjected to the negative effects of WB (D'Cruz et al., 2018). The situation of bullying by subordinates can be furthered in the workplace due to the dependency of the manager on their subordinates to meet work requirements (Patterson et al., 2018), as well as managers not reporting the bullying, out of fear of being portrayed as a weak manager to their peers and others (Birks et al., 2014). It is suggested that this places managers in an even more vulnerable position in the perpetuation of upward bullying by their subordinates. Consequently, this may limit the support that would be available to a manager from senior management and leadership of the organisation, to address the situation in a proactive and timeous manner.

However, Peng et al. (2019) found that deviant workplace behaviours inherent in upward bullying towards supervisors are also attributed to the subordinate's prior experiences of abusive supervision. Consequently, it is suggested that a toxic work environment is the outcome of WB, which is supported by Mokgolo (2017) and serves as a catalyst for perpetuating the vicious cycle of WB between managers and subordinates.

WB may also occur horizontally at the same organisational level between colleagues. According to Farrell et al. (2006), such bullying is characterised by behaviours such as public humiliation, rumour mongering, incivility and social isolation. When bullying occurs between colleagues, the bully usually has a high degree of charismatic influence which motivates other colleagues to unite against the targeted individual, resulting in the target experiencing social exclusion and helplessness (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2009). WB may also take place on both horizontal and vertical levels of an organisation (Wright & Hill, 2015). Importantly, when an individual is bullied by a group of individuals, for the purpose of being removed from the organisation or a particular division of the organisation, along with the systematic influence of the organisational culture, climate, technology and leadership supporting such agendas, this behaviour is referred to as workplace mobbing (Duffy & Sperry, 2012).

With the rise of virtual workspaces in the 21st Century, WB has become omnipresent in cyberbullying. According to Hollis (2016), cyberbullying can be understood as a form of WB

behaviour directed towards individuals or groups through the use of information technology (IT) appliances such as computers, electronic mail, mobile phones or social media platforms to torment and scare an individual or colleagues. It is believed that the key elements of cyberbullying are that the bullying is repetitive and persistent, and intrudes upon the victim's private life with the potential to expose information about the victim to a wider online audience, thereby rendering the victim defenceless against such conduct (Vranjes et al., 2017). This highlights the coercive power inherent in cyberbullying as well as the capacity for cyberbullying to be far more destructive than traditional WB in terms of the extent to which the victim's personal and professional reputation can be damaged inside and outside the organisation.

As is evident from the literature review, WB and power relations occur across all organisational levels. However, Loya (2017) asserts that unskilled workers are the most susceptible to experiencing WB, as they are dependent on their jobs for their survival.

Overall, the aforementioned studies illuminated the interdependency of individuals and organisations producing, consuming and reproducing power in organisations (Mannix-McNamara, 2021). It, therefore, becomes pertinent to explore these deeply embedded interactions of power within a local government organisation as the cornerstone of such politics to understand the impact of power relations and WB on individuals and the organisation at large. However, it is necessary to first understand the negative behaviours characteristic of WB, to determine the manifestation of such behaviours and power relations across these organisational levels.

2.3.3. Negative Acts

WB can occur in a subtle, discreet and private manner as well as in an open and public manner (Werner, 2016). Work-related negative acts can take on many forms and can thus give rise to different manifestations of the phenomenon at work.

Studies have described WB behaviours as overt (direct and verbal) or covert (indirect and non-verbal) forms of WB (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; Mokgolo, 2017). Examples of overt behaviours or direct bullying include persistent insults, criticisms, offending remarks and even physical violence; covert behaviours refer to being ignored, withholding pertinent job related

information and social exclusion (Carroll, 2018). These WB behaviours have been categorised in the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised as indicated earlier (Carroll, 2018).

According to Hodson and Sullivan (2012), there are three classifications of WB behavior, these being obstructionism, hostile expressions and overt aggression. Obstructionism refers to "the deliberate intent of the bully to cause a delay to the victim's work being done, to interfere with the victim's work as well as withholding information and resources from the victim to get the work done successfully" (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012, p.65). This corresponds with Carroll's (2018) dimension of job isolation. Hostile expressions include "the bully enacting behaviours such as giving dirty looks and glaring at the victim, spreading rumours and gossip about the victim as well as ridiculing the victim in the form of laughter, sarcasm and mockery" (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012, p.65). Overt aggression is regarded as "the use of threats, assault, destroying required resources and the personal property of the victim" (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012, p.65).

Within the South African context, Smit (2014) developed five categories of WB behaviours: "(1) work-related bullying; (2) social isolation and exclusion; (3) direct and indirect personal attacks or attacks on the private lives of victims; (4) being yelled at in public; and (5) physical violence or threats thereof" (p.45). An important distinguishing criterion of WB is that it violates the fundamental human right to dignity contained within the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) through the "psychological violence of hurting, humiliating, intimidating, tormenting, pressuring, mocking, isolating or degrading the victim" (Du Plessis, 2017, p. 231). It is therefore inferred that psychological violence is regarded as a behaviour underpinning WB.

Other examples of obstructive WB behaviours may include hindering training and promotional opportunities of individuals as well as removing the roles and responsibilities of individuals (Du Plessis, 2017).

2.3.4. Intentionality

According to Richardson and Richardson (2022), perpetrators of WB are aware that their behaviour will cause harm to their victims. It is suggested that reactive anger and instrumental aggression underpin workplace aggression (Keashly et al., 2020). An example of reactive anger demonstrating intent to cause harm is the obstruction of promotional or training opportunities

of a person to impede their career advancement within the organisation (Du Plessis, 2017). Instrumental aggression is viewed as a means to achieve a desired objective such as promotional goals or a heightened self-image, but not necessarily to harm an individual. This is supported by Amendola (2019), who states that no person is hired for the purpose of inflicting emotional harm upon another, but rather, utilises the opportunity afforded by circumstances at work to inflict harm upon another person, which results in the victim experiencing severe emotional distress.

Intentionality within WB also alludes to there being a disparity of power within the organisational hierarchy. This gives rise to the occurrence of WB, when the employer has knowledge of a WB situation, yet fails to take action against the complaints and requests for assistance provided by the victim, thereby exposing the victim to the considerable risk that could have been prevented (Amendola, 2019). The intentionality of WB to downplay such conduct and the victim experience of this bullying demonstrates that WB is not solely perpetrated by one employee or colleagues at work, but supported by the broader organisation and the powers vested at an organisational level. Einarsen et al. (2011) refer to this phenomenon as organisational mobbing.

In contrast, Kalamdien (2013) states that bullies are often unaware of their behaviour being constituted as WB, and the effects of such behaviour on others, as long as they do not receive feedback from others on their behaviour. A study by Einarsen et al. (2011) also recognises the role of the victims' understanding of their experience of WB and whether it may be intentional or not. This may explain why Agervold (2007) describes intent being evident in subjective accounts of WB, and not present within objective working definitions of WB. Therefore, there is an increasing difficulty to define intent in WB behaviours, which may contribute to the victims' feelings and lived experiences of WB.

2.4. Antecedents of Workplace Bullying

The determinants of WB are potentially numerous and complex and require further investigation. Research on WB has predominantly recognised the importance of exploring antecedents from both an individual and an organisational perspective. However, little research exists on the situational antecedents and social interactions that can result in bullying in the workplace. These antecedents will be explored in greater detail below.

Individual antecedents of WB focus on the subjective appraisal of the experience of WB through the lenses of victims, which determines the severity of the event as well as the severity of their response to the situation. Few studies have explored personality as a contributory factor towards WB or being a buffer against the phenomenon.

2.4.1. Personality

Personality can be understood as relatively steadfast characteristics within individuals that influence their feelings, thought patterns and behaviours (Calvete et al., 2016). It is suggested that certain characteristics or a combination of particular personality attributes influence the expansion of WB. Empirical support for this notion is provided by Reknes et al. (2019) whereby certain traits such as anger, anxiety and negative affect are the strongest individual risk factors of victims becoming targets of WB.

2.4.1.1. Neuroticism

Exploring the role of the Big Five personality traits, which refer to extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism, Omar (2017) found that neuroticism results in victims displaying emotional instability towards stressful situations, which can elicit aggressive responses from others and thus make victims more susceptible to becoming targets of WB. Neuroticism shares the same characteristics as outlined by Reknes et al. (2019) above. It is inferred that the emotional instability within victims is associated with a low locus of control and availability of resources within themselves to control the encounter and the environment around them, in comparison to individuals with high levels of agency who do not permit WB to negatively influence their well-being. Consequently, their low levels of hardiness or lack of resilience to recover from encounters such as WB would be negatively affected (Omar, 2017). A recent study by Bashir et al. (2021) also provided empirical support for neuroticism and negative affect being positive predictors of initiating the WB process.

2.4.1.2. Anger

It is postulated that anger influences WB and to understand this more completely, one needs to explore how aggression and assertiveness inherent in anger give rise to WB. According to Samnani and Singh (2016), when individuals experience frustration due to role conflict, they are more likely to vent their frustrations on others and in turn provoke them to respond with negative behaviours or become increasingly annoyed with the individual.

Such aggressive behaviour or counterattacks could potentially lead to spiralling conflicts over time, including WB.

2.4.1.3. Assertiveness

Similarly, assertiveness can be understood as seeking to take control of the situation, whereby the victim may confront the bully to resolve the matter (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). However, the victim's assertiveness may border on aggression, resulting in the perpetrator either capitulating or invoking further counter-productive, destructive behaviours against the victim (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). In other instances, victims that were previously subjected to WB became bullies themselves (Gamian-Wilk & Bjorkelo, 2019).

2.4.1.4. Negative Affect

According to Nielsen and Knardahl (2015), workplace mobbing negatively impacts on the victims' experiences of anxiety and depression as well as their personality characteristics such as conscientiousness, openness and friendliness. These results suggest that negative affect in terms of anxiety and sadness can potentially limit the victims' ability to adapt and respond to WB, thus resulting in victims being less receptive to new experiences.

Conversely, it also suggests that the personalities of victims are affected as a consequence of WB as opposed to being an antecedent of WB. Similarly, other studies have also found limited support for personality contributing towards the elevation of conflict at work (Ramaci et al., 2019). It is postulated that research on the association between personality and WB has produced mixed findings and should thus be regarded as inconclusive. This could be attributed to the relationship being viewed as linear and explored in the same way, whilst neglecting to research possible mediating and moderating variables on the personality and WB association (Samnani & Singh, 2012). To understand the manifestation of WB, it necessitates the investigation of personality characteristics that serve as risks to being or becoming a perpetrator of WB.

2.4.1.5. Extraversion

According to Munir et al. (2019), perpetrators score highly on personality characteristics such as extraversion and openness to new experiences, indicating that they are sociable, attention seeking and actively scan their environment for opportunities to bully others. Conversely,

research demonstrates that victims have little social competence in knowing how to interact with others or respond to social situations such as WB (Carroll, 2018). These findings suggest that perpetrators may identify and capitalise on the psychosocial vulnerability of victims prior to engaging in WB, which boosts their self-image and therefore justifies and legitimises their bullying behaviour in the organisation.

2.4.1.6. Self-worth

According to Botha (2019), perpetrators of WB are usually insecure and are obsessed with the need to control their environment or others which may threaten their fragile sense of self-worth. These findings are reinforced by Gobind (2015) where perpetrators bully individuals if they believe that those individuals are a threat to their "competency, popularity or experience" (p.159). It is suggested that these cognitions of perceived threats at work enable the justification of WB behaviours by perpetrators against victims, to maintain power and serve their interests within the context of the organisation.

However, a study by Fanti and Frangou (2018) discovered an interaction between a highly elevated self-esteem and narcissism in relation to victimisation and WB behaviours. This suggests that perpetrators of WB can exhibit traits of narcissistic personality disorder.

2.4.1.7. Narcissism

The narcissistic personality disorder is characterised by the individual possessing an inflated self-image, coupled with an inflated sense of superiority over others. Narcissism also involves individuals being callous, deceitful and demonstrating non-compliance, which corresponds to the low agreeableness dimension from the Big Five personality traits (Tokarev et al., 2017). Low scores on the agreeableness dimension further suggest the increasing propensity for the individual to respond with high levels of aggression (Munir et al., 2019), being characteristic of WB behaviour. In addition, bullies are extremely sensitive to criticism and may respond aggressively to maintain their ego and self-concept (Tokarev et al., 2017).

2.4.1.8. Psychopathy

Perpetrators are also known to display another form of the personality disorder known as psychopathy, which shares many similarities with narcissism, such as low agreeableness and high impulsivity (Tokarev et al., 2017). This suggests that perpetrators do not give much

thought to the negative implications of their behaviours and actions towards victims. This is supported by Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2009) who reports that having low empathy and low perspective-taking are aggravating factors in becoming a perpetrator of WB. However, psychopathy differs from narcissism in that it is more malicious due to perpetrators deriving satisfaction from inflicting harm upon their targets (Tokarev et al., 2017). It is therefore no surprise that psychopathy is deemed to be among the most accurate explanatory variables of adult bullying (Baughman et al., 2012).

This has important implications for organisations to obtain insight into their employee's personality strengths and development areas so as to develop strategic risk interventions that focus not only on individual development plans with respect to personality development areas but to utilise such information meaningfully in fostering team cohesion and effectiveness. This could in turn have a positive impact on individual behaviour and possibly prevent conflict and WB behaviours to a larger extent in the organisation.

Personality in and of itself, however, cannot fully explain WB. It is also necessary to consider other individual variables including culture, gender, race, education and age, which will be discussed below.

2.4.2. Culture

A scarcity of research exists on the investigation of culture in the construction of WB (Salin et al., 2018a). A global study by Power et al. (2013) investigated the acceptance of WB across different cultures in Asia, South America, African countries and the Eastern subregion of Europe. Key findings from this study include a performance orientation characteristic of in-group collectivism of Confucian Asia societies where workers working for the good of the organisation, are more susceptible to unpleasant workplace practices and are more tolerant of WB, as opposed to individualist countries such as Australia and North America. Possible reasons for individualistic cultures being less tolerant of WB are due to their focus on autonomy, freedom and self-actualisation (Samnani, 2013). This could result in individuals from individualistic cultures reflecting on these behaviours as negative acts and becoming more inclined to address these.

However, a recent study by Salin (2021) revealed that high ingroup collectivism cultures have viewed WB as unacceptable but may themselves engage in WB behaviour towards other individuals whom they perceived as outsiders. This could be viewed as a means for collectivist in-groups to assert and preserve their identity, positive self-image, distinctiveness and expectations against those who are perceived to threaten or potentially undermine the collectivist values, identity and shared norms.

The historical apartheid regime in South Africa resulted in inequalities and adverse impacts based on unfair discrimination against certain racial groups. The advent of democracy in 1994 attempted to provide equal opportunities for all people and prohibit unfair discrimination in all walks of life. Consequently, diversity management is becoming increasingly important for management as South African legislation compels organisations to have a diverse workforce. A study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) explored WB across different industries and provinces in South Africa and found that employees experiencing negative diversity experiences such as discrimination and prejudice, experienced greater exposure to WB when compared to employees that experienced positive diversity experiences such as mutual understanding, respect and socialisation across different race groups.

Within cultural research, it is worthwhile exploring reasons why some employees experience WB more than others. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Tajfel and Turner (1979) may provide some insight into group dynamics, where individuals seek to obtain a positive self-image by categorising people as belonging to either a majority group or a minority group. Individuals would endeavour to compete to belong to the majority group to improve their self-esteem and identity. However, should they deem the minority group to be more favourable, they would try to challenge the minority group to achieve a social particularity. This can result in stereotyping, prejudice, group polarisation and majority group favouritism to attain some level of influence, which if applied to WB, can assist a bully in attaining shared distinctiveness and identity with the majority group (Haslam & Reicher, 2006).

2.4.3. Gender

Limited research has been conducted on gender and WB within South Africa. A study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) sought to bridge this gap and explored WB across six different industries in South Africa. Their findings were statistically significant in that both males and

females were victims of WB. However, males experienced a significantly greater level of WB than females, in the form of overt and covert bullying from supervisors as well as overt bullying from colleagues. These findings are congruent with international literature, where Salin and Hoel (2013) assert that males tend to experience more abusive supervision such as negatively related work acts, whilst females experience WB from colleagues in the form of social discrimination.

There was a notable decrease in labour force participation, ranging from 52.4% in 2016 to 46% in 2020 amongst females and 65.2% in 2016 to 57% in 2020 amongst males in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2016; Spaull et al., 2020). The reduced labour force participation could be attributed to the rise of job losses experienced during the Coronavirus pandemic, as suggested in the research findings by Casale and Posel (2020). However, it is further reported that males occupy 75% of senior and executive management positions within South Africa (Department of Labour, 2021), which demonstrates a clear positional power differential that could lead to WB behaviours towards females, who possess less positional power.

Consequently, South African females report great difficulty in navigating and managing their professional, domestic and personal responsibilities, which negatively impacts on their level of career advancement in organisations (Jaga et al., 2017). Thus, organisations perpetuate WB through social barriers which leave females occupying traditional, and less supportive roles, within the organisation, and further entrenches gendered roles of males in dominant management positions.

However, studies also reveal that females face the increased likelihood of becoming targets of WB from both males and females in comparison to males. According to Namie (2014), 69% of male perpetrators bully 57% of females, whilst 31% of female perpetrators bully other females 68% of the time. This suggests that females are earmarked for bullying by male and female perpetrators, with most incidents arising from male perpetrators. For example, a study revealed that in highly sexist organisations females experience further criticism by being held responsible for the incident if they report incidents of being bullied (Gilbert et al., 2013). This can further exacerbate WB in the form of social isolation after the incident occurred.

Within South African municipal policing departments, female police officials often experienced verbal abuse and sexual harassment at work from male police officials in management positions, although the prevalence of such bullying is minimal (Khosa, 2019). These findings reveal the power differentials inherent in the perpetrator-victim relationship, as well as the under-reporting of WB experiences due to fear of reprisal that perpetuates the spread of the phenomenon in the work environment.

2.4.4. Age

There is growing uncertainty amongst researchers on the influence of age on WB. A recent exploratory review of fifty-one papers on WB, of which eight pertained to age and WB, revealed that workers below the age of forty-four were most susceptible to becoming victims of WB (Fernandez et al., 2017). Similarly, Cunniff and Mostert (2012) discovered that younger employees were more frequently bullied in comparison to older employees in South Africa. This could be attributed to junior employees having a lower income status and a perceived lack of institutional knowledge when compared to older employees, which creates a power disparity promoting WB.

Similarly, a study by Robertson (2019) explored different generational experiences of WB and suggests that Millennials require continuous feedback compared to Baby Boomers and Generation X and that in the absence of feedback, they would therefore experience WB to a larger extent than older employees. It is inferred that withholding crucial information related to individuals or their work, will result in younger employees experiencing a greater magnitude of WB due to their pursuit for improvement and mastery. Older employees do not rely heavily on such information due to their institutional knowledge and experience, and may therefore report lower levels of WB in this regard. According to Gobind (2015), bullies view younger employees to be a threat in terms of competence or innovative ways of working. This may justify perpetrators bullying younger employees in organisations.

However, a study by Varhama and Björkqvist (2004) discovered increased levels of WB among both older and younger municipal employees in Finland. Other studies revealed an insignificant correlation between age and WB (Botha, 2019; Ortega et al., 2009). Thus, research findings on the influence of age on WB are inconsistent and may differ in each unique organisational context.

2.4.5. Education

Research has produced mixed findings on the influence of education or qualifications on WB. Cunniff and Mostert (2012) revealed that employees who were less educated or held lower qualifications experience WB more frequently than employees who were better educated or qualified. It could be postulated that employees at lower occupational levels are increasingly reliant on their jobs as a means of survival. In addition, the limited autonomy and decision-making power vested in such roles could create a relationship of compliance to avoid punishment, which is conducive to WB.

Conversely, other studies assert that those who are highly educated and occupy commanding positions such as managers, also experience WB (Ariza-Montes et al., 2014). It is suggested that highly educated individuals in high-ranking positions are bullied because their competence is perceived as a threat to bullies, personally and professionally (Gobind, 2015). A South African study by De Wet and Jacobs (2013) indicated that over 80% of employees in higher-ranking positions were bullied against their professional status by being given work below their competence. This shows that highly qualified individuals are stripped of the purpose of their jobs and are purposefully demeaned by making them feel redundant. It is further suggested that these bullying behaviours enables perpetrators to safeguard their professional and social standing within the organisation, which can perpetuate the cycle of bullying.

This WB behaviour could be described as mobbing or group bullying which is intended to cause offence, ostracism, and negatively affect the victim's work in order to make the victim feel defenceless and to ultimately remove the person from their position in the organisation (Yildiz, 2018). It should therefore not be surprising to discover a statistically significant relationship between mobbing and the turnover of victims that have experienced such conduct (Yildiz, 2018). Conversely, a study by Botha (2019) reported insignificant differences in WB experienced amongst highly educated employees and those who were not.

2.4.6. Race

According to Bergbom and Vartia (2021), few studies exist on the association between ethnic diversity and WB. Namie (2014) investigated the influence of ethnicity on WB in the United States and discovered through the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) 2014 survey, that the

rates of being directly targeted for bullying was the highest for Asians followed by African-Americans, Spanish Americans and Caucasians.

Ethnic differences and WB cannot be separated from first understanding the history of Apartheid in South Africa, that was characterised by unequal employment opportunities for African, Coloured and Indian populations and job reservation for Whites. However, the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) legislation attempted to address the adverse impact endured by these minority groups through anti-discriminatory provisions on the basis of race and gender, to name but a few.

It may therefore be inferred that despite various legislative measures put in place to address the adverse impact of the past, very little has changed in terms of bullying on the basis of race. Furthermore, a study by Maleka and Siziba (2019) revealed that racism is one of the factors that contribute towards unequal distribution of rewards and benefits in organisations.

These international and South African research findings support Foucault's assertion that the discourse of power is evident through the analysis of social experiences; perpetrators of WB analyse social interactions and the work conditions to capitalise on the perceived weaknesses of others, which generates a power imbalance and justifies perpetrators' actions in order to maintain their position of power and self-interests (Groves, 2016). The analysis of social experiences also suggests that the perpetuation of WB bullying based on ethnic differences is still deeply embedded in dominant ideologies of society and organisations, which serve to uphold institutional norms and enforce normalising judgements.

A study by Meyer and Kirsten (2014) reported in the past that victims experienced bullying by their superiors in the form of racial discrimination on the grounds of affirmative action measures, whilst their co-workers experienced psychological violence on the basis of being the racial minority. Thus, political changes also influence the direction and spread of WB in organisations. It is postulated that that power as a discourse is evident in the written political dispensation of South African Employment Equity legislation that provides insight into the hidden power (Groves, 2016), such as suitable redress in the form of affirmative action measures for previously disadvantaged ethnic groups, resulting in a new dominant ideology in post-apartheid South Africa. It is suggested that the shift in power dynamics resulted in

previously disadvantaged groups exerting their newly acquired power and influence upon ethnic minorities through WB.

WB is also manifested in the organisation through workplace gossip. Workplace gossip can be understood as a social activity that can either instantly harm or uplift a person's reputation (Carrim, 2016) and can thus be viewed as WB. Similarly, Kiss et al. (2014) advocates that individuals that are supportive of negative workplace behaviour such as gossip, obtain social wealth in organisations and are deemed more popular. This demonstrates reward power and charismatic power that bullies and supporters of WB can receive if they engage in or support WB, which further serves to perpetuate the spread of WB.

It is suggested that an enhanced self-esteem and reputation in the organisation justifies and legitimises WB by perpetrators. An example of such behaviour includes gossip by the majority ethnic group to discredit managers of a minority ethnic group, vilify a professionally competent employee's reputation, or cause individuals of a minority ethnic group to remain powerless in an organisation (Carrim, 2016). This suggests that perpetrators are often threatened by the competence of others, which causes them to target such individuals.

This has important implications for considering social and cultural attributes of employees and managers within the local municipality under study, which will assist in determining if these are causations of WB.

2.4.7. Bystanders

A scarcity of research exists on bystanders being a causation of WB, specifically the drivers of their behaviour towards WB (Mulder et al., 2016). Bystanders can be understood to be any witness present, regardless of their occupational level in the organisation, and can either be actively involved or detached from the bullying situation (Lansbury, 2014). This suggests that bystanders can either play an active or passive role, which may be constructive in reducing WB or destructive in exacerbating WB, and are thus not merely passive observers. This is further illustrated by Paull et al. (2012) who categorised bystanders "according to whether they are active, constructive, passive and destructive" (p.15).

A South African study by Khumalo (2019) revealed that bystanders retaliated in moral anger by confronting perpetrators of WB. This can be viewed as an active constructive response towards WB, as the bystander is seeking to assist the victim or reduce subsequent episodes of the phenomenon. However, such behaviour could also be met with counter-aggression from the perpetrators of WB or the organisation itself, which would serve to increase the cycle and spread of WB across the organisation (Peng et al., 2019). This suggests incongruence between the bystander's moral values and the observed bullying behaviour, culminating in displays of moral anger and justice.

In contrast, Li et al. (2019) revealed that bystanders might inflict further mistreatment or bullying upon victims of WB due to their perceived competition or their jealousy of the victim, taking pleasure in the suffering of the victim and believing that bullying is a fair means of distributive justice for the perceived negative actions or behaviours of the victim. This can be considered as an active destructive response on the part of bystanders due to a repeated victimisation of the victim. Similarly, bystanders may choose to join the perpetrator in bullying the victim, particularly if the perpetrator occupies a higher position within the organisational hierarchy, who might assist the bystanders in their career advancement goals within the organisation (Motsei, 2015). Thus, it is inferred that bystanders engage in a cost benefit analysis before expending their efforts in supporting perpetrators of WB against the victim.

However, despite being aware of WB, bystanders or witnesses may choose not to take any action in confronting the bully or supporting bullied individuals as they feel powerless, fear retaliation from the perpetrator, avoid the victim and ignore what they have witnessed (Paull et al., 2019). This can result in enabling the perpetuation and intensification of WB in organisations. Powerlessness felt by bystanders could be attributed to having no solutions on how to assist the victims (Motsei, 2015). It is therefore suggested that the bystanders' perceived levels of self-efficacy will determine whether they are willing and able to support the victims of WB. Similarly, Hellemans et al. (2017) discovered that bystanders with a poor self-efficacy perception were afraid to intercede on behalf of bullied individuals thereby increasing the risk and perpetuation of WB.

However, while witnesses were initially inclined to assist the victim of WB, due to supervisor responses and intervention in the matter, the actions of these bystanders became more passive

and covert (Coyne et al., 2019). This highlights the power differentials in terms of the wilful subjugation of bystanders to the institutional power of the organisation, which serves to deter resistance, enforce normalising judgements and exacerbate WB.

According to Treadway et al. (2021), bystanders would be less inclined to report bullies who possessed political power and engaged in ostracising behaviours towards them, thus exacerbating WB. It also reveals how knowledge is established and perceived evidence of common truth by bystanders, which influence how they define their identity as potential bullied individuals, and their behaviours towards power dynamics, such as not supporting victims of WB.

However, critique has been levelled against categorising bystanders into a typology, as it largely ignores the social and communicative ambiguity involved in many situations within the work environment (Linstead, 2013), which can affect the way in which bystanders subjectively interpret incidents of WB. For instance, Einarsen et al. (2020) assert that bystanders of WB may have witnessed a single incident of conflict, and not party to the repeated acts of WB that occur over time and in different settings. Accordingly, bystanders may not have a complete understanding of the magnitude and linkages of WB towards bullied individuals, and may construct their observations based on limited information, which is not concurrent with the reality of WB for victims.

2.4.8. Organisational Culture

Organisational culture can be understood as the unwritten code of conduct that employees and new incumbents adapt to, through the socialisation processes of the organisation and organisational members (Samsudin et al., 2020). This could potentially give rise to competing values and assumptions that challenge the underlying organisational values, beliefs, assumptions and norms, and consequently WB.

According to Samsudin et al. (2020) a hierarchy culture characterised by bureaucratic structures and administration is suggested to elicit WB. Correspondingly, An and Kang (2016) found that hierarchy cultures were 2.8 times more likely to elicit WB. It is therefore postulated that public sector organisations such as local government entities with a hierarchical structure are more susceptible to WB. This could be due to the quest for power between the hierarchies

of political leadership and professional leadership (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007) as well as low autonomy and participation in decision-making (Kelloway et al., 2010). It is suggested that these conditions provide fertile ground for WB to take place in the context of public sector organisations.

A study by Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) suggests that the public sector, inclusive of local government entities, has an organisational culture and identity that communicates the provision of effective service delivery and care towards the public. It also promotes anti-discriminatory policies towards its members, yet conceals the lived realities of WB within the organisation, and inculcates a culture of fear of reprisal for victims if they were to report WB. This suggests that a means of impression management is being created towards the public that is antithetical to the values of caring, and seeks to legitimise managerial and organisational positions without always giving ethical legitimacy to policy and legislative provisions.

In addition, fear of reprisal in the organisational culture can be demonstrated to victims of WB through stigmatisation as whistle-blowers, social isolation, denial of promotion or employment opportunities, increased scrutiny over victims and their work. (Carroll, 2018). In other instances, fear of reprisal is demonstrated through retaliation by the perpetrators, which has the aim to silence the victim and discourage any co-workers witnessing the bullying from assisting the victim (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). It is therefore suggested that fear of reprisal within organisational cultures through retaliation and silencing is a strategy to maintain institutional power over their employees, particularly bullied individuals. This in turn has the potential to exacerbate WB in such organisations.

Bullied individuals are further marginalised if the organisational culture legitimises, promotes and rewards WB and provides little to no support to the victims thereof (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). This suggests that the organisational culture can be a political strategy aimed at enhancing the perpetrators' positions in the organisation through WB. Empirical support for this proposition is provided by Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) where perpetrators were rewarded with job promotions for displaying WB behaviours in the public sector.

An example of organisations being unsupportive to victims of WB is when victims approach HR to assist them with obtaining recourse through anti-discriminatory policy provisions, but

are met with glib solutions such as transferring the victim to another department in the organisation (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). This demonstrates a contradictory dialogue of the principles that organisations and its culture claim to uphold in terms of caring for the public and its members. It appears to rather protect and support the bully and WB behaviours. Consequently, such organisations are encouraging WB to flourish and remain undetected.

It could be postulated that HR are in an ethical unenviable position of safeguarding employee rights at work, yet are also required to submit to the positional power vested in management positions in the organisation for their own job security. This is supported by Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) who states that the lack of autonomy in decision-making power experienced by HR practitioners, coupled with reporting to management whilst addressing the employee's complaint of WB with empathy, compounds the difficulty and complexity of their role as a champion of people management in dealing with WB effectively. This could also consequently advance WB in organisations.

2.4.9. Leadership

Studies have revealed that 75% of middle and senior management, by virtue of their positional powers, are identified as perpetrators of WB, displaying an autocratic leadership style and inflicting abusive supervision over their subordinates (Botha, 2010; Peng et al., 2019). This study explores a few destructive leadership styles and leadership responses as antecedents to WB.

As stated by Skogstad et al. (2014), a laissez-faire approach is understood as leaders avoiding leadership responsibilities and not being suitably available to respond to subordinates needs. Similarly, Glambek et al. (2018) found that leaders with a laissez-faire leadership style would avoid intervening in instances of WB due to not providing sufficient insight into the interpersonal relations of their subordinates and WB, as well as not having the necessary expertise on how to deal with WB situations.

Consequently, WB may continue to flourish under leadership with a laissez-faire leadership style, with victims possibly feeling abandoned by their leaders and having little support from their leaders towards their experience and consequences of WB. It is also postulated that

management would experience greater difficulty in dealing with situations of WB that have been allowed to advance over time due to a lack of intervention from the outset.

However, it must also be noted that the laissez-faire leadership style may have been perceived as such in the eyes of the victim and may not necessarily reflect the behaviour of the leader itself (Glambek et al., 2018). A study by Nielsen and Abildgaard (2013) did not find the laissez-faire leadership approach to have an indirect effect on WB. Accordingly, the need to comprehend the perspectives of leaders towards WB and address any difficulties they may encounter with regards to managing WB is essential.

Another destructive leadership style is the autocratic management style, which can be understood as an intimidating, restraining form of WB linked to bullied individuals' experiences of WB (Hoel et al., 2010). This could be ascribed to the fact that autocratic leadership cultivates apprehension, unquestioned obedience and discourages dialogue during problem-solving (Salin & Hoel, 2020). Consequently, public servants under autocratic leadership are less risk aversive and fearful in that they do not always provide proactive advice that contributes to good governance of public sector organisations (Grant-Smith & Colley, 2018). It is suggested that autocratic leadership creates conditions for WB to flourish.

In attempting to understand these findings on autocratic leadership, it is suggested that leaders may have their own self-interests as primary focus or require a specific behaviour from their subordinates which may serve as the justification and legitimisation of WB.

In the South African context, leaders may view certain subordinates as a threat to their career advancement in the organisation and therefore may engage in abusive supervision towards subordinates, resulting in heightened levels of anxiety, job insecurity on the part of subordinates and consequently WB (Cilliers, 2012). It is suggested that bureaucracy and superior-subordinate relationships in the public sector along with the acceptance of instructions from superiors by subordinates, provide fertile ground for WB to flourish in this context (Nguyen et al., 2019).

In the context of civil service in Africa, workers esteem their leaders as those who align the expertise of the workforce to achieve the organisation's mission and strategic objectives.

Consequently, this renders the leadership and political administration of such organisations as the focal point. It is not surprising to find employees in revenue collections justifying their actions such as money laundering with perceptions that their leaders also engage in such corrupt practices or turn a blind eye amidst evil (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). It can therefore be postulated that unethical, deviant workplace behaviours are regarded as WB in this context and can increase over time if such behaviours are embraced by leadership (Akanni et al., 2018).

However, Weinberg (2014) asserts that unethical behaviour demonstrated by subordinates or employees of the organisation may not be so prevalent, but rather limited to the subordinates or individuals closest to the leader that are most likely to display such behaviours. Notwithstanding this critique, the propensity for such behaviours to spread across all levels of the organisation is likely to increase as individuals interact with other employees over time.

In contrast, however, subordinates or middle hierarchical ranks between superiors and subordinates may engage in corrupt behavioural practices, despite having a desire to not engage in such practices, due to the belief that their superiors will support them lest they all are held accountable, and also due to a fear of their superiors' retaliation against them if they do not engage in such behaviour (Jávor & Jancsics, 2016). This suggests that a leader's expectations of unquestioned obedience to institutionalised norms of engaging in WB and concealing WB will cause employees to wilfully subject themselves to obeying such expectations or face negative repercussions for their actions. It is therefore postulated that the prevailing ideology and display of power in WB are further entrenched and perpetuated across the organisation.

However, recent studies have begun to shed light on the leader reporting wrongdoing and experiencing retaliation and bullying in return, and how this in some instances was felt more intensely by public service leadership due to their strong identification with the societies that they serve (Stafford 2017a; Stafford 2017b). Such actions have given rise to a multifaceted view of loyalty on the part of a leader, where demonstrating ethics contributes to good governance and on the other hand, contributes to leaders being viewed by their superiors as disloyal for not achieving the goals of organisational effectiveness (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2016a). Therefore, establishing and navigating leadership loyalty to the multiple objectives that leaders are expected to achieve may exacerbate WB of individuals as well as the leaders themselves.

2.4.10. Job Design and Psychosocial Work Conditions

According to Salin and Hoel (2020), role stressors such as role conflict, where employees receive conflicting tasks and perceive these to be unreasonable, are likely to increase their stress and frustration levels, which may increase WB. It is suggested that role conflict can have a negative effect on the well-being of the workers, which can decrease their ability to defend themselves against bullying attacks.

Research also supports the strong association between role ambiguity with WB. For instance, ineffective communication, a lack of clear goals, unclear expectations, and insufficient information result in increased ambiguity in the job, stress and WB (Vartia, 1996). Recent studies also revealed strong associations between high work pressure, high occupational demands and WB (Andersen et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019).

It is therefore suggested that a large magnitude of workplace stressors increase the risk of WB behaviours, such as aggression from managers towards their subordinates, as well as team members taking out their frustration, tension and aggression on one another. This situation culminates in dysfunctional team dynamics and co-worker bullying, which has also been supported in a study by Samnani and Singh (2016). Conversely, Bruursema et al. (2011) suggested that WB was a result of performing monotonous tasks or experiencing role underload, hence workplace and role stressors are a source of harassment (Salin & Hoel, 2020).

These findings suggest that unfavourable job and work conditions may increase a victim's susceptibility to further episodes of WB. However, Salin and Hoel (2020) caution that stressful workplace demands may not simply be the result of the nature of work, but can also be a form of WB inflicted on subordinates by the managers.

Strong empirical support has been provided for significant relationships between poor occupational resources and WB, including a lack of social support and WB (Lambert et al., 2018), withholding pertinent job information and WB (Carroll, 2018) as well as low levels of autonomy, decision-making power and WB (Lewis et al., 2017). Within the public services sector, there is strong support for the relationships between elevated workloads, high emotional demands, poor independence over work, poor incentives, elevated job uncertainty ambiguity, multiple job clashes, work-family interference and poor perceptions of organisational fairness

with high levels of intimidation (Andersen et al., 2018). It is therefore suggested that a lack of individual and organisational support mechanisms can result in victims experiencing psychological strain, which can increase their vulnerability to being bullied.

Recent studies have revealed the role of a poor physical working environment in perpetuating the spread of WB. According to Salin (2015), organisations with poor air quality, severe temperatures, and confined working space resulted in employees experiencing or observing bullying in those workplaces in the form of aggression. This could be due to increased frustrations with working conditions that limit their ability to perform their tasks efficiently as well as counter-frustration from management as a result of not performing optimally, which could lead to WB over time.

This has important implications for organisations to investigate and identify variables within the work environment such as ergonomics, work organisation and job design that may be antecedents of WB, as opposed to focusing solely on the perpetrator as the primary cause of bullying in the workplace.

2.4.11. Organisational Change

Empirical support has been provided for WB flourishing under conditions of organisational change (D'Cruz et al., 2014). It therefore becomes important to comprehend contextual determinants that give rise to WB in times of organisational change, such as downsizing, which can lead to increased pressure for employees to compete and perform at their best (Salin & Hoel, 2020).

Consequently, the organisational culture may transform to valuing and rewarding competitiveness, which is conducive for WB to flourish in (Samsudin et al., 2020). As stated by Samnani and Singh (2014), organisations may establish performance reward systems for outstanding performance, which can increase WB due to competition for scarce resources as a result of organisational change.

Similarly, the public sector is also negatively affected by destructive processes such as increased competition for resources, demonstration of competence and sustained levels of productivity which can result in WB behaviours (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015).

A study by Mabunda (2019) discovered that under competitive conditions, employees may experience unequal opportunities, increased isolation, reduced collaboration, reduced tolerance and portray a cold, emotional front towards others. It is suggested that these defensive behaviours and survival of the fittest mentalities in response to organisational change are considered fertile ground for WB to flourish.

It is also postulated that market changes may provide the justification, legitimisation and reinforcement of WB, such as autocratic leadership styles (Salin and Hoel, 2020) and reduced team collaboration and support (Creasy & Carnes, 2017).

A central factor that promotes WB is the perceived violation of the psychological contract during organisational change. The psychological contract can be understood as the agreed upon responsibilities and expectations of the employer towards the employee for services rendered by the employee, and the responsibilities and expectations of the employee to the employer (Mokgolo, 2017).

However, when the psychological contract is deemed to have been violated, employees are reportedly subjected to payment cuts and layoffs (Salin & Hoel, 2020). These findings highlight that victims affected by organisational change in this manner, are likely to experience high levels of psychological strain and thus may have less capacity to resist WB.

According to Baillien et al. (2019), an indirect relationship exists between exposure to structural organisational transformation, perceived psychological contract violation and becoming perpetrators of WB each time an organisational change is introduced within a six-month time lapse.

This can have negative ramifications for the organisation and targets of WB. For instance, the perpetrator can demonstrate resistance and engage in counter-productive behaviours towards innocent targets and the organisation, such as withdrawal, theft, sabotage and misusing company information (Griep et al., 2016). It is therefore suggested that counter-productive behaviours as a result of organisational change, if left unchecked, can escalate to more protracted forms of WB over time.

In contrast, Holten et al. (2017) asserts that it is not the organisational change itself that gives rise to WB, but rather the way in which procedures are applied fairly to execute change. Hence, WB is a result of procedural injustice.

2.4.12. Organisational Justice

Organisational justice represents a fair application of organisational processes, procedures, interactions and outcomes through the lens of employees (Baldwin, 2006).

Empirical support is provided for the relationship between a lack of perceived organisational justice and WB. According to Notelaers et al. (2019), a lack of organisational justice in the context of a perceived imbalance between the effort given by employees in the work that they do and inconsistent rewards received by employees from the organisation or management, may result in employees becoming more susceptible to WB. Within local municipalities in South Africa, existing power relations create positional and professional distance between management and employees, which destroys trust as employees report feeling isolated from having access to expertise, providing input into decision-making and capitalising on opportunities within the organisation (Ndevu, 2019).

It is therefore postulated that an absence of organisational justice through this lens will result in employees feeling marginalised and embittered. To this end, employees may also engage in counter-productive work behaviours such as breaking organisational norms in the form of reducing effort given to their work, engaging in regular and repeated complaining and withdrawing from social interactions in the organisation that could increase WB (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). This highlight's Foucault's conceptualisation of hidden social power in the form of resistance to dominant ideologies and power dynamics (Groves, 2016) demonstrated through institutional norms and practices.

Consequently, leadership may try to punish individuals for flouting organisational norms through other means of abusive supervision, such as ridicule or invading employee privacy (Peng et al., 2019). This emphasises that perceived negative reciprocity between employees and management with regards to increased efforts, limited rewards provided and insubordination can exacerbate WB.

Overall, organisational injustice is implicit in the experience of WB and necessitates a deeper investigation within local government organisations in South Africa. Importantly, WB cannot be understood or emphasised from any of the individual, social, situational and organisational antecedents in isolation, but rather, through a systematic study of the interaction of these antecedents that contribute to the spread of this phenomenon in organisations.

2.5. Consequences of Workplace Bullying

2.5.1. Physical and Psychological Ill-Health

It is widely acknowledged that WB has severe consequences on the physical and mental health of bullied individuals. Empirical support has been provided by Verkuil et al. (2015) for the relationship between WB, despondency, apprehension and psychological distress. Similarly, Presti et al. (2019) 'proved that the effects of workplace bullying on physical and psychological negative symptoms were mediated by anxiety and, partly, by depression' (p.816).

The research findings by Neto et al. (2017) revealed that WB resulted in burnout as well as reduced psychological well-being and presenteeism at work. It can therefore be inferred that the repeated and long-term exposure characteristic of WB would result in bullied individuals experiencing insufficient recovery time in response to WB episodes, which could increase employee vulnerability to being bullied further.

Consequently, it is postulated that victims display higher levels of emotional responsiveness to future negative social behaviours encountered on a daily basis, than those that have not experienced WB previously (Hoprekstad et al., 2019). Based on this study, it is inferred that the psychological consequences of WB are not experienced solely during the WB incident, but also in the day-to-day life of bullied individuals following the encounter.

This is supported by research that explored the relationship between daily acts of social exclusion in the workplace and the resultant anxiety that interfered with the victims' sleep patterns following an encounter of WB (Pereira et al., 2013), including sleep disturbances for a period between one to five years, following exposure to WB (Hansen et al., 2021). This highlights the enduring devastating consequences of WB on individual well-being. The

consequences of WB have also resulted in victims of WB experiencing work-life conflict due to impaired relationships with family and friends (Kalamdien & Lawrence, 2017).

The ill-health experienced by bullied individuals as a result of WB are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Health Consequences Associated with Workplace Bullying

Health consequences	**Symptoms**	**Research**
Physical ill-health	Muscle disorders	Vignoli et al. (2015)
	Increased risk of cardiovascular disease	Lingen (2019)
	Headache and stomach disturbances	Lever et al. (2019)
	Exhaustion, body pains, hypersensitivity and memory loss	Presti et al. (2019)
	Prolonged sleep disturbances	Hansen et al. (2021)
Psychological ill-health	Psychological stress	Verkuil et al. (2015)
	Eating disorders	Du Plessis (2017)
	Poor self-esteem	
	PTSD	
	Trouble forming healthy relationships	
	Suicidal thoughts and suicide	Hogh et al. (2021)
	Anxiety and depression	Presti et al. (2019)

Empirical support has been provided for public service employees potentially experiencing elevated levels of mental ill-health as a result of WB in comparison to the private sector, including silence, feeling insecure, worthless, disrespected and devalued (Nguyen et al., 2019; Samnani & Singh, 2016). In South Africa, Momberg (2011) discovered that members of the workforce who were bullied on a regular basis experienced chronic workplace psychological stress, resulting in increased absenteeism to avoid the stress and to seek professional and medical help. However, findings on the impact of WB on the mental well-being of bullied individuals in a South African public sector have been scant. Therefore, a further investigation of WB and its influence on the health of individuals within the research site is deemed to be necessary.

2.5.2. The Ramifications of Workplace Bullying on Organisations

The human cost of WB can result in negative effects and outcomes for organisations. Table 2 below illustrates the variables that need to be considered when calculating the costs of WB, which are deemed significant losses to the organisation.

Table 2

Variables Significant in the Calculation of Losses Resulting from Bullying and Harassment

Variables	**Sources of loss**	**Research**
Staff attrition	• Reduced organisational commitment • Staff members exit the organisation due to psychological tension, brutality, as well as limited support received from colleagues	Gülle and Soyer, (2016) Figueiredo-Ferraz et al. (2012); McTernan et al. (2013); Middlemiss (2017)
Decline in productivity	• Deteriorating execution of work • Poor performance • Turnover of the company employees.	Jacobs and De Wet (2015); Neto et al. (2017); Sheehan et al. (2018)
Morbidity of employees	• Increased use of sick leave and medical expenses • Various psychological and physical ill-health issues	Lever et al. (2019); Presti et al. (2019)
Morbidity of witnesses	• Psychological and physical health problems	Workplace Bullying Institute (2016); Namie and Namie (2011)

Organisational culture	• Damaged team relations • Poor staff morale • Hostile work climate	De Wet (2014); Bartlett & Bartlett (2011)
Compensation fines, legal costs	• Company fines for not complying with legislation that offer protection to organisational members • Financial redress to bullied individuals	Fattori et al. (2015) Middlemiss (2017)

Note. Adapted from "Bullying and Harassment as Antisocial Behaviours: Socio-Economic Aspects of Their Impact Assessment," by J. Vveinhardt, V.B Fominienė and L. Jesevičiūtė-Ufartienė, 2018, *Inzinerine Ekonomika [Engineering Economics], 29*(5), p. 550.

However, it must also be acknowledged that victims may possess various resources within themselves or have access to resources within their work environment that may assist them to manage the physical and psychological aftermath of WB. These coping mechanisms will be expounded upon below.

2.6. Coping With Workplace Bullying

As stated by Rai and Agarwal (2018), there is a scarcity of published works on the factors that can alleviate or elicit WB. A useful model by Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) is put forward to describe exposure to WB, responses and outcomes of WB at an individual level (Figure 1).

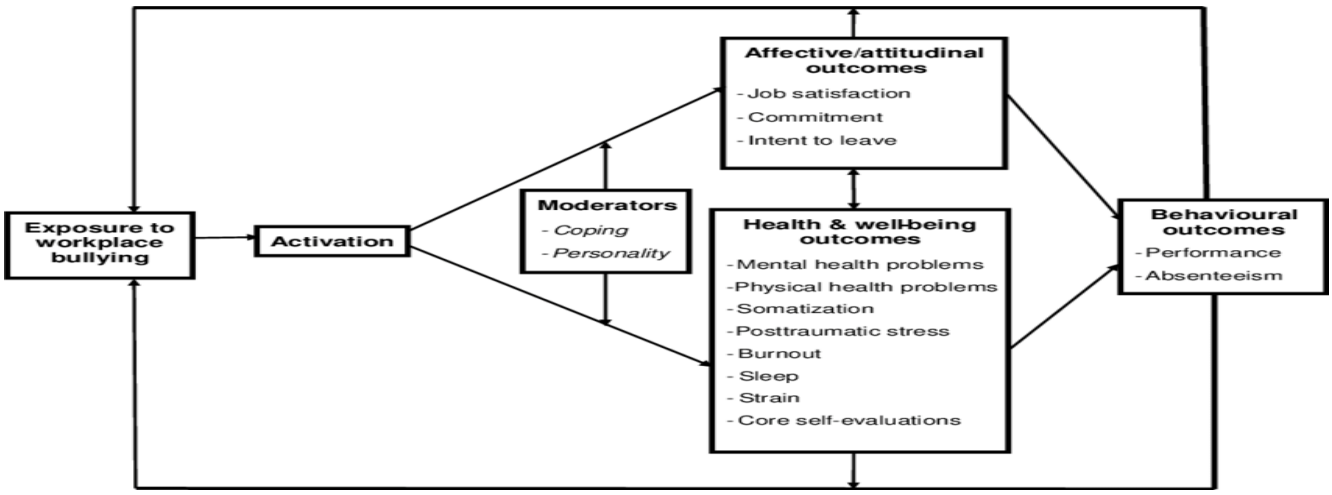
According to this model, WB is regarded as a source of stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) because of the protracted period of time needed to deal with and manage the phenomenon in the workplace. Individuals may appraise the situation as a threat or not depending on the coping resources within themselves or within the organisation they may have access to that will influence the perception of the activating event being a source of psychological stress or not. The repetitive nature of WB over time indicates that it can be viewed as a prolonged stressor, resulting in employees experiencing prolonged states of alarm and threat (cognitive activation) towards the stressor and responding to such threats with the cognitive and behavioural coping

resources at their disposal (Dehue et al., 2012), which can serve as a protective buffer against the ramifications of WB.

Conversely, when the stressor of bullying persists and employees experience difficulty in responding to the stressor due to limited coping resources within themselves or the organisational environment, cognitive activation remains high (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). This results in negative cognitive and attitudinal states (Glaso et al., 2011) and impaired well-being noted earlier. Examples of negative attitudinal states within this model include reduced satisfactions in the job, reduced commitment and increased intentions to leave the organisation (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). These physical, psychological and attitudinal outcomes ultimately have a direct impact on the secondary outcomes or consequent behaviours of the victim, which according to the model, include productivity and absenteeism.

Figure 1

Theoretical Model proposed by Nielsen and Einarsen (2012)



Note. Reprinted from "Outcomes of Exposure to Workplace Bullying: A Meta-Analytic Review," by M.B. Nielsen & S. Einarsen, 2012. *Work & Stress, 26*(4), p. 313.

It therefore becomes important to understand what coping implies, the coping mechanisms employed by bullied individuals and the effectiveness thereof to reduce the repercussions of WB.

In the literature review, coping has been conceptualised from two different perspectives, namely as a fluctuating state depending on cognitive and situational appraisals of the stressor (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984), as well as stable trait dispositions that are enduring over time and are employed as coping strategies to deal with stressors such as personality (Omar, 2017). It is suggested that individuals may also search their work environment for available resources that could mitigate against the negative effects of the workplace stressor, whilst in other instances, in the absence of coping resources, individuals may simply react in a negative way to WB.

2.6.1. The Effectiveness of Coping Strategies

The different coping styles utilised by individuals can be illustrated through either problem-focused coping, which includes the reappraisal of the stressor, direct, active, confrontational problem-solving, seeking social support within the environment for the purposes of solving the problem, or emotion-focused coping which is characterised by the focus and expression of emotions, suppression of emotions, psychological and behavioural withdrawal, avoidance, self-care and searching for emotional support from others (Lee & Lim, 2019). This is further supported by van Heugten et al. (2021) where emotion-focused coping in the form of counter-aggression, revenge and retaliation have been employed by victims of WB to achieve a sense of justice.

As stated by Van den Brande et al. (2017), emotion coping mechanisms exacerbated the relationship between job uncertainty, conflicting responsibilities in the role, job insecurity and WB. It is suggested that withdrawal behaviours or venting frustrations at the perceived role conflict may come across as a breach of organisational social norms and responsibilities in relation to work by other organisational members or the leadership. This can increase the vulnerability of victims becoming a target for subsequent bullying episodes or abusive supervision. This notion is supported by Samnani and Singh (2016) and Peng et al., (2019).

Similarly, Adriaenssens et al. (2015) stated that when emotion focused coping is the dominant strategy employed by victims of WB; they experience higher levels of depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion. These findings highlight that emotion focused coping is not an effective coping strategy to mitigate against the consequences of WB. This is supported by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) who assert that emotion focused strategies may assist victims to reduce and

cope with negative emotions in the short term, but prevents the ability to actively and directly deal with the problem at hand.

However, power disparities between management and subordinates may reduce the level of autonomy in choosing an active problem focused coping style over an emotion focused coping style, where the latter, such as avoidance or doing nothing about the problem, hoping it would go away, is more likely in vertical downward bullying, from management to subordinates (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). These findings highlight that subordinates may define themselves as helpless and defenceless in response to bullying, and thus adopt an avoidance emotion focused coping response towards WB. It is also inferred that emotion focused coping may further reduce bullying episodes for those with greater positional power in organisations, yet negatively impact on the well-being of victims of WB. Similarly, Bernstein and Trimm (2016) revealed that avoidance and failing to respond to WB drastically reduced the self-esteem, well-being and job satisfaction of the victims.

In contrast, organisational members with elevated levels of emotional intelligence deal with WB more effectively than those with lower levels of emotional intelligence as well as experience improved well-being outcomes (Ashraf & Khan, 2014; Raman et al., 2016) such as experiencing higher levels of psychosocial well-being (Nel, 2019). Thus, emotional intelligence highlights the importance and usefulness of understanding, regulating and utilising emotions in decision-making and interactions with others, which directly contributes to stress management and overall life satisfaction (Bar-On, 2000). It is therefore suggested that emotion focused coping can involve elements of an active problem-solving coping strategy in the form of emotional intelligence, which can serve to assist victims to successfully cope with WB.

According to Dehue et al. (2012), problem coping mechanisms are more effective than emotion coping mechanisms as they involve an active attempt to resolve the problem of WB, thereby buffering the ramifications of WB. This was supported by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) who found that active responses to WB such as confronting the problem through assertiveness and soliciting assistance, saw a reduction of the phenomenon and improved well-being outcomes of victims of WB. It is therefore postulated that problem focused coping provides a protective buffer against the impaired well-being of bullied individuals due to WB.

However, Bernstein and Trimm (2016) also discovered that assertiveness by standing one's ground may be perceived as a negative act by the bully, which could elicit counter-aggressive behaviour towards the victim. Thus, problem focused coping may prove to be beneficial in some situations, but in other situations may prove ineffective, particularly when certain stressors are not within the control of organisational members but within the control of another individual's cognitive appraisal of the situation or within the control of the organisation, which may exacerbate WB. This finding is consistent with the proposition by Folkman and Lazarus (1984), that the use of problem coping mechanisms is effective when the stressful source is considered to be manageable and emotion coping mechanisms being effective when the stressful source is uncontrollable.

In contrast, Hewett et al. (2018) discovered that problem focused coping was more effective for less frequent episodes of WB and less effective for frequent episodes of WB, along with deleterious effects on the well-being of victims of persistent WB. Contrary to such assertions, scientific support exists for the magnitude of WB not being able to predict the type of coping strategy employed by bullied individuals (Dehue et al., 2012). It therefore calls for a consideration of broader situational and individual dispositions that can influence the choice of coping strategy in response to WB, which may serve as a protective buffer against the detrimental impact of WB on the health of victims.

2.6.2. Personality and Individual Dispositions: Moderators of Workplace Bullying

When personality has been explored in the literature review, it has largely utilised the Big Five Personality Traits, which has produced positive relationships for neuroticism, optimism and hardiness with WB (Omar, 2017). These will be elucidated below.

2.6.2.1. Neuroticism

As noted earlier, neuroticism can be understood as a perceived lack of control over stimuli, resulting in negative affect such as anxiety and depression, as well as insecurity and anxiety which has been linked to increased harassment and WB incidents (Reknes et al., 2019; Nielsen & Knardhal, 2015; Nielsen, Glaso & Einarsen, 2017). It is suggested that emotional instability characteristic of victims with high levels of neuroticism, may signal their vulnerability to the perpetrator, which could frustrate the perpetrator further and escalate WB. A South African study by Omar (2017) revealed that neuroticism moderated the association between WB and

levels of work engagement, suggesting that higher levels of neuroticism increased WB and reduced engagement. This suggests that neuroticism may be considered as an ineffective coping mechanism in response to WB.

Conversely, individuals low on neuroticism as a personality trait have a positive self-concept, increased psychological stability and less apprehension, which serve to assist victims in coping effectively with WB, as they do not view WB as having a negative impact on them (Vartia, 1996). Empirical support in recent years has increased for individuals scoring high on positive affectivity being less likely to become victims of WB (Bashir et al., 2021). It is therefore suggested that low levels of neuroticism in victims can moderate the association between their exposure to WB and perception of WB.

2.6.2.2. Assertiveness

According to Omar (2017), individuals that are high on assertiveness endeavour to take control of the stressor at hand, which in turn increase their levels of assertiveness and resilience for coping with WB more effectively, as well as improved work engagement. However, some perpetrators may perceive assertiveness as aggression, which could lead to a vicious cycle of WB (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Thus, assertiveness may be viewed as an ineffective coping mechanism that has the potential to exacerbate subsequent WB depending on the social interaction and perceptions of this personality trait by others in the organisation.

2.6.2.3. Resilience

Resilience can be understood as an individual's personal resources, skills and abilities to successfully adapt and respond to stressful or adverse situations (Chi et al., 2016). Thus resilience may be considered to be a buffer against occupational stressors, such as WB. For instance, Chi et al. (2016) revealed that resilience had a positive influence in reducing victim stigmatisation and WB. This suggests that the victim's conviction of their ability to overcome adverse situations such as WB and learn from it, can improve their capacity to deal with WB more effectively.

It is postulated that resilience may also be able to mitigate against the repercussions of WB on individual wellness. For instance, Annor and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) discovered that resilience moderated and strengthened the association between WB and self-reported wellness.

This notion is further supported by Rai and Agarwal (2018) as well as a study by Lee (2017) which found that victimisation in the form of bullying and its effect on depression was partially mediated by resilience. Similarly, Hao et al. (2015) found that workplace stress led to public servants experiencing burnout, and that this relationship was mediated by resilience.

A recent study by van Heugten et al. (2021) discovered that bullied individuals cope by engaging in forgiveness towards perpetrators and direct their energies towards reconstructing their self-concept, which leads to increasing their levels of resilience. It is suggested that forgiveness needs to be embedded in the organisational culture as an organisational norm, which can then contribute to positive expectations, improved working relationships and potentially buffer the negative impact of WB. It is inferred that forgiveness releases the victims from bondage to the negative experience of WB, realigning their adaptive response to WB which is within their control, which can in turn improve the resilience levels of bullied individuals. This notion has been supported by Gupta and Kumar (2015) where the relationship between acceptance and resilience is mediated by forgiveness. However, the notion of forgiveness is subjective, as it is suggested to be dependent on various attributes such as the personality, culture and values of the individual, as well as the time that it takes to do so.

Based on these empirical findings, resilience as a personal resource can be viewed as a successful coping mechanism to mitigate against the development of negative affect and emotional exhaustion that are deleterious consequences of WB on employee mental wellness.

Within South Africa, Nel (2019) advocates for emotional resilience training to effectively help bullied individuals deal with WB and for organisations to reduce the spread of the phenomenon in the work environment, as emotional intelligence develops over time. It is therefore suggested that low levels of resilience will increase WB and reduce employee health and wellness, whilst high levels of resilience would enable effective adaptation and response to WB with a minimal negative impact on employee health and wellness.

In contrast, Anasori et al. (2020) discovered that WB negatively affected resilience, which resulted in higher levels of emotional exhaustion for the victims. This suggests that WB can disrupt the effectiveness of resilience as a coping mechanism, particularly when the bullying increases in severity, which places the individual's career and personal well-being in jeopardy.

2.6.2.4. Optimism

Optimism can be understood as a personality attribute that is a stable and enduring characteristic of the individual (Mishra, 2013). This study emphasises that individuals with advanced levels of optimism and a positive self-concept are less likely to experience WB as intimidating (Mishra, 2013). According to Cunniff and Mostert (2012), WB is regarded as a perceived stressor. It is suggested that optimism can improve the perceptions that bullied individuals have about themselves and how to deal with the situation at hand due to positive emotions and positive expectations about their future. This may in turn potentially reduce the levels of WB as a source of stress at work.

Within the South African context, Setar et al. (2015) discovered that organisational members with high levels of optimism and an enthusiastic outlook for their future, perceive their work environment as less stressful and are unlikely to engage in uncivil or hostile conduct such as aggressive speech, gossiping about co-workers or withholding important information from co-workers. Such behaviours are considered negative acts and are forms of WB (Carrim, 2016; Carroll, 2018). As suggested, high levels of optimism among employees may serve to prevent the spread of bullying in organisations.

Conversely, individuals with low optimism are more inclined to view their work environment as stressful and will respond to the stressor in a negative manner through hostility and workplace incivility (Setar et al., 2015). This can result in the increased risk of WB in the organisation. It is therefore postulated that reduced levels of optimism increases mental strain in victims and their vulnerability to subsequent episodes of WB, which can further impair their health and well-being and their ability to cope effectively with bullying.

In contrast, Thiam (2018) asserts that victims may fear losing their social status within the organisation, which may project unrealistic optimism or a positive façade to others. Whilst this may be stressful, it does help them focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses and thus manage their experience of WB more effectively. However, in cognisance of the stressful experience that portraying a positive facade brings, it has been reported that bullied individuals would choose to be at work despite being ill in order to preserve their social standing and avoid possible social isolation (Janssens et al., 2016). Arguably, the efforts of the victims to maintain and uphold their social status is nullified through the ill-health experienced which further

reduces their social standing in the organisation. This in turn may further exacerbate social isolation and WB.

2.6.2.5. Self-efficacy

As stated by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), self-efficacy can be understood as 'one's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context' (p.66). Self-efficacy can therefore be considered as a problem focused coping strategy, a notion supported by Van den Brande et al. (2019), who discovered a strong linkage between self-efficacy and problem coping mechanisms.

Similarly, Setar et al. (2015) discovered that an individual's confidence in directing efforts to succeed in a challenging task and hope displayed a weak association with workplace incivility and hostile behaviour. This finding is important, as workplace incivility and expressions of hostility are forms of WB (Carroll, 2018). It is further postulated that individuals with an elevated measure of hope and self-efficacy are confident about their capabilities and engage in a range of divergent knowledge processing to reach a desired outcome and are thus less likely to exhibit hostile behaviours such as addressing co-workers aggressively.

These findings highlight that self-efficacy may protect victims against the mental strain associated with WB as individuals with high levels of self-efficacy possess the requisite competencies and are skilled in integrating and applying a range of skills, competencies and knowledge to alleviate the workplace stressor of WB. This is corroborated by Fida et al. (2018) where victims of WB experienced increased levels of self-efficacy in response to having role models that modelled relational occupational self-efficacy behaviours, which in turn was an effective buffer against workplace incivility, poor mental health, subsequent burnout and turnover intentions. This may increase the levels of personal accomplishment, mastery which builds gains in the self-efficacy coping resource that can increase the protective buffer against possible future incidents of WB in the future.

However, empirical support for the buffering effect of self-efficacy and occupational rank against workplace ostracism was discovered by De Clercq et al. (2019). The study revealed that individuals within a higher level of organisational hierarchy due to their comprehensive

understanding of knowing where pertinent information is located that can improve organisational functioning, can effectively gather the necessary resources along with selecting their specific skills and abilities to overcome any knowledge deficiencies experienced due to workplace ostracism. This highlights the principle of mastery in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), which reflects an inherent desire and ability to not be overcome by adverse situations such as WB, and can in turn maintain high job performance and the ability to cope effectively with WB.

In contrast, Livne and Goussinsky (2018) revealed that low self-efficacy exacerbated victims' experiences of WB and burnout, particularly depersonalisation. It is therefore suggested that victims may perceive that they do not have confidence in their capabilities or access to relevant expertise to deal with WB, and may experience impaired well-being by repeatedly thinking about the negative situation with no solution at hand. This could potentially lead to burnout in the midst of WB.

Self-efficacy as a coping mechanism has also received limited support as it has served to only partially mediate the relationship between victimisation inherent in WB and mental health (Lin et al., 2020). It is suggested that self-efficacy may become depleted over time in the midst of WB and impair the mental well-being of bullied individuals.

2.7. Organisational Coping Mechanisms

The organisational environment can elicit or inhibit WB as well as provide resources to aid victims in coping with WB. These organisational coping resources will be discussed in greater detail below.

2.7.1. Social Support

Social support can be understood as behaviours provided to colleagues, supervisors or subordinates within the recipient's social network (Finchilescu et al., 2019). According to Rai and Agarwal (2018), social support in the form of workplace friendship such as emotional support, guidance and encouragement or the knowledge made available to victims that such support is accessible, can serve to protect them from the adverse consequences of WB.

Similarly, Coyne et al. (2019) revealed a positive association between bystanders sharing friendship with the target, increased the levels of intervention and support provided towards the victim of WB. It is therefore suggested that social support can serve to improve the well-being of victims of WB. Bernstein and Trimm (2016) also discovered a significant relationship between victims of WB seeking help for possible redress and experiencing improved psychological well-being in South Africa.

These findings highlight that social support can serve to further capacitate victims of WB with the necessary protection against the adverse consequences of such attacks on their health and well-being. Consequently, bullied individuals may appraise their workplace more positively as a result of receiving social support (Noblet et al., 2012). In addition, social support has resulted in improved levels of job satisfaction (Carroll & Lauzier, 2014), improved organisational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

Conversely, low levels of social support exacerbate social isolation experienced by the victims, which increases their vulnerability to subsequent WB incidents (Salin & Hoel, 2020). In addition, social support does not offer suitable protection to preserve the mental wellness of victims as WB increases (Finchilescu et al., 2019). Accordingly, victims of WB may have less time to recover from each bullying episode, resulting in increased vulnerability to WB incidents.

2.7.2. Leadership Support

In a recent review of WB, leadership has traditionally been viewed as an antecedent of WB, with no evidence for moderators within the leadership-bullying relationship (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). It therefore becomes important to investigate and examine the effectiveness of leadership support which can serve as a possible moderating variable of WB.

According to Karatuna (2015), leadership or supervisory support is a problem coping mechanism whereby victims seek advocacy support from their leadership to prohibit WB. Within the context of a range of sectors, including civil service, a study by Rossiter and Sochos (2018) revealed that supervisor support positively influenced the relationship between WB and burnout, whilst support from seniors reduced physical intimidation and burnout.

This suggests that management has the ability to take corrective action against workplace bullying by instituting disciplinary actions against the perpetrator or introducing measures in the work environment, such as policies and procedures which can curtail WB. A study by Ndegwa and Moronge (2016) in the context of civil services in Kenya, discovered that supervisory support was a strong predictor of employee performance, which buffered WB and impaired productivity.

These findings highlight the receipt of leadership support as an occupational support mechanism can reduce the repercussions of WB on victims, which may result in improved well-being and performance.

In contrast, Finchilescu et al. (2019) asserted that when victims believe that WB is embedded in the culture of the organisation, they become more tolerant of the phenomenon and are less inclined to obtain assistance from their supervisors or colleagues to deal with it. This highlights how power is perpetuated in organisations where institutional norms are unspoken yet embedded in the organisational culture. This, in turn, has the potential to perpetuate WB across organisations.

However, Karatuna (2015) discovered that leadership support served as a doubtful advantage whereby it served to investigate formal complaints on the incident, invoke disciplinary action against the perpetrator on the one hand, whilst on the other hand leadership ignored the problem and blamed the victim for the bullying. This suggests that a lack of leadership support can contribute to victims experiencing further social isolation, a sense of helplessness, increased vulnerability to subsequent bullying as well as reinforce the belief that WB is accepted by the institution and that the perpetrator can continue to engage in such conduct without fear of repercussions. This has been supported by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) as well as Salin and Hoel (2020) as noted earlier. Consequently, victims lose trust in management and decide in some instances not to proceed through formal dispute resolution systems in dealing with their complaint, and may even consider leaving the organisation (Karatuna, 2015). These findings suggest that a lack of leadership support may serve to exacerbate the already impaired well-being of victims of WB.

According to the researcher's knowledge, research on leadership support as an effective coping mechanism in South African civil services has been scarce, barring research conducted at the South African Police Service (SAPS), where police officers identified a lack of leadership support as a key determinant of psychological distress, which can exacerbate WB (Mushwana et al., 2019).

2.7.3. Organisational Support

Organisational support can be understood as employees experiencing role clarity, provision of relevant information related to their jobs, positive supervisory relationships, assistance from colleagues and providing input when decisions are made (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2011). It is suggested that these resources can serve as potential buffers against WB.

According to Rai and Agarwal (2018), perceived organisational support is a moderating variable between WB and negative outcomes of WB, including negative emotions, diminished satisfaction with work, organisational commitment and intentions to leave the organisation, whilst the absence of organisational support exacerbates these negative outcomes (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

Examples of organisational support include the provision of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that can be utilised to provide the necessary psychosocial support, and counselling to help victims cope with the ramifications of WB on their mental wellness (Mabunda, 2019), as well as resilience training (Rai & Agarwal, 2018) or emotional intelligence training (Nel, 2019). A study by Van Schalkwyk et al. (2011) across different industries, including government industries in South Africa, revealed that organisational support mechanisms, including clearly demarcated roles and responsibilities, involvement in the adoption of decisions and good relationships with management reduced WB from superiors and intentions to leave the organisation by direct reports.

Overall, these findings highlight the critical need for organisations to cultivate and strengthen organisational resources as well as individual dispositions to help them cope more effectively with WB and reduce negative organisational outcomes.

2.8. Theoretical Frameworks to Explain Workplace Bullying

2.8.1. Foucault's Conceptual Framework on Power

The power differentials between victim and perpetrator of WB has the potential to influence how WB is understood and experienced by victims. It also determines how they define themselves and their behaviour in relation to WB, as well as their ability to access and receive organisational and social support in response to WB. In response to these power imbalances experienced by victims of WB, Foucault's conceptual framework of power is employed as a theoretical framework to understand WB through his broad conceptualisation of power and the manifestation thereof through discourses, structure, individuals and institutional practice (Foucault, 1992). Foucault's framework reveals how WB manifests and perpetuates itself in organisations, and how it is experienced by victims and targets of WB at the research site.

Foucault conceptualises power as a discourse, where the emphasis is placed on the importance of analysing the text or written documents within organisations that may provide insight into the hidden power and knowledge within the text (Groves, 2016), which may advocate a particular ideology or rather the dominant ideology of the organisation and its institutional practices. For instance, organisations that do not have a policy on WB, or code of good practice against bullying, may create the perception that the organisation does not view WB seriously, or that it is insufficiently equipped to deal with WB effectively. This can perpetuate WB and thus render insufficient support to bullied individuals. Foucault also emphasised that power can also be understood as a discourse through analysing social experiences to determine how those with power justify and legitimise their actions in organisations (Groves, 2016).

The above views are also demonstrated in a study by Berlingieri and D'Cruz (2021) which revealed that the ideologies and discourses of business necessity, professionalism as well as performance management over employee rights are endorsed by top management. This in turn creates a dissonance in the understanding and use of what is deemed legitimate and illegitimate power by organisations and management to support and legitimise WB. Within the research study, bullied individuals can share their lived experiences on what they believe to be the causations of WB and how these aspects may justify or give effect to the phenomenon within the municipality.

The hierarchy of local government organisations lends itself to an unequal distribution of power across organisational levels (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015), enabling WB to flourish. However, Groves (2016) also highlights Foucault's views on hidden social power within the organisation that may cause individuals to resist such power. For example, victims obtain the support of trade unions to provide them with a sense of agency in defending their case against bullying experienced (Mokgolo, 2017). Alternatively, they may engage in upward bullying by not providing their superiors with the work their superiors are dependent on (Birks et al., 2014). A credible explanation for the justification of upward bullying is often a means of reducing the power differentials experienced following previous bullying episodes from their superiors (Peng et al., 2019). However, upward bullying is also perpetuated or justified when reward power such as offers of career advancement in the organisation by higher authorities within the organisation become incentives (Birks et al., 2014).

This could explain the conceptualisation of knowledge by Foucault (1991), which includes how information is understood, or the evidence of social reality, and has the potential for individuals to define themselves and their behavioural response to power dynamics within organisations. To this end, bullied individuals may label themselves as victims if they perceive a lack of organisational or HR support in addressing WB (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

The monopolisation of knowledge, resources and job opportunities by leadership (Ndevu, 2019) may serve to justify the harmful acts of power in the form of corruption, maladministration of funds and poor governance, which also has the effect on some organisational members internalising bullying as an acceptable practice. and thus, motivates reciprocal bullying of others as evidenced in local government structures (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). This may contribute to organisational employees feeling vulnerable and defenceless against WB (Leymann, 1996), and labelling themselves as victims as this may be the evidence of the social reality within their organisation. This may further result in victims submitting to the authorities within the organisation, which effectively legitimises and justifies WB as an institutional practice.

Conversely, it may have the effect of victims and bystanders countering WB in an aggressive manner (Khumalo, 2019) or responding in a constructive problem-focused manner through the use of complaints procedures in reporting WB to the ombudsman (Uys & Smit, 2016). This is

in line with Foucault's proposition, that where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1977) and supported by Berlingieri and D'Cruz (2021) where, despite targets being subjugated by the perpetrators and the employer through acts of WB, they choose to resist.

However, bullied individuals that used complaint procedures as a means of resisting WB were stigmatised by their managers, labelled as deviant and experienced further bullying (D'Cruz et al., 2018). These actions are suggested to intentionally inculcate fear and discourage victims and other bystanders in reporting incidents of WB through the complaints mechanisms (Motsei, 2015; Uys & Smit, 2016). Covert and overt displays of disciplinary power through vertical bullying often reveal institutional practices that organisations adopt to mitigate against the risk of resistance, purely to preserve their dominant ideology of self-interest at the expense of others.

To this end, Foucault emphasises disciplinary power through the context of a panoptic gaze in prisons, whereby constant surveillance is the norm and demands conduct in obedience to the institution's requirements or face repercussions if disobedient (Sheridan, 2016). Hence, surveillance as a means of disciplinary power is intended to control the actions of others through subjectivity, upholding institutional norms, deterring resistance and enforcing normalising judgements.

An example of management surveillance and the constraining action of victims towards WB is reflected in the findings of Samnani et al. (2016) whereby management repeatedly bullied union organisers and supporters and threatened their job security, resulting in employees fearing to take their case forward. This highlights not only resistance to power, but also surveillance and institutional bullying that subjugated the employees' individual and institutionalised forms of resistance. This supports the assertion by Foucault (1982) of power operating at a micro level (individual) and at a macro level (organisation) which is aimed at governing or structuring the actions of others through organisational statutes, strategies and systems to create networks of power. Within the context of the research study, it is suggested that WB behaviours of surveillance and intimidation have the potential to induce submission of employees to the will of the perpetrator and organisation, which could possibly contribute to employees' and managers' feelings of helplessness in response to WB.

Modern workplaces utilise technology as a circuit of social power in increasing surveillance and transparency in the lives of their workforce, collecting data and information about their workforce to the point of having certain aspects of their privacy breached (Sheridan, 2016) and increasing the risk of cyberbullying by exposing victims of cyberbullying to a wider online audience (Vranjes et al., 2017). However, the modern panopticon is less obtrusive and more subtle through surveillance cameras and tracking data, resulting in employees knowing that they are being observed but often forgetting or normalising such observations due to these instruments and technological mechanisms being blended so seamlessly into their work and work environment (Sheridan, 2016). It is therefore suggested that the use of technology to monitor employees could potentially exacerbate the spread and acceptance of WB across the organisation.

Within the context of public sector organisations, there is a high level of political insecurity and unrest in political structures, which is exacerbated during the election of political management (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015). This in turn introduces new institutional norms, policy requirements and behaviours, which can perpetuate the spread of WB. In response to public scrutiny of public sector business management and finances, public sector organisations have engaged in reforms through the provision of anti-bullying or anti-discrimination policies to enforce the message that these organisations consider WB to be a serious issue that will be dealt with (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015).

However, research reveals that anti-bullying policies do not always result in the implementation and prevention of WB, suggesting that policies are a form of institutional power that preserves and reinforces the dominant ideology of WB by organisations (Hodgins et al., 2020). This suggests that anti-bullying policies can be a point of resistance between management and employees where employees may face increased scrutiny for reporting WB and may experience constraining actions by management for coming forward about their experiences of WB.

Overall, the Foucauldian approach to conceptualising power within organisations is deemed to apply to this study as it seeks to interrogate discursive ideologies within a particular context. It also recognises the intersectionality of the individual experience with social relations, institutional power and how this contributes to knowledge, distributive power and WB

experienced by victims and managed in organisations. Furthermore, utilising this theoretical framework provides an opportunity to undermine dominant ideologies that attribute WB solely to a personality clash or a performance issue (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). This study augments understanding of how WB experienced by managers and employees within the research site, may lead to the development of interventions and guidelines to reduce power differentials and bullying at all organisational levels.

2.8.2. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

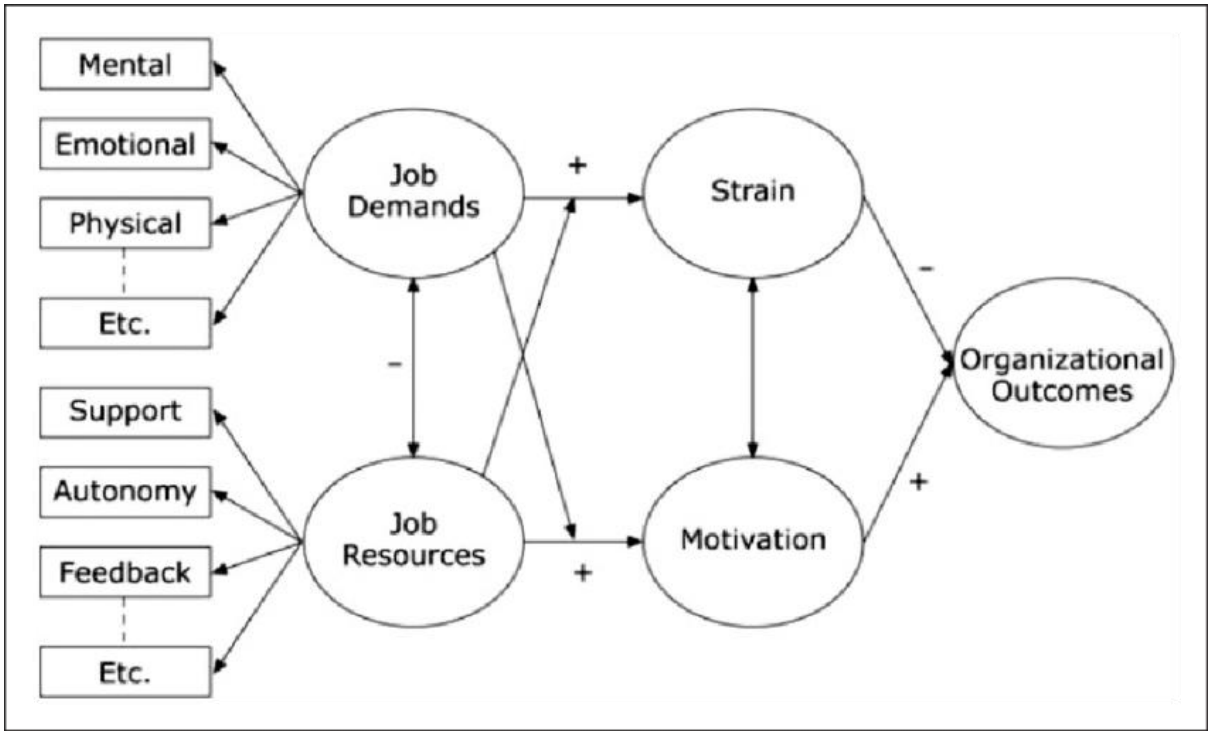
As indicated earlier, WB has devastating consequences on individual and organisational health and well-being (Thiam, 2018).

Hence, in response to varying responses to workplace bullying, the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) is the second theoretical framework used in the study to explain WB as a process between the victims and the perpetrators, and the resulting individual and organisational impact of the phenomenon. Currently, occupational demands and occupational resources are broadly applied to explain not only burnout but also its positive counterpart in terms of work engagement in response to workplace stressors. WB is regarded as an organisational stressor (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012) and therefore it would be appropriate to explore the participants' feelings and experiences of WB through this theoretical framework.

Figure 2 below illustrates the two underlying psychological processes resulting either in the development of job strain or motivation with corresponding positive or negative effects on organisational outcomes. The first is a stressful process, where excessive job demands and lacking resources may result in depleted energy levels and increased use of sick leave, impaired productivity and reduced organisational commitment, whilst the other process emphasises that the availability of occupational resources can result in increased work engagement, organisational commitment, improved productivity and reduced turnover intentions (Schaufeli, 2017).

Figure 2

The Job Demands-Resources Model



Note. Adapted from "The Job-Demands-Resources Model: State of the Art," by A.B Bakker and E. Demerouti, 2007, *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), p. 313. Copyright 2007 by the Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

According to the first proposal of this theoretical framework, occupational demands are the individual, group or organisational aspects of the work faced by the employees (such as the workload, cognitive demands, emotional demands, role ambiguity). These occupational demands can deplete an individual's physical and psychological capabilities, which may lead to reduced energy levels and experiences of psychological strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In the context of WB, poorly designed work or the scarcity and absence of adequate resources, such as organisational support, can increase the risks of WB (Salin and Hoel, 2020). The results are negative organisational outcomes as indicated in the model, inter alia, reduced satisfactions about the job, diminished motivation and increased thoughts to leave the organisation by victims of WB (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

The second proposal of this theoretical framework is occupational resources, which are individual, group or organisational resources employees have or have access to in their work environment (such as task autonomy, skill utilisation and social support). These resources serve to reduce the psychological strain experienced as a result of high job demands, increase levels of intrinsic motivation by providing the worker with opportunities for growth, learning and development, and increase levels of extrinsic motivation by assisting them to achieve their goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). It is therefore suggested that job resources are motivational as they contribute to the fulfilment of self-efficacy (Fida et al., 2018) and may serve to foster engagement and commitment among individuals to achieve goals such as reducing WB.

A study by Islam et al. (2019) corroborates the benefit of occupational resources such as authentic ethical leadership, which increased the level of organisational identification and commitment in victims of WB and other employees, to achieve organisational goals such as reducing WB. Thus, the presence and utilisation of occupational resources can result in positive organisational outcomes indicated in the model.

Research studies have demonstrated empirical support for occupational resources reducing the psychological strain on victims of WB, such as social support (Coyne et al., 2019; Rai & Agarwal, 2018); resilience reducing emotional exhaustion (Truter et al., 2018) and all burnout dimensions (Hao et al., 2015). These findings suggest that having access to such resources within the work environment can assist victims of WB whose own personal and energy resources may have become depleted over time in response to bullying. It is therefore suggested that within the context of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), occupational resources serve to reduce psychological strain, increase learning opportunities and experiences to deal with WB, and are therefore considered to be protective mechanisms against the ill-health experienced by victims of WB.

Employees have elevated exposure to bullying from their supervisors within the local government industry (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012), which has led to increased psychological distress and impaired well-being amongst organisational members. In addition, other job demands include unequal distribution of knowledge, resources and rewards and promotion opportunities owing to the distance and power disparities between leadership, management and employees. This represents low organisational justice as a form of WB, resulting in resentment,

mistrust, disengagement and reduced productivity at local government structures (Ndevu, 2019).

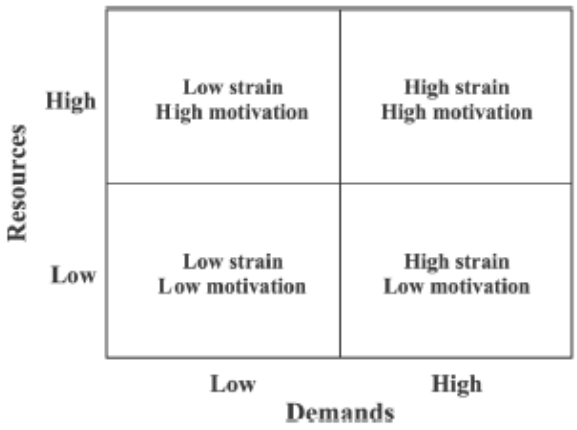
These findings suggest that unethical leadership is a significant occupational demand, as it causes fellow employees to accept and in turn engage in WB, which reduces engagement and increases bullying behaviours at work (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). This may increase distress and impair the well-being of other workers who do not engage in bullying behaviours, as they may fear reprisal should they report their leader's unethical conduct or choose not to obey their leader's instructions. Other job demands faced by employees at public sector organisations include high workloads, role ambiguity, role conflict and low autonomy in decision-making, which may exacerbate WB (Andersen et al., 2018).

Workplace resources that served as a protective mechanism against WB within South African local government employment, include healthy supervisory relationships, social support from managers or leaders, provision of knowledge, participation in decision-making (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2011), positive diversity experiences and personal resources, such as a sense of coherence (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). It is therefore inferred that these resources may reduce WB and the negative individual and organisational consequences associated with the phenomenon, as they satisfy the human needs of independence, relatedness and self-efficacy. A recent study by Mabunda (2019) at a South African local municipality emphasised that organisational resources such as "leadership, recruitment, screening and selection, training, discipline and performance appraisal are all key in the effective management of workplace violence" (p.33).

A third tenet of this theoretical framework is that occupational demands and occupational resources interface with each other, which will influence the psychological strain-well-being and organisational outcomes relationships. Figure 3 below demonstrates this interaction where elevated occupational demands and elevated occupational resources result in increased stress and increased inspiration, whilst a few occupational demands and a few occupational resources will result in decreased stress and decreased inspiration.

Figure 3

The Interaction between Occupational Demands and Occupational Resources



Note. Adapted from "The Job-Demands-Resources Model: State of the Art," by A.B Bakker and E. Demerouti, 2007, *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), p. 317. Copyright 2007 by the Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

It is inferred that occupational resources can reduce the impact of occupational demands on WB, mitigating its harmful effects. For instance, social support serves to reduce burnout and increase assertiveness in victims (Branch et al., 2013) as well as increase positive organisational outcomes such as work engagement (Omar, 2017). However, occupational demands increase the importance of occupational resources, where these resources have a positive influence on inspiration when occupational demands are elevated. For instance, authentic leaders enable the development of resilience in victims by teaching them how to endure and thrive in the midst of existing and future incidents of WB (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004).

However, De Cuyper et al. (2009) demonstrate the JD-R interaction, whereby elevated occupational demands such as organisational change and elevated occupational resources such as employability under such conditions, provide high levels of motivation for perpetrators to inflict bullying on targets whose employability is not guaranteed. This emphasises the power differentials between the perpetrator and the victim that perpetuates WB.

The value of utilising the JD-R Model in organisations also lies in its ability to be all-encompassing with regards to having cognisance of personal and work characteristics, flexibility by allowing organisations to adapt this model to their unique organisational context and needs, as well as providing a uniform communication framework for all relevant stakeholders (Schaufeli, 2017).

Therefore, this study has relevance, as the use of the JD-R Model will aid in the identification of antecedents, consequences and potential moderators of WB within a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, culminating in the advancement of intervention guidelines to eradicate WB in this context.

2.9. Conclusion

WB is a multifaceted phenomenon that influences individuals and organisations. It can be attributed to power imbalances and dynamic interactions at individual, group and organisational levels. WB has resulted in deleterious consequences for individual and organisational well-being, both of which are interrelated. However, these negative consequences of WB can be mitigated through coping strategies, individual and organisational resources to assist victims in coping more effectively with WB, and possibly curtail this phenomenon in organisations. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology underpinning this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Chapter Overview

Chapter 3 details the researcher's methodological choices in this study, including the research inquiries, the research design, the sampling strategy and sample, negotiation of entry into the research site, the establishment of the researcher's role in the organisation as well as the participant enrolment approach. This chapter also outlines the ethical standards for data collection, data analysis procedures and quality considerations.

The focus of this study was to obtain a rich description of the feelings and lived experiences of employees and managers towards WB, generate meaning and provide invaluable insight that would contribute to the knowledge base on WB. The study aimed to investigate how employees and managers construct, experience and cope with WB within the context of a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal and develop substantial intervention guidelines to curtail WB in this setting.

3.2. Recap on the Research Questions as Stipulated in Chapter 1

Given the above research problem and study aims, the research questions are indicated as follows:

- How do employees and managers comprehend the phenomenon of WB?
- How do employees' and managers' lived experiences of WB contribute to the knowledge of WB?
- On the employees' and managers' understanding, what are the factors that initiated WB?
- What are the coping mechanisms used by employees and managers to respond to WB?
- How can WB be prevented and managed through the application of the lived experiences of employees and managers?

3.3. Research Design

Research has been frequently identified as being conducted according to either exploratory or quantifiable research approach. Qualitative research provides insight into the explanation,

sense making and construction of meaning in relation to individual experiences (Bleiker et al., 2019). There has been increased attention given to qualitative research, where there has been a rise in qualitative studies on human and social science research (Creswell & Poth, 2016) and qualitative research is often conducted in the field of psychology (Willig & Rogers, 2017).

A quantitative research approach would not be applicable to this study on WB under investigation because the findings of this study were not statistical in nature and were not intended to be generalisable across all populations within the research site and across municipalities in South Africa. Instead, the qualitative research approach was selected as it draws insights from multiple data sources, respects the social worlds and identities of the research participants as key actors and is therefore emerging, evolving and interpretive (Gaya & Smith, 2016). In doing so, qualitative research can reveal the complexities of the social world and illuminates the participants' lived experiences. This is particularly important as little is known about employees' and managers' feelings and lived experiences of WB in the local municipality under investigation and will allow the researcher to expose the less perceivable meanings inherent in the victim's narrative of WB.

Therefore, the uniqueness and suitability of qualitative research in relation to this study is that it provided the direction for the exploration of a sensitive topic, namely WB (Fahie, 2014), providing research participants with a voice to express their critical reflections on WB (Schurink, 2005), which enabled the researcher to acquire an experiential understanding of the complex interrelationships and direct interpretation of events (Tuffour, 2017). This approach, therefore, generated different beliefs and views that contributed to the current knowledge base on WB under investigation in South African local government. Thus, data analysis in qualitative research is inductive and interactive (Creswell & Poth, 2016) whereby the researcher engages in reflexive thought on the participants' roles and experiences to generate themes emergent from the analysis of data.

It is suggested that the collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants as co-constructors of knowledge in the collection and analysis of data, is another advantage of qualitative research, in that it minimises the power relationships. This is particularly important when exploring and reporting on WB, where there are clear power differentials between the perpetrators, the targets and the victims (Leymann, 1996). The overall objective or outcome of

qualitative research in this study is to present a composite interpretation of WB, based on the subjective interpretations of WB from the research participants in relation to their feelings and lived experiences of the phenomenon. However, the researcher is cognisant of the need to be sensitive in the interpretation of the participants' responses to not contaminate the data. In addition, the outcome of this study is to initiate a call to action. Suggesting a call to action is a key characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016), which in the context of this particular study, is to develop substantial guidelines and interventions to manage and prevent WB at the intended research site.

3.4. Research Method

The ontology and epistemology inform the methodology of the research, which can be understood as the strategy data collection and data analysis (Bleiker et al., 2019). The method of research in this study is therefore underpinned by relativism, where reality is created through subjective perceptions mediated by human senses. From an epistemological standpoint, this reality becomes known through subjectivism, where the knowledge of social phenomena is understood through the construction thereof, vide the interaction and interpretation of such phenomena by both the research participants and the researcher, resulting in multiple realities of the research phenomenon under investigation.

A decision was made to use a case study research design to obtain the required subjective insights and interpretations of WB as experienced by employees and managers within the local municipality. The rationale for the utilisation of these methodologies is expounded on below.

3.4.1. Case Study

As stated by Montes-Rodriguez et al. (2019), case studies have often been utilised in social science research as a methodology associated with the qualitative, hermeneutic or interpretive paradigms. Given that this study is embedded in a qualitative and interpretive paradigm, a case study was considered relevant and appropriate to explore WB.

The qualitative research design was specifically an exploratory case study providing a holistic and thorough inquiry into a sensitive and multifaceted topic. According to Yin (2018), exploratory case study research is beneficial for obtaining an in-depth comprehension of contemporary phenomena in terms of providing a "fluid rendition of the past and present, not

just the present" (p.12). This is important when studying the phenomenon of WB, which is regarded by Thiam (2018) as a universal and contemporary social phenomenon that has deleterious consequences on individual well-being, long after the occurrence of the exposure.

The qualitative case study research methodology was also deemed to be beneficial in that it allowed the researcher to delimit the empirical study objective (Merriam, 2009), and thereby determine the investigative focus and what would be excluded. In the context of this study, a single exploratory case study was conducted, where the researcher delimited the research phenomenon of WB to be understood within a single research site at a particular point in time in KwaZulu-Natal. The scope of this single case study was twenty research participants, consisting of ten employees and ten managers who had experienced WB within the research setting in 2021. Therefore, the study is a single, exploratory case study bounded by the time and place, the employees and management, i.e., the participants, and the perpetrators.

The following case study propositions as per Table 3 below are based on the empirical findings of the published works contained in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Each proposition serves to focus the collection of data, ascertain the direction and scope of the study based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and inform the selection of the theoretical frameworks (Stake, 1995) to inform the interpretation of the research findings.

Table 3

Research Case Study Propositions

Case study propositions	Literature
Employees and managers construct WB as a negative social act or behaviour such as victimisation or harassment by the perpetrator	Einarsen et al. (2010); Le Roux et al. (2010)
Employees' and managers' experience of WB are rooted in disparities of power between targets, victims and the bully.	Birks et al. (2014); Botha (2019); Cunniff and Mostert (2012); Foucault as cited in Hutchinson and Jackson (2015); Peng et al., (2019); Raven (1992)
The causations of WB occur amongst individuals, teams and across the organisation.	Andersen et al. (2018); Meyer and Kirsten (2014); Salin and Hoel (2020);
Employees and managers cope with WB based on the interaction between occupational demands and occupational resources.	JD-R Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli, 2017); Finchilescu et al., (2019); Nel (2019); Omar (2017)

According to Hyett et al. (2014), the selection of a theoretical framework must be well-grounded to enhance rigour in the study. Foucault's conceptual framework of power was therefore deemed relevant and utilised in this study, in that it acknowledged the importance of the intersectionality between subjectivity, individual, social and institutional displays of power and the legitimisation of power and resistance. These are imperative in understanding the multi-faceted phenomenon of WB within a hierarchical, bureaucratic site of struggle with evident power differentials.

The second theoretical framework utilised was the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), as it is an all-encompassing model that identified personal and workplace characteristics that provided insight into the identification of antecedents, consequences and

possible moderators of WB at the research site. This is further elucidated in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 of the thesis.

The above-mentioned theoretical frameworks may also contribute towards the arrangement of the research findings. However, Baxter and Jack (2008) caution that a dependency on deductive analyses from conceptual frameworks may limit inductive reasoning when exploring a research phenomenon, which in this study is WB. To mitigate against this risk, the researcher followed the recommendation by Yin (2003) by utilising and converging multiple data sources such as online interviews, the researcher's journal and document analysis to explain the case study. This enabled the confirmation of the findings and possible rival propositions that could provide a holistic understanding of WB at a local municipality, and also contribute new knowledge of the phenomenon in an organisational context.

3.5. Sampling Strategies and Sample Description

The research site of a single local municipality was selected as the case in this study given that it was in the vicinity of the researcher. In addition, the research site was a large matrix organisation that afforded the researcher the opportunity to easily recruit potential participants across a large cohort of employees and managers. According to Etikan et al. (2016), sampling can be understood as a portion of the population selected as the subject of a study in order to illuminate the research phenomenon studied. The population for this research study included ten employees and ten managers from a single local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. It, therefore, becomes important to identify the selection process for the study.

Purposive sampling was selected as the appropriate sampling strategy for this study as it was convenient, inexpensive and allowed the researcher to recruit participants with specific characteristics, the necessary insights, experience and willingness to provide information pertinent to the research phenomenon (Etikan et al., 2016). Employees and managers were selected for the sample of this study as their feelings and lived experiences on WB could provide a depth to insight on and meaning and understanding of WB in the local municipality under investigation.

Eligibility for individuals to participate in the study was guided by pre-determined criteria, defined by the researcher (Omona, 2013). Therefore, for employees and managers to participate

in this study, these individuals were to (a) have either experienced or witnessed WB (b) the bullying occurred regularly and repeatedly, ranging from weekly to six months or more (c) be willing to describe their lived experiences and observations of WB (d) be currently employed within the local municipality being researched in the capacity of employee or management, where applicable (e) be between 18–65 years of age and (f) have access to online video interviewing platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Only individuals which met the stated criteria were invited to participate in this study. It is believed that by utilising a criterion sampling strategy within purposive sampling and sample criteria, the researcher is assured that all research participants meet the mandatory criteria, which is pivotal to quality assurance in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3.5.1. Sample Size

Twenty participants consisting of ten employees and ten managers from the research site were chosen to participate in the study. The rationale for selecting these participants were because employees and managers have dynamic interactions on a frequent basis, and it is these dynamic interactions that can reveal the underlying causations, repercussions and moderators of WB. The election of twenty employees and managers was aligned to a smaller sample size associated with qualitative research, as the goal of the research was to collect rich detail on each individual or organisation being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The twenty research participants completed an online audio-recorded and video interview based on their preference, where it was determined that no new data emerged at the conclusion of these interviews; therefore, no additional research participants were recruited. The determination of the final sample size of twenty research participants was based on the process of data saturation. According to Johnson et al. (2020), data saturation is considered to be a standard of authenticity in qualitative research whereby the researcher ensures that an adequate opportunity has been given to collect relevant data until no new themes or information are emerging from the dataset. Exploring the phenomenon of WB through the detailed study of this small sample resulted in a far-reaching understanding of WB within the selected local municipality, where previously only limited knowledge was known on WB.

3.5.2. Professional Profiles of Research Participants

Table 4 below provides a profile of the research participants in this study.

Table 4

Profile of Research Participants (RP)

ID	Age	Gender	Race	Education	Occupational Level	Length of Service	Marital Status
RP 1	45-54	Female	Indian	Grade 8-10; Professional Body Membership	Employee	21 years and over	Single
RP 2	35-44	Female	African	Diploma/Certificate	Employee	6-10 years	Single
RP 3	45-54	Male	African	Post-graduate Diploma Certificate	Manager	21 years and over	Married
RP 4	35-44	Female	African	Diploma/Certificate	Employee	11-15 years	Single
RP 5	45-54	Male	Indian	Post-graduate Degree/s	Employee	21 years and over	Married
RP 6	35-44	Male	White	Post-graduate Degree/s	Acting Manager	6-10 years	Married
RP 7	45-54	Female	African	Post-graduate Diploma	Employee	0-5 years	Married
RP 8	35-44	Female	African	Post-graduate Degree/s	Manager	6-10 years	Married
RP 9	35-44	Male	African	Diploma/Certificate	Manager	11-15 years	Married
RP 10	55-65	Male	African	Under-graduate Degree	Employee	6-10 years	Single
RP 11	45-54	Female	Indian	Post-graduate Diploma Certificate	Manager	21 years and over	Single

RP 12	55-65	Male	Indian	Post-graduate Degree/s; Professional Body Membership	Senior Manager	21 years and over	Married
RP 13	55-65	Female	African	Post-graduate Degree/s	Senior Manager	11-15 years	Married
RP 14	45-54	Female	African	Post-graduate Degree/s	Executive Management	11-15 years	Married
RP 15	45-54	Female	African	Post-graduate Degree/s; Professional Body Membership	Executive Management	0-5 years	Married
RP 16	45-54	Female	Indian	Post-graduate Degree/s; Professional Body Membership	Employee	21 years and over	Widowed
RP 17	45-54	Female	African	Post-graduate Degree/s	Leadership	6-10 years	Married
RP 18	25-34	Female	African	Post-graduate Diploma Certificate; Professional Body Membership	Employee	0-5 years	Single
RP 19	45-54	Male	Indian	Grade 10-12	Employee	21 years and over	Married
RP 20	35-44	Female	Indian	Post-graduate Degree/s	Employee	21 years and over	Single

4. Data Collection

In accordance with an interpretivist research paradigm, data collection is informed by an inductive approach, which is to observe how themes, patterns and information emerge from research participants in a specific setting or context (Salvador, 2016). Data was collected

primarily through semi-structured interviews and the analysis of documents as a secondary source of data. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviewing afforded the researcher the opportunity to pose open ended questions across a few individuals to obtain extensive insight and detail into their personal experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

This is discussed further below.

4.1. Interviews

Interviews in qualitative research have been utilised extensively, particularly in qualitative health and social science research as they are relatively inexpensive, accessible and effective in accessing the research participants' world and their subjective feelings and experiences (Nathan et al., 2019). This is particularly important in this qualitative case study where little is understood on WB at the research site. Interviews also provide diverse perspectives and new knowledge on WB pertinent to this context.

Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for exploring complex, emotionally sensitive research topics (Barriball & While, 1994), and therefore was considered a suitable data collection method for exploring a sensitive, multifaceted phenomenon of WB in this study. Given the power disparities associated with the phenomenon, semi-structured interviews tend to reduce power differentials experienced by victims as they are afforded the opportunity to respond to questions at their discretion and to discuss matters that are important to them (Choak, 2012). This allows the researcher to privilege the participants' voice in the interview process and be directed by their responses.

An interview guide with questions pertinent to WB was designed to stimulate free-flowing conversation and ensured that the sequencing of questions was participant led as recommended by Roulston and Choi (2018). This illustrates the flexibility and adaptability of semi-structured interviews where questions typically begin with introductory questions, where the researcher requests the research participants to "Tell me a bit more about yourself" (Mokgolo, 2017, p.24) before progressing from the participants' response.

To this end, semi-structured interviewing was used to create an empathetic connection, encourage reciprocity between the researcher and research participants, engage in open-ended

conversation and provided a space for participants to ask questions that they had during the interview or raise issues not addressed. Additionally, and where relevant, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to sensitively and meticulously ask probing questions to what the participants had already mentioned, with the purpose to obtain greater clarity and accuracy (Roulston & Choi, 2018)

In this study, in-depth, semi-structured online interviewing were utilised to obtain a rich understanding of the employees' and managers' feelings and experiences associated with WB at the selected municipality. However, the Coronavirus pandemic led to the modification of traditional research designs and methods, hence online, video, in-depth and individual semi-structured interviews became the norm as a substitute to the traditional in-person interviews.

The rationale for the use of online interviews is discussed in detail below.

4.1.1. Online Interviews in Qualitative Research

Online interviews can be understood as "a verbal, written, carefully planned or causal interchange" (Salmons, 2014, p.2). Online interviews are a viable option to traditional in-person interviews as they provide the researcher and participants with convenience and flexibility in that the researcher can select the online video application to conduct the interviews, thereby saving the researcher the time and cost of sourcing a suitable venue for the interviews (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). Online interviews also afforded the participants and researcher to reschedule where necessary without incurring any costs.

Participants are afforded a greater level of voluntary participation and the right to exit the study at the click of a button, which is less likely in a face-to-face interview, as it has been reported that participants feel less at ease to withdraw once they have commenced with the interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). However, no participants indicated a desire to withdraw from the study. Additionally, there was a high level of accessibility of online teleconferencing video platforms (Microsoft Teams or Zoom) as research participants could download these applications on their smartphones or computers (Archibald et al., 2019; Eriksson, 2020). This allowed for greater access to participants that were geographically dispersed across the research site and who were previously inaccessible due to limitations such as time and finances.

Shin et al. (2017) posit that given the sufficient interaction between interviewees and the interviewer, teleconferencing online video interviews can offer a similar level of intimacy as achieved in traditional in-person interviews and are thus regarded as the closest simulations and replications of in-person interviews (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). Additionally, audio and video recordings could be made simultaneously without the need for additional equipment, which allowed for a greater level of attention on the participant without being distracted by audio that can interrupt the interview flow and level of engagement.

Online video interviews provide an opportunity for a high level of not only verbal engagement but also the exploration of the interpretation of non-verbal communication through sound, body language as well as possible written text, links and images (emoticons, photos) shared in the chat features of these platforms simultaneously (Salmons, 2014), thereby allowing for real-time interaction. These methods of communication became the norm, which provided a multifaceted and deeper understanding of each research participant's lived experiences of WB. Consequently, data analysis was powerfully enhanced through online video interviews that allowed for multiple reviews of the data obtained at different points in time by timing out, playing back to reframe, refocus and re-evaluate the analytic gaze (O'Connor & Madge, 2017).

Other important advantages of utilising online teleconferencing video technologies included the security features of Zoom to "securely record and store sessions without recourse to third party software" (Archibald et al., 2019, p.2). Similarly, Microsoft Teams made use of secure cloud storage technology (Eriksson, 2020). This is particularly important when studying a sensitive phenomenon of WB.

In cognisance of the aforementioned considerations pertaining to online teleconferencing video interviewing, platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams were a viable alternative to the traditional in-person interviews for collecting data in the study, and also served to uphold the physical and social distancing restrictions implemented as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

However, a potential drawback of online video interviewing was that of not being able to obtain a full range view of the non-verbal communication such as the body language displayed by participants during the online interviews, as this view was limited to the head and shoulders

(Bayles, 2012). To mitigate against this risk, the recommendation by Lo Iacono et al. (2016) was followed, that is, being cognisant of the research participant's choice of interview location and screen background, that can add substantial import to the data collection process of each participant's presentation of themselves, particularly when participants utilised smartphones and tablets to be interviewed on online video platforms.

5. Data Analysis

Given that the interest of this thesis was to comprehend employees' and managers' feelings and lived experiences of WB, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was deemed appropriate to reveal these subjective meanings.

Given the limited understanding of WB within one of the local municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, IPA was specifically selected to analyse previously unexplored topics where subjective meanings were important but poorly understood (Smith, 1996). IPA was suitable for this thesis as it explores, describes and locates participants making sense of their lived experiences as it appears to their consciousness and how they experience the phenomenon as they re-imagine and re-experience the incident (Tuffour, 2017).

Interpretation within IPA involves a double hermeneutic where the researcher reflects on and clarifies the meaning the participants ascribe to their experience in relation to the research phenomenon, and records the participants' observations, suggesting that the researcher is a co-constructor of knowledge based on the dialogue with participants for deeper interpretation (Tuffour, 2017). Practically, this was achieved when paraphrasing and providing short, summative and reflective statements of the understanding gained on what each participant said in the interviews and follow-up interviews, to obtain an accurate understanding of their narratives on the phenomenon.

Overall, IPA is consistent with the idiographic, inductive and enquiring aims of this study (Amla & Buitendach, 2019). The study is idiographic as it exposed both divergent and convergent themes for a holistic, deeper interpretation and reporting of findings; inductive as raw data was condensed into summative, significant statements and interrogative in deriving themes that appeared from the findings before progressing to the analysis of the next participant's narrative.

5.1. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of IPA was specifically utilised in this thesis. This method of IPA consists of a seven-step cyclical, reflexive and re-iterative process that enables the identification of converse and diverse themes within and across data sets (Amla & Buitendach, 2019). These steps are elucidated below and also include bracketing that must be adhered to in IPA.

5.1.1. Bracketing

IPA emphasises the application of bracketing, which is to set aside the researcher's judgements, bias or prior experiences from the phenomenon under investigation to accurately comprehend and interpret the participants' responses on the research phenomenon (Tuffour, 2017).

Bracketing was also extended to the analysis of emerging themes for each research participant as a unique representation of their feelings and experiences. Each theme was not automatically invoked as a theme for the next participant unless it emerged spontaneously within the following participant's interview. This was applied to all interviews in order to preserve and uphold the unique stand-alone themes for each participant.

5.1.2. Develop a List of Significant Statements

The development of significant statements was derived through the reading and re-reading of all relevant, raw research data sources such as the researcher's journals and interview transcripts, to determine how each participant experienced the phenomenon. This is referred to as the horizontalisation of data, where significant statements were listed and each statement was regarded as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994).

5.1.3. Reducing and Eliminating

Given the volume of the data and significant statements provided by each research participant, it was pivotal to ensure that there were no repetitive or overlapping statements when the list of statements was compiled (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To determine the significance of statements provided by the participants, each statement was evaluated in terms of whether the wording within the statement was necessary to understand WB. Vague phrases and repetitive words were consequently deleted. Overlapping phrases were organised under descriptive terms where possible and in other instances were deleted.

5.1.4. Clustering of Horizons into Themes

This step entailed clustering the reduced set of relevant statements that did not overlap or repeat itself into meaning units or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The themes were compared to the interview transcripts and journal entries on the participants' non-verbal communication observed during the interviews, to determine if these common threads were apparent or implied in the participants' narratives. For this process, the recommendations by Alase (2017) were followed, where the themes were colour coded and categorised across the data sets for analyses. The final main themes and sub-themes are reported and expounded on in Chapter 4.

5.1.5. Constructing Textural Descriptions

To construct textural descriptions is to author what participants experienced in relation to the phenomenon (WB) to comprehend the incident (Creswell & Poth, 2016). These written descriptions must include verbatim examples of the participants' experiences in relation to the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to Moustakas (1994), these verbatim examples can include the thoughts, feelings and consequences of behaviours reported by the participants. The participants' quotations from the online interviews were utilised to illustrate the themes pertaining to their lived realities of WB.

5.1.6. Develop a Structural Description

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), a structural description focuses on how the experience happened, thereby paying close attention to the setting and context in which the research phenomenon occured. In this thesis, WB which had occurred in the local municipality was explored to provide an understanding of the organisational setting and conditions that advanced the participants' feelings and experiences of WB. This, therefore, added increased depth and understanding of the participants' textural descriptions as suggested by Moustakas (1994) of WB, in terms of how participants ascribed meaning to their experience and the way in which they coped with their experience of WB.

5.1.7. Develop a Composite Structural Description

The composite structural description is a long paragraph that is a synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions, capturing the essence of the narratives of participants in relation to the research phenomenon (Alase, 2017). This resulted in a rich comprehension of each employee's and manager's feelings and reality of WB within the local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

These seven steps were repeated for all twenty research participants, with the results bracketed for each participant in order to allow for the emergence of a narrative that is authentic to each participant's experience of WB.

5.1.8. Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

This final step focused on utilising the composite structural description to provide a detailed summary or synthesis of all the participants' findings that encapsulated the meaning of all the incidents expressed to report all findings, draw conclusions from the datasets and answer the research questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Following this independent analysis and interpretation of the datasets through the utilisation of IPA, robust discussions with the research team were held to validate the overall thematic representation, participant narratives and interpretations of their feelings and lived experiences of WB. The research team challenged each member's analysis and interpretation, thereby eliminating any theme or interpretation that was not collectively agreed upon by all members of the research team.

6. Research Procedure

The research procedure below focused on outlining a sequential procedure of the steps undertaken by the researcher to ensure the research on WB was ethical, credible and scientifically sound.

6.1. Research Proposal and Research Design

A preliminary review of published works was conducted to identify the area of interest and any lacunae in the existing knowledge base on WB, to prepare a research initiative and to select a suitable research design and method to investigate the proposed research phenomenon. A qualitative research framework in the form of a single, exploratory case study was decided on.

6.2. Sampling Size and Strategy

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify the research sample, namely ten employees and ten managers within a single research site, who possessed particular characteristics relevant to the objectives of the research (Davoudi et al., 2016). As discussed earlier, the objectives included specific attributes. Accessibility to a wider range of research participants across geographical

boundaries within the local municipality was augmented by remote online video interviewing on applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

6.3. Negotiating Entry

Relevant letters requesting permission from the University's HSSREC and the local municipality to conduct the research and select potential participants from the local municipality under study were generated and responded to. Signed approvals to conduct the research were obtained in terms of the ethical clearance from the HSSREC HSSREC/00002133/2020 (Appendix A), and the gatekeeper's permission from the research site were provided (Appendix B) as well as the letter for the organisation's outsourced EAP service provider to provide psychosocial counselling services to participants where required (Appendix G). The leadership of the Municipality was approached and fully apprised of the study and research topic.

6.4. Developing Interview Protocol: Pilot Studies

An interview schedule with interview questions and follow up (Appendix H) probes were developed, which were reviewed and confirmed by the research supervisors. The development of the interview schedule was based on an expanded and evaluative appraisal of published works in relation to WB, which guided the formulation of the research questions. This was further refined when a pilot study was facilitated, having interviewed HR employees and managers. The pilot study provided relevant feedback on the ease of use, ethics, relevance and effectiveness of interview questions to mitigate against any possible harm or injury to the research participants (Mokgolo, 2017). A remote interviewing data collection platform of Microsoft Teams was utilised for the pilot interviews.

6.5. Recruitment of Research Participants

A formal invitation was sent to employees and managers across the research site (Appendix C) via the municipality's online communication portal, to fully apprise them on the study, research objectives, criteria to participate in the study and ethical considerations that would be upheld in the study. Interested employees and managers that met the research sample criteria responded favourably to the invitation. These research participants were recruited via telephone and email and were fully informed about the nature of the study. Thereafter, the participants'

electronic signed informed consent (Appendix D) and participant information sheet (Appendix E) were obtained by email. This was done prior to embarking on the data collection processes.

6.6. Data Collection

During the Coronavirus pandemic, in-depth semi-structured online video and audio interviews were held on Microsoft Teams and Zoom communication platforms to explore the participants' feelings and experiences on WB. This generated a comprehensive narrative and understanding of WB in a real-life setting (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). These virtual platforms for remote interviewing were beneficial to this study as they ensured the health and safety of all participants, provided an accurate recording and simulation of face-to-face interviewing in qualitative research.

Data was collected from participants until data saturation was reached through the constant comparison of the emerging information from the interviews in relation to the research objective (Guest et al., 2006), and when no new information were generated from the interviews.

Observations and note-taking on the participants' non-verbal communication on different aspects of WB as well as the researcher's perceptions and feelings in relation to each interview were recorded in the research journal and interview transcripts. Participants were also requested to populate and email a biographical questionnaire (Appendix F) which was utilised to identify differences in socio-demographic variables (age, gender, race, education and organisational level) that may have contributed to the possible varied narratives of WB at the local municipality. Thereafter, opportunities for brief follow-up online interviews were provided to each research participant to ensure accurate recordings and understanding of the views provided and to also probe for additional views that the participants may not have revealed on the phenomenon. (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019).

6.7. The Role of the Researcher in Data Collection

6.7.1. Establishing the Relationship

An increased use of email and telephonic communication with research participants were done to explain the nature and benefits of the study. These benefits were to enable participants to

voice their experiences of WB that may have only received limited focus in the past, and the opportunity to provide recommendations to prevent and manage WB.

It was further emphasised that the research process presented minimal risk to the participants, except potential unpleasantness during the narration of their bullying experiences along with the risk mitigation measures. Participants were advised that they were free from answering any questions at their discretion. In addition, participants were provided with the contact information of the researcher and supervisors if they required clarity or wished to raise concerns about the study.

A Microsoft Teams user guide (Birmingham City Council, n.d.) and a Zoom user guide (Zoom Video Communications Inc, 2022) were shared with the participants to assist them to understand and navigate the platforms more effectively. However, participants reported a user-friendly experience in the use of these platforms, which are supported by Archibald et al. (2019) and Eriksson (2020).

Participants were given the option to video or audio record the interview at a remote location of their choice that was free from disturbances, which helped ensure privacy during the interview. The participants' logistical requirements in terms of their availability to participate in the online interviews were also accommodated, where possible. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and codes on their interview transcripts.

6.7.2. During the Interview

The provisions of the informed consent form (Appendix D) were emphasised to establish rapport with participants in terms of care toward upholding the ethical considerations of harm minimisation, respect for their person, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy. Empathetic listening and close attention to the participant's verbal language, tone of voice and facial expressions were utilised to help build online rapport. The recommendation by Seitz (2016) was employed to utilise the researcher's facial gestures to communicate emotion and acknowledgement of what the participant has said. This encouraged research participants to open up and share more as they felt that their experiences were accepted in a non-judgmental manner.

Furthermore, personal assumptions of the researcher on WB were bracketed so as not to negatively influence the participants' responses or the social desirability of responses. This allowed participants to provide their critical reflections on the phenomenon. However, if for some unforeseen reason, a distraction arose during the online video interview, the topic was changed or the participant was asked if they would like the interview to be rescheduled to not compromise on confidentiality.

Time breaks were provided in between questions that allowed participants to respond at a pace they were comfortable with, and the use of sensitive probes into the participants' responses was employed where relevant to the study. However, if a participant exhibited or reported anxiety or discomfort, the interview was paused, and the presenting symptoms were managed through workplace counselling, followed by a formal referral through a third-party EAP service provider. This is discussed under ethical considerations in this chapter. The use of loaded terms such as abuse or violence was avoided and were rather diverted to a range of behaviour associated with bullying.

6.7.3. Exiting the Researcher-Participant Relationship

Participants were advised not to disclose the detailed nature of the interviews to others. Follow-up support to participants seeking assistance in terms of referrals to obtain psychosocial support was provided. Lastly, participants were provided with positive affirmations of their survival skills.

6.7.4. Reducing Social Desirability in Participant Responses

Social desirability bias can be understood as the tendency for individuals to present a form of reality that is aligned to what is perceived to be socially acceptable (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). In order to reduce social desirability bias, the following mitigating measures were employed in the study:

Trust and rapport building were established with the participants, which included the use of humour at times to alleviate power differentials and to demonstrate respect, as suggested by Bergen and Labonté (2020). Rapport was further established as the researcher outlined the roles and expectations of the participants and the researcher.

Uniformity in the use of interview questions was ensured with all participants. The development of the interview questions was without specified limits so that participants had more autonomy in providing their responses. The participants' responses were also sensitively and meticulously probed for clarity, requesting participants to provide an example or story to illuminate and illustrate their response, as suggested by Bergen and Labonté (2020). Lastly, the participants' non-verbal communication were actively observed as asserted by Mooney et al. (2018) during the online video interviews on Microsoft Teams and Zoom, and these were recorded within each interview transcript and noted in the journal to obtain additional insight into the phenomenon in light of their experience of WB.

6.8. Data Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of IPA consisted of seven steps utilised to search for themes and patterns within each participant's response set, as well as concluding with themes and patterns across the participants' response sets.

Additionally, reviews of organisational policy and procedural documents were completed by the researcher and the research supervisors to generate first order and second order themes to comprehend possible ideologies that legitimised the occurrence and escalation of WB within the organisation. Document analysis was appropriate for the study as it served to either confirm, dispute or provide further insights into the interview data acquired (Van den Berg & Struwig, 2017). The development, review and confirmation of codes were all logged in a document analysis codebook (Appendix I). Any codes that were not agreed upon were eliminated from the data set and data analysis process.

Reflexive insights and notes contained within the researcher's journal also enabled a greater analysis and understanding of WB based on observing the participants' non-verbal communication, as well as to increase the researcher's self-awareness of potential values, assumptions and beliefs in relation to WB and participants' response sets that were bracketed so as to not influence the reporting of the participants' results. The journal, therefore, assisted to not only enrich the data collection process from each participant but served to provide greater clarity on any aspect of their narrative that were disconnected (Mackenzie et al., 2013) on the research phenomenon. An audit log ensured that all research steps and research records throughout the research was in place.

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is paramount to the success of any study, particularly when undertaking research that involves human subjects around sensitive topics (Hurley et al., 2016), such as WB This is suggestive that participants are vulnerable groups, as they "may be susceptible to increased harms, such as emotional and psychological discomfort or distress" (Shaw et al., 2019, p.3) through WB. Accordingly, strict ethical protective measures were placed in this study to ensure that all participants felt safe, respected and moreover, heard.

7.1. Ethical Clearance and Gatekeeper's Approval Letters

As indicated earlier, ethical approval to conduct this research was provided by UKZN HSSREC (HSSREC/00002133/2020) as well as a signed gatekeeper's permission letter from the local municipality under study.

7.2. Informed Consent

Permission was acquired from the participants through the provision of their signed electronic informed consent after having engaged with the participants on the contents thereof via email and telephonically. A participant information sheet detailed the scope of the study, which provided participants with adequate background information and what would be required from them to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study.

Ethical commitment was demonstrated towards participants with regards to respecting their privacy, rights, needs and preferences, vulnerability, anonymity, confidentiality, elective participation, withdrawal from the study, ensuring no harm and obtaining their informed consent. These were all considered to be the important criteria underpinning informed consent as indicated by Creswell and Poth (2016), which was obtained from each participant.

7.3. Possibility of Distress

A few participants exhibited distress in narrating their experiences of WB and were offered to pause their interview and not answer any questions should they so desire. It was also reiterated that participants could quit the study at any point in time with no repercussions attached.

The researcher provided participants with the option of counselling to manage presenting symptoms of distress, and to then initiate a referral to an appropriate psychologist for further

psychological services and management through the independent EAP at the research site. This EAP offers a free, confidential counselling service with psychosocial support to employees and their families. It is outsourced through a third-party service provider, and there were no possible repercussions, as perhaps there could be if this had been an internal service. Moreover, employees have autonomy in their selection and use of this EAP service, independent of other stakeholders such as their management or co-workers, thereby preventing the possibility of social stigmatisation and secondary victimisation. Therefore, at no time were the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants at risk. Only two of the participants expressed a need for counselling services, which was fulfilled via the EAP of the municipality.

7.4. Confidentiality and Anonymity of Data

The informed consent form and participant information sheet made provisions for ensuring that there would be no personal identifiers in the research findings of the research participants and the organisation. Instead, pseudonyms and coding were utilised in place of participant names. Limits to confidentiality were also included in the informed consent form and discussed with the participants before the commencement of the interviews. These provisions, along with the verbal reiteration of these provisions prior to the interview, ensured the protection of anonymity as well as confidentiality. Each online interview recording was coded which served to protect the invisibility of the dataset.

The rationale behind utilising Zoom for maintaining the confidentiality and data security is that it verified the identity of the user, coded meetings instantly and duplicated recordings to a cloud-based platform, that can be distributed safely for cooperation (Inc, Z.V.C., 2016) by the researcher, the participants and the supervisors. Similarly, Microsoft Teams delivered advanced security and compliance capabilities through the enforcement of the two-factor verification of the user, single sign-on, coding of datasets, storage and encryption of notes stored, detection of safe and unsafe attachments on the application (Singh & Awasthi, 2020) and secure sharing of documents from the secure cloud storage functionality of the application (Eriksson, 2020) with the researcher and the supervisors.

The concealment of data were ensured as data was transcribed and stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher and the research supervisors had access to. To mitigate possible security risks, the participants were requested to sign the informed consent

form to create a separate Zoom or Microsoft Teams account for the study, and to close the account following the termination of the study. Confidentiality was assured as all participant interviews were downloaded and secured on a cloud Google Drive with unique access codes as a backup to prevent any loss of data. Thereafter, the participant interviews were deleted from the server to preserve and uphold anonymity and confidentiality requirements in the study. After the mandated period of five years, all research data would be destroyed through the shredding of all manual transcripts and the deletion of electronic research data and correspondence from all electronic devices and storage systems.

7.5. Feedback to Participants

Feedback was in accordance with the purpose and findings of the study, with due regard given to considering the potential benefits and harm to participants as a result of the findings. The mode of communication with participants was online feedback sessions with the researcher on Microsoft Teams and Zoom to prevent any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of research findings that could arise, should research reports be provided to the participants.

7.6. Conflict of Interests

This study was not supported by funding and therefore does not inform or impact the design, outcome and dissemination of the research. Similarly, participants were not offered any rewards or incentives to participate in this study.

8. QUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

All research needs to display standards of quality to determine its accuracy and validity. In qualitative research, accuracy and validity are demonstrated by establishing the trustworthiness of a study. This includes reporting on the criteria of credibility, dependability and confirmability, which enhances the trustworthiness of the study (Alase, 2017) and are discussed further in relation to the research study below.

8.1. Credibility

Triangulation is understood as a process utilised to enhance qualitative research through the use of multiple approaches (Sim & Sharp, 1998). With reference to this thesis, a case study was employed to draw on multiple data sources to illuminate the study, such as moderately

structured interviews, journaling and the analyses of official policy documents at the research site.

This study also employed investigator triangulation, that is, utilising two or more researchers in the coding, perusal and evaluative decision-making as well as the strategy of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to help reduce potential researcher bias and improve the credibility of the findings. The interview transcripts and research findings at the local municipality were shared with the participants, which enabled them to further explain and correct any interpretations of their responses where necessary, to assure the accuracy of the data collected.

8.2. Confirmability and Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is understood as the degree to which the results of a study can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers, whilst dependability aims to achieve the replication of the qualitative inquiry if the inquiry were to occur in the same cohort of participants, coders and context. These qualitative requirements were fulfilled through an audit log that documented the steps and processes undertaken by the researcher at the inception of the study, through to the development and reporting of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The findings in this study related to the research questions and were supported by literature from prevalent international and South African studies, as well as within the research setting of local government structures.

The theoretical frameworks provided the lens through which WB and the research findings were interpreted. This also informed the research approach, qualitative methodology and decisions made in terms of detailed ethical considerations for data collection in respect of facilitating online interviews during the restrictions brought about by the Coronavirus during the study, and the use of IPA to illuminate the case study approach.

The audit trail in this study further included the biographical questionnaires, informed consent and semi-structured interview schedule as well as the detailed steps and processes for undertaking data collection and data analysis. An important consideration is how research bias is to be accounted for, if not eliminated, from the study. The corroboration of the research with the research team was a highly interrogative and reflexive process, where all themes and

synthesis of meanings and essences were established based on the unanimous agreement amongst the researcher and research team, which further served to increase the confirmability and dependability of the research findings (Forero et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2020). Any themes that could not be unanimously agreed upon were eliminated from the data analysis process. This is in accordance with IPA protocols in terms of strict auditing of data by the researchers prior to reaching a consensus on the collaboration of themes substantiated by the data (Smith, 2011).

It is suggested that the inclusion of reflexive notes may also serve to eliminate or reduce researcher bias from the study (Amin et al., 2020) and thereby contribute to the transparency of the research (Aguinis & Solarino, 2017). In this study, reflexivity was ensured through the provision of the researcher's journal notes, which is aligned to the IPA qualitative data analysis method, where the researcher not only brackets individual assumptions, perceptions and experiences in relation to the participants and study but also co-constructs the realities of WB experienced and narrated by the participants.

9. Conclusion

Chapter 3 reconfirmed the research questions that this study sought to answer. It also outlined the investigative approach that directed the selection and utilisation of the research methodologies to illuminate and provide a rich understanding of employees' and managers' feelings and lived experiences of WB. Chapter 3 also explicated the research procedures as well as the ethical considerations associated with the study, particularly as the methodologies have been adapted for use in the context and the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic. The Chapter concluded with quality considerations to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

The results and discussion of the research are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1. Chapter Overview

A detailed discussion on the research findings is presented based on the Research Participants' (RP) data, framed by the sequential steps of Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam's Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Additionally, the results relate to the research questions of the study in alignment with the interrogative analysis and double hermeneutic IPA methodology. The interpretation of the findings is demonstrated by comparing the theoretical frameworks, empirical literature and document analysis to identify divergent and common analytical areas. The chapter concludes with a presentation of WB intervention guidelines.

4.2. Data Analysis Procedure

Ten main themes emerged across all twenty participant data sets, which was further refined and reduced to a total of eight main themes and forty-five sub-themes that answered the five research questions below:

- How do employees and managers comprehend the phenomenon of WB?
- How do employees' and managers' lived experiences of WB contribute to the knowledge of WB?
- On the employees' and managers' understanding, what are the factors that initiated WB?
- What are the coping mechanisms used by employees and managers to respond to WB?
- How can WB be prevented and managed through the application of the lived experiences of employees and managers?

The final main themes, sub-themes, participant responses and corresponding research questions are explicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Data Analysis Matrix: Overall Main Themes and Common Sub-Themes Across Participants Responses

Research Question (RQ)	Main themes	Sub-themes	Participants	Response totals per theme
RQ 1	1. Definition and characteristics of workplace bullying	1.1. Abuse of power and authority	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14, 15, 16, 17,18, 20	18
		1.2. Frequency	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,19,20	17
		1.3. Intentionality	1,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,13,14,15, 17,20	13
		1.4. Negative social acts	2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,13,14, 15,16,17,19	15
		1.5. Submission of victims	1,2,3,6,7,8,9,13,15,19	10
		1.6. Hostile work environment	1,2,4,5,8,9,10,11,13,14,18	11
		1.7. Negative affect	2,3,4,7,10,11,14,15,16,18	10
RQ 1	2. Workplace conflict	2.1. Disagreement	2,4,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,17, 18,20	13
		2.2. Individual differences	1,5,6,11,13,14,15,16,18,20	10
		2.3. Review and resolution of conflict	2,4,7,8,9,10,12,14,15,16,20	11
		2.4. Escalation of conflict to workplace bullying	1,2,8,18	4
		2.5. Overlap of constructs	3,16,16	3

RQ 1	3. Prevalence and awareness of workplace bullying	3.1. Widespread prevalence	1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10,11,13,14, 15,16,17,18,19,20,	17
		3.2. Moderate to low prevalence	7,11,6,12	4
		3.3. Lack of awareness of workplace bullying	1,2,3,4,5,7,9,12,13,14,15, 16,17,18,20	15
		3.4. Moderate awareness of workplace bullying	8,13,16	3
RQ 1	4. Manifestations of workplace bullying	4.1. Workplace aggression	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,13, 14,15,16,17,18,19	18
		4.2. Isolation	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,10,12,13, 14,15,16,17,18,19,20	17
		4.3. Categories of bullying	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,1 6,17,18,19,20	17
		4.4. Harassment	1,2,4,5,6,8,10,11,12,13,15, 18,20	13
		4.5. Victimisation	5,9,11,12,13,15,16,17,19	9
		4.6. Undermining	1,2,6,7,11,13,15,17,19	9
		4.7. Humiliation	1,2,3,4,6,7,11,20	8
		4.8. Intrusion	1,2,4,7,11,14	6
RQ 1	5. Consequences of workplace bullying	5.1. Individual consequences	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,18,20	19
		5.2. Interpersonal consequences	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,17,20	17
		5.3. Organisational Consequences	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20	20

RQ 2	6. Antecedents of workplace bullying	6.1. Abusive leadership	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20	20
		6.2. Personality	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,19,20	19
		6.3. Socio-demographic variables	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, 13,14,15,16,17,18,19	19
		6.4. Lack of organisational support	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,13,14, 15,17,18,19,20	16
		6.5. Under-reporting	1,2,3,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,14, 15,17,18,19	15
		6.6. Organisational political interference	2,3,5,7,8,9,11,12,15,16	10
RQ 1	7. Coping with workplace bullying	7.1. Emotion-focused coping	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,13, 14,15,16,17,18,20	18
		7.2. Problem-focused coping	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13, 14,15,16,17,18,19,20	19
		7.3. Psychological Resources	1,2,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,17, 19	12
		7.4. Effectiveness of coping mechanisms	1,2,3,7,8,12,13,14,16,17,18	11
RQ 3	8. Prevention and management of workplace bullying	8.1. Leadership	4,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,16, 17,18,19	13
		8.2. Metrics	2,3,4,6,8,10,11,14,15,20	10
		8.3. Education and awareness workshops	1,2,5,6,10,11,15,17,18	9
		8.4. Team interventions	4,6,8,14,15,16,18,20	8
		8.5. Anti-bullying policy	3,5,6,8,11,13,20	7

		8.6. Reporting and investigation	2,5,11,13,14,16	6
		8.7. EAP counselling	1,4,7,9,11,12	6
		8.8. Guidance for victims	1,3,6,7	4

4.3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH DATA ANALYSES

Eight main themes emanated from the research study and are summarised below. The participants' quotations underpinning each main theme are expounded in Appendix J of this thesis.

4.3.1. Definition of Workplace Bullying

90% of the participants (n=18) conceptualised WB to be an abuse of power and authority, and perpetration of negative social acts (RP 1, RP 5). 85% of the participants (n=17) reported that WB occurred frequently (RP 4), of which 60% of the participants (n=12) had endured WB over the years (RP 10). 65% of the participants (n=13) reported intentionality underpinning WB perpetrated against the victims (RP 4, RP 11). However, 25% of the participants (n=5) reported that WB occurred irrespective of occupational level.

50% of the participants (n=10) understood WB as incidents that induced submission of the victims to the will of the perpetrator. Similarly, 50 % (n=10) of the participants reported that WB resulted in negative affect (RP 16) as well as 55% (n=11) reported the creation of a hostile work environment (RP 14).

4.3.2. Workplace Conflict

65% of the participants (n=13) conceptualised workplace conflict as a disagreement that was based on individual differences (50%; n=10) (RP 6), which would be reviewed between affected parties and can be resolved (RP 10). This revealed that WB was conceptually different from workplace conflict for the majority of the participants.

However, only 20% of the participants acknowledged the propensity of workplace conflict to escalate to WB (RP 1), along with 15% of the participants reported (n=3) on an overlap between both WB and workplace conflict (RP 16).

A further minority of the participants acknowledged the necessity for an objective measurement of WB which would assist in the prevention and management of this phenomenon.

4.3.3. Prevalence and Awareness of Workplace Bullying

85% of the participants (n=17) reported a widespread prevalence of WB (RP 18), whilst the remaining participants were unaware of how pervasive this phenomenon was within the municipality (RP 12). However, 15% of the participants (n=3) acknowledged some WB communique disseminated by the organisation to employees.

4.3.4. Manifestations of Workplace Bullying

85% (n=17) of the participants recognised experiences of predominantly vertical bullying in the form of intimidation (RP 19) and mobbing (RP 20). Some participants also experienced horizontal bullying (RP 16) in terms of sabotage and upward bullying (RP 9) in terms of gross insubordination, to a lesser extent.

The majority of the participants also reported experiencing isolation (85%, n=17) in terms of job isolation (RP 10) and social isolation (RP 2). For some of the participants, WB manifested in the form of victimisation (45%, n=9) and undermining (45%, n=9). WB behaviours such as humiliation (40%; n=8; RP 3) and intrusion (30%; n=6; RP 1) were identified by a minority of the participants as experiences of WB.

4.3.5. Consequences of Workplace Bullying

95% (n=19) of the participants reported experiencing harmful psychological and physical behavioural consequences and work-life interference as a result of WB. 85% of the participants (n=17) also reported damaged interpersonal relationships whilst 100% of the participants (n=20) reported negative organisational consequences as a result of WB. The most common ramifications of WB related by the participants are expounded in Table 6 below:

Table 6

The Five Categories of Consequences of Workplace Bullying

1.Psychological Consequences	2.Behavioural Consequences	3.Physical Consequences	4.Interpersonal Consequences	5.Organisational Consequences
Depression	Defensive Behaviour	Physical illnesses	Breakdown of trust relationship	Reduced productivity
Fear	Mistrust	Sleep disturbances	Gossip	Demotivation
Anxiety	Demotivation	Weight gain and weight loss	Reduced team cohesion	Toxic organisational culture
Poor self-esteem	Being vigilant	Headaches	Work-life interference	Increased financial costs
Stress	Correcting damage to reputation	Memory Impairment	Workplace Deviance	Damaged organisational reputation

The contributing factors to the participants' experiences of WB are elaborated on below.

4.3.6. Antecedents of Workplace Bullying

Although all participants (n=20) reported abusive leadership as the most common antecedent of WB, the most common are reflected in the responses of the participants as listed (RP 7, RP 17, RP 19, RP 12, RP 6). For instance, a participant experienced a decline in their health due to WB and observed her doctor's recommendations only to have the leadership deprive her of her remuneration.

The participants often noted mobbing with different stakeholders such as management and Human Resources. Management also banded together with trade unions in forcing participants out of their work.

A divide to conquer management style also underpinned abusive leadership experienced by the participants. This, in turn, created relational tensions amongst participants and their colleagues.

There was also common evidence of a lack of leadership support as an antecedent. Conversely, a lack of leadership support was also attributed to leadership themselves being bullied.

Of note was that 80% of the participants (n=16) reported a lack of organisational support as an antecedent of WB.

50% of the participants (n=10) attributed organisational political interference (RP 9, RP 8, RP 5, RP 17) as a locus that caused WB to flourish in the organisation, as politically affiliated individuals and political deployments within the organisation bypassed reporting lines to bully leadership. The political interference resulted in an adoption of an autocratic leadership style by the leadership, that further perpetuated WB.

The autocratic leadership style from the organisational political leadership were also displayed in management. Organisational political interference also inflicted upward bullying on those who attempted to ensure compliance with the organisational procedures. In other instances, organisational political interference included workplace mobbing.

Despite the reported pervasiveness of WB at the municipality, 75% of the participants (n=15) regarded under-reporting as a causation of WB, predominantly in terms of bystanders, due to fear of victimisation (RP 15). There were also reports of under-reporting from the participants (RP 18) to a lesser extent. A minority of the research participants, (RP 14) however, were active bystanders in terms of providing problem focused support to their colleagues who were being bullied.

95% (n=19) of the participants reported on the personality of victims and perpetrators contributing to the flourishing of WB. The socio-demographic characteristics of the perpetrators of WB is listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Socio-Demographic Profiles of Perpetrators Based on Participants' Experiences of Workplace Bullying

Participant	Gender of Perpetrator	Age of Perpetrator	Race of Perpetrator	Education of Perpetrator	Occupational Level of Perpetrator
RP 1	Male	Older than RP 1	Not specified	Not specified	Senior Management
RP 2	Both Male	Both Older than RP 2	Both African	Not specified	Middle and Senior Management
RP 3	Female	Older than RP 3	African	Not specified	Senior Management
RP 4	Both Male	Both Older than RP 4	Both African	Not specified	Both in Management
RP 5	Male	Older than RP 5	African	Not specified	Senior Management and subordinates
RP 6	Male	Older than RP 6	White	Less qualified than RP 6	Management
RP 7	Male Female	Older than RP 7 Younger than RP 7	Both African	Not specified	Both in Senior Management
RP 8	Both Females	Both Older than RP 8	Both Africans	Not specified	Senior Management Colleagues (Same level)
RP 9	Males and Females Male	18-65 Not specified	Mix of Indian, African, Coloured and White perpetrators	Not specified Not specified	Basic Skill level (subordinates) Supervisory level

RP 10	Both Females	Both Younger than RP 10	Both Africans	Not specified	Middle and Executive Management
RP 11	Female	Older than RP 11	Indian	Less qualified than RP 11	Employee (subordinate)
RP 12	Males Female Male Male	Similar age Older Older Similar age	African African White African	Not specified Not specified Not specified Not specified	Shop stewards Organisational political leadership Executive Management City leadership
RP 13	Female	Younger than RP 13	Not specified	Not specified	Executive Management
RP 14	Male	Older than RP 14	Coloured	Not specified	Executive Management
RP 15	Female	Not specified	African	Less qualified than participant	Management
RP 16	Female Male Female	Older Younger Similar Age	Indian Coloured African	Less qualified Not specified Not specified	Colleague (Same level) Supervisory level Management
RP 17	Male	Older than RP 17	African	Not specified	City leadership
RP 18	Female Female	Older Similar age	Indian African	Not specified Not specified	Senior Management Colleague (Same level)
RP 19	Male Female	Both Younger than RP 19	Not specified Not specified	Not specified Not specified	Manager Supervisor
RP 20	Not specified Not specified	Older than RP 20 Younger than RP 20	African African	Not specified Not specified	Middle and Executive Management Colleague (Lower level)

In terms of the perpetrators of WB, it was commonly acknowledged that they had insecurity issues (RP 1), jealousy with a low-self- esteem (RP 13) as well as a deep-seated need for control over others and a low ethical disposition (RP 11). The perpetrators also displayed personality traits such as narcissism (RP 16), perceived psychopathy (RP 4) in terms of deriving satisfaction in harming others. The participants also viewed the perpetrators to be deceptive and manipulative in concealing WB when interacting with others (RP 2).

Personality characteristics of victims that exacerbated WB primarily included being non-confrontational (RP 1), having an achievement orientation (RP 6), low self-efficacy (RP 20) and having less supportive networks (RP 2).

95% of the participants (n=19) reported socio-demographic variables as an antecedent of WB. There were reports of male and female perpetrated bullying, however, in both instances, there was a somewhat elevated prevalence of females bullied by both males and females. In male on female bullying, the notion of females remaining on a lower level than males prevailed (RP 4).

In other instances, female gender stereotypes from males were reported (RP 17), which led to why females were bullied in the workplace.

In contrast, reasons for female perpetrated bullying on female employees were attributed to females adopting similar qualities as the male leaders (RP 8). Female perpetrated bullying towards men were an attempt to force them out of their employment (RP 3) and to enforce capitulation to their unreasonable instructions (RP 10).

Despite 75% of the perpetrators being older than the participants, only a minority of female participants admitted that their age contributed towards their experiences of WB (RP 17).

Race contributed to WB in the form of different tribal norms of unquestioned obedience to superiors (RP 2) amongst the majority group of Africans in the organisation. Indians as a minority group within the organisation determined that organisational policies were used to unfairly discriminate against them on the basis of their race (RP 16). 70% of the perpetrator profiles across the participants were African, followed by Indian, White and Coloured ethnicities to a lesser extent. This could be attributed to the African being the majority ethnic group within population demographics as well as within the organisation.

Education also contributed to WB in terms of organisational political appointments and affiliations possessing less skills (RP 5) and in other instances where 55% of the participants held higher qualifications than the perpetrators, resulting in the perpetrators feeling threatened by their competence and achievement orientation (RP 15, RP 12).

Occupational levels contributed to WB in terms of abusive leadership reported above in the form of deviation from organisational policies, legislation as well as mobbing. Low socio-economic status of some staff members to a lesser extent led to them being dependent on their jobs for survival, exacerbating WB in the organisation (RP 2).

4.3.7. Coping with Workplace Bullying

90% of employees and managers reported the use of emotion-focused coping mechanisms, the most common being avoidance (RP 9, RP 2, RP 3). This was followed by the provision of social support from colleagues (RP 14) and family members, such as spouses (RP 13).

Participants also engaged in defensive behaviour and maintaining personal values (RP 6). As part of emotion focused coping, some participants also reported that their motivation to participate in the study, was to create a conducive space to effectively give voice to their WB experiences (RP 3), which also served as a cathartic experience (RP 13). The participants also relied on religion for support (RP 3, RP 13) and the power of forgiveness therein (RP 1) to assist in coping with their experiences of WB. To a slightly lesser extent, yet still relevant, the participants engaged in cognitive appraisals of WB (RP 6) to direct their course of action in relation towards WB.

Overall, the most effective emotion-focused coping mechanisms utilised by participants were social support, religion and personal values whilst avoidance (RP 13) was less effective against WB.

95% of the participants identified problem-focused coping as a mechanism. For instance, some participants lodged grievances (RP 11), attended internal counselling (RP 16), external counselling (RP 3), as well as the use of assertive communication (RP 19, RP 13). An integral aspect of assertive communication was to establish healthy boundaries (RP 13) which provided a buffer against WB.

Overall, the most effective problem-focused coping mechanisms reported amongst the participants were external counselling and engaging in assertive communication. However, reporting WB, the EAP of the municipality (RP 11) as well as transfers (RP 14) had limited effectiveness in helping the participants cope with WB.

65% of the participants utilised psychological resources, with the most common being resilience in learning lessons from WB to assist affected victims through their experiences (RP 17) and creating opportunities for themselves at work (RP 10). This was followed by an internal locus of control (RP 9), followed by gratitude (RP 1), and optimism (RP 19) being reported to a lesser extent. However, some participants reported the use of false optimism (RP 2) to cope with WB. Based on the analysis of psychological resources utilised by the participants, resilience was the most effective psychological resource that assisted participants in coping with WB.

4.3.8. Prevention and Management of Workplace Bullying

65% of the participants (n=13) elaborated that leadership should assume responsibility for preventing and managing WB. This included engaging in participatory leadership by listening and validating their experiences of WB (RP 8), ensuring transparent communication to staff (RP 19), prioritisation of employee wellness (RP13) as well as the prevention of organisational political interference (RP 9).

There were also several participants who emphasised accountability and the delivery of consequence management by leadership (RP 10) through consistent implementation of discipline (RP 9) and making examples of the perpetrators (RP 17).

50% of the participants (n=10) highlighted the importance of metrics for the diagnosis and reduction of WB in terms of competency profiling (RP 6), and psychological assessments (RP 14, RP 4) to include emotional intelligence assessments to promote objectivity in the recruitment and selection processes (RP 11).

The participants also reiterated that the study findings and recommendations should be shared with leadership (RP 6).

45% of the participants (n=9) stressed the importance of educational workshops and training on WB for victims (RP 8), bystanders (RP 8), management (RP 11), leadership (RP 7), HR (RP 12), trade unions and perpetrators (RP 11).

40% of the participants (n=8) reported that WB interventions also occur within teams in terms of diversity management (RP 18), conflict resolution (RP 16), creation of psychological safety through boundary setting (RP 16), trust and emotional intelligence (RP 20) as well as the creation of caring and productive teams (RP 14).

35% of the participants (n=7) expressed the need for the development and implementation of a WB policy (RP 3) with pertinent policy provisions (RP 8). It is maintained that an anti-bullying policy would give credence to the implementation of WB interventions in a holistic manner, as succinctly reported by a participant (RP 6).

30% (n= 6) of the participants reported the need for improved independent reporting and investigation of complaints lodged by victims of WB (RP 5), which includes the investigation of top officials guilty of WB (RP 13). In addition, the participants also emphasised the need for the neutrality of HR in mediating WB (RP 2), with the need to have their role revised and appropriately managed (RP 11).

30% (n= 6) of the participants reported elevating the role of the EAP within the municipality through counselling for the perpetrators (RP 1) and staff (RP 9), with the need to expand their business partnering efforts with the other Departments (RP 2).

20% of the participants (n= 4) provided guidance for victims of WB in terms of assertive communication in ensuring equal pay for work of equal value (RP 7), thus asserting their employment contract and job description (RP 6) as well as confronting WB (RP 6). Additionally, it was recommended that the victims of WB find their collective voice through mobilising a team of survivors to publicly address WB in the municipality (RP 3).

4.4. INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

The following discussion will illuminate employees' and managers' experiences of WB at the research site and will be presented as per research objectives. Furthermore, this section will provide substantial intervention guidelines towards reducing the spread of WB at the research site.

STUDY OBJECTIVE 1: TO EXPLORE HOW EMPLOYEES' AND MANAGERS' CONSTRUCT, EXPERIENCE AND COPE WITH WB AT A LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

4.4.1. Interpretations of Constructions of Workplace Bullying

WB was described to be widespread and flourishing across the local municipality by 45% of the employees and 40% of the managers of the research sample. However, despite its perceived widespread prevalence, 75% of participants within the study reported low or minimal awareness of the organisation's position and communique pertaining to WB. This intimates a poor awareness of the lived realities of WB, as the organisation does not openly disclose details of related incidents in the workplace. These findings are corroborated by Thiam (2018) who reported that WB occurs frequently within organisations but has not been revealed to employees.

Foucault's proposition of the analysis of written organisational documents provided insight into the invisible power and knowledge within the text (Groves, 2016), It was established that the municipality's collective agreement aligned to the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995). This agreement reflected a dominant ideology of the organisation's institutional practices in terms of maintaining silence on WB, where it did not explicitly mention or discuss WB, nor how it would be managed. However, the collective agreement revealed behaviours associated with WB in terms of intimidation, threatening the Presiding Officers for discharging their duties, obstructionism as well as restricting employees from obtaining legal representation except upon mutual agreement, or unless determined by the Presiding Officer.

It is suggested that WB, not being specified in this agreement, could potentially highlight the legitimisation of managerial discursive ideology and WB by consolidating power through

silence (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015), which could potentially discourage the victims to report WB.

The abuse of power and authority was commonly described by 90% of the employees and managers of the research sample, in their construction of WB as positional power inherent in managerial roles. This is consistent with Raven's (1992) notion of positional power being exemplified between managers and subordinates.

However, a minority of the employees and managers in the study explained that WB occurred irrespective of the occupational level, making reference to horizontal bullying and upward bullying, albeit to a lesser extent. This is in keeping with studies administered by Birks et al. (2014) with respect to the occurrence of upward bullying, and Carrim (2016) in respect of horizontal bullying, which will be expounded on when reporting the participants' experiences of WB. These findings reflect Foucault's acknowledgement of hidden social power within the organisation (Groves, 2016) that may cause colleagues and subordinates to resist positional power of management through horizontal and upward bullying.

The abuse of authority also led to 50% of the employees and managers of the research cohort constructing WB as a circumstance that induces submission of victims to the will of the perpetrator, associated with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. This suggests that WB places victims into a state of fear and increases their vulnerability to be controlled by the perpetrator. These notions are supported by Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) in view of the power imbalance created by WB, whereby the victims are unable to defend themselves against their perpetrators. In addition, they come up against a lack of control over WB experienced (Zapf & Gross, 2001) and hence submit to the perpetrator through real or perceived threats of repercussions (Le Roux et al., 2010).

Viewed through the lens of Foucault (1991), victims defined themselves as defenceless and unable to control the bullying, and their behavioural response, that of submission to the power dynamics within the organisation, resonated with 50% of the participants.

However, this study also revealed that 80% of the employees and managers of the research sample reported WB, and consulted extensively with HR and shop stewards, stating that they

did not accept being bullied, and actively sought redress. This notion is supported by Mokgolo (2017), where victims may broaden their influence by lodging a grievance and mobilising the support of trade unions to assist them in their defence against WB inflicted upon them. Upon reviewing the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, support is provided for employees to acquire representation from a sanctioned trade union, who may be an organised labour official attending their disciplinary hearings.

Foucault (1977) also maintained that where there was power, there was resistance, suggesting that victims were not docile bodies in response to WB. This will be further expanded upon in the discussion on how victims coped with their experiences of WB.

In the construction of WB, the majority of employees and managers at the local municipality referred to a range of negative social acts, most notably intimidation, discrimination, isolation and disrespect. Intimidation and isolation are also supported by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) in working definitions of WB. Disrespect is also consistent with Einarsen et al. (2010) in terms of systematically subjecting employees to disrespectful and impolite treatment.

Furthermore, WB is regarded as violence and harassment in South Africa (Momberg, 2011; Pietersen, 2007), with recent literature emphasising discrimination and intimidation consistent with the present study, on perceiving it as acts of violence at work (Escribano et al., 2019). In particular, RP 6 eloquently referred to this as *"psychological warfare"* (RP 6).

A pertinent finding was that 85% of the employees and managers within the study established that the frequency of WB was continuous and unrelenting. This suggests that the organisation may either condone WB or had limited understanding and awareness on what it was and how to deal with it, as stated earlier. This notion was evident upon reviewing the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, where WB was not specified as a form of behavioural misconduct that warranted corrective disciplinary action. This was also made explicit by Einarsen et al. (2010) in their conceptualisation of the regular occurrence of WB (weekly) and period of WB (over six months or more). Interestingly, 75% of the 85% of the participants affirmed that they had endured WB for a protracted period, which often lasted for years. Notelaers and Van der Heijden (2021) too found that it was endured over an extended period.

In addition, through the lens of the JD-R Model, these findings emphasised WB as a prolonged workplace stressor understood to cause psychological stress for the victims. These also has a negative effect on organisational outcomes, such as a hostile work environment as reported by the participants. Moreover, a few participants maintained that a single isolated incident may be considered severe enough to constitute WB. This notion is supported by Lee (2000) as well as Cregan and Kelloway (2021), who asserted that an isolated threat to attack an individual is by interpretation physical bullying.

Despite a lack of mutual agreement in published works on intentionality by the perpetrator to cause harm to victims as a characteristic of WB (Salin et al., 2018a), 75% of the employees and managers within the study found bullying to be a systematically and purpose-driven planned action or event by perpetrators. Of this 75%, 45% of the managers described intentionality as a pertinent characteristic underpinning WB. This could be ascribed to the frequency of WB that justified and illustrated intent to cause harm to the victim, which is supported by Einarsen et al. (2011). Agervold (2007) justifies that intentionality is often found in subjective accounts of WB, thereby giving further credence to the participants' convictions that perpetrators were intentional in causing malicious harm to them. The municipality's collective agreement on discipline indicates that the organisation imposes discipline that is progressive by nature, with increasing severity in the repetition of the offence. It also places employees on precautionary suspension if there is a reason to maintain that an employee's presence at work poses a hazard to the safety and wellness of fellow employees.

Intentionality can be understood through Foucault's assertion of power as an analysis of social experiences (Groves, 2016) where perpetrators of WB carefully scrutinise their work environment and prey upon the weaknesses of their target, in order to fulfil their self-interests or interests of the organisation. Hence, their interests justify and legitimise their actions of WB. Within the research site, perpetrators bullied employees and managers predominantly on the basis of the participants holding less positional authority in the organisation, exercising compliance with organisational policies, whistleblowing, as well as underlying personal differences against the participants.

75% of the employees and managers within the research sample viewed workplace conflict as being conceptually different from WB based on mere disagreements, which are inevitable in

the workplace, which is corroborated by Amendola (2019). It is understood by the participants to be based on individual differences in terms of conflicting interests or different opinions on work-related matters, that can be reviewed and resolved, thereby preserving a good working relationship. These findings are promoted by Baillien et al. (2017) in terms of conflict being constructive, through the engagement in problem solving measures by the affected parties, whereas the opposite is demonstrated in WB incidents (Ayoko et al., 2003).

Within the context of the said municipality, conflicts are initially dealt with progressively amongst affected parties. If the conflict remains unresolved, secondary intervention from Line Management, HR, EAP, conflict resolution interventions and mediation are the other channels utilised by the affected parties to resolve conflict. However, a minority of the participants acknowledged the propensity of workplace conflict escalating to WB over time, suggesting that enduring conflicts can develop into WB, corroborated in the study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012).

In contrast, a few employees and managers in the study viewed conflict and WB as similar and inseparable, as conflict can escalate into bullying based on the frequency of occurrence (RP 16), thereby necessitating an investigation to determine whether the complaints relate to interpersonal conflict or WB (RP 3). The municipality's code collective agreement requires affected parties to bear the burden of proof against the allegations made, with each party afforded the opportunity to submit and cross-examine evidence and outline aggravating and mitigating circumstances before a sanction is imposed by the Presiding Officer, with due regard to the law. This document is silent on the distinction between workplace conflict and WB, which is a departure from the literature reviewed in this study, that differentiated conflict from WB. A study by Hershcovis (2011) corroborates a minority of participant reports showing a strong overlap between these constructs which result in negative individual and organisational well-being outcomes.

However, a recent study by Notelaers et al. (2018) demonstrated that the strength of the association between conflict and WB decreased as conflict, aggression, and bullying were reported more frequently. Viewed through the lens of the JD-R Model, WB and conflict are social stressors that differ in magnitude, with WB resulting in greater levels of psychological stressors such as anxiety, impaired sleep quality and the need for recovery. These increased

levels of stressors also lead to substantial negative organisational issues in terms of dissatisfaction with an individual's job, reduced commitment and increased turnover, in comparison to workplace conflict.

Whilst not a common finding, an employee who described herself belonging to the Christian faith elaborated on WB being a spiritual problem. This is a significant departure from scholarly definitions contained in the literature on WB. Ephesians 6:12 from the New King James Bible (1979) captures this notion succinctly, which may be relevant to employees of the Christian faith *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* A dearth of published works on spirituality in WB exists, which would warrant further exploration.

Overall, employees and managers within the research sample constructed WB as a frequent, intentional abuse of power from individual or collective perpetrators, towards individual or collective victims. These incidents of abuse of power through the perpetration of negative social acts occur regularly and repeatedly over a long time, resulting in negative affect to victims and a toxic work environment. This construction of WB is subjective and aligned to the inductive nature of IPA in preserving the participants' authentic narratives on the phenomenon.

10% of managers recognised the need for an objective measurement of WB, a scale that classified WB behaviours which would aid their defence against perpetrators. Accordingly, Thiam (2018) highlights the importance of objectivity which can contribute towards creating consistency in the definition of WB. Within the local municipality, attempts to create objectivity are silent in so far as a definition of WB is concerned. However, it does list behaviours that are actually reflective of WB and warrant a dismissal on the first offence.
These include intimidation, assault, (Carroll, 2018), gross insubordination (Birks et al., 2014), bribery and corruption (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016).

4.4.2. Dichotomy of Experiences of Workplace Bullying

4.4.2.1. Manifestations of Workplace Bullying

85% of employees and managers in the study experienced vertical bullying in the form of intimidation and mobbing. This is consistent with the findings by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) who found that overt bullying was largely initiated by superiors within the South African government structures through the use of intimidation. The victims' experiences of intimidation through the use of threats are also supported by Cregan and Kelloway (2021) as indicated earlier.

Mobbing is understood to be group bullying from employees and supervisors or groups of supervisors of their target, which is entrenched in leadership practices and the power vested at an organisational level (Einarsen et al., 2011). This finding corroborates the experiences of mobbing amongst 85% of the participants. Vertical mobbing experienced by employees and managers in the study were in response to their efforts to mitigate fraud and corruption, as well as to ensure compliance with policies and procedures governing the work they do. This notion is affirmed by Pheko et al. (2017) and Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) who asserted that due to the hierarchical power structures in South African civil service, such as in local government organisations, corruption is rife, and most always concealed from others.

These findings can be interpreted through Foucault (1991) where participants experience WB in the form of corruption and unethical practices as a common reality at work, which in turn influences their behavioural responses to bullying (Groves, 2016). These responses to bullying in turn is shaped by the organisation's surveillance tactics as a means of disciplinary control to coerce the participants into obeying the organisation's institutional norms. These norms include not reporting unethical bullying behavior or face repercussions for disobedience through acts of retaliation.

It is therefore not surprising to find that 90% of the employees and managers within the research cohort experienced WB in the form of aggression, particularly by being shouted at, threatened and insulted. Examples and meanings of insults mentioned by the participants included name calling such as *"incelebane"* [people-pleaser] (RP13) that describes a person that does everything just to please another person, "*Impimpi"* [informant] (RP 9, RP 13) which describes

a person who secretly provides information to the authorities. In addition, the dissemination of destructive innuendos from colleagues such as *"being raped"* (RP 4) and malicious gossip such as *"having an affair"* (RP 11) also underpinned workplace aggression described by some participants.

Upward bullying was also described by the managers in the study to a lesser extent than vertical bullying, which included gross insubordination, mobbing and fabrication of claims against their superiors. These findings are corroborated by Birks et al. (2014) who revealed upward bullying behaviours by subordinates such as refusing to accept or complete work delegated by their supervisor, lack of punctuality, absconding from work and meetings, fabricating claims of work persecution against their superior. Correspondingly, Mohammadipour et al. (2018) emphasised a lack of respect underpinning bullying from subordinates towards their immediate superiors, which validated the managers' experiences of WB at the local municipality. These findings of upward bullying can be interpreted through the lens of Foucault, in that resistance is present in the midst of power (Foucault, 1977) in an attempt to sway power into their favour, avoid consequences for poor work performance and tarnish the professional reputation of their superiors.

85% of the employees and managers within the research sample experienced isolation, with the employees experiencing more social isolation than the managers in the form of gossip from colleagues, and their superiors instructing colleagues not to associate with the participants. However, horizontal bullying experienced by participants from fellow co-workers occurred to a lesser extent than vertical bullying, and included bullying behaviours such as gossip, sabotage and being ignored. A study by Farrell et al. (2006) corroborates these findings where bullying may include acts of public humiliation, incivility, social isolation and rumour mongering.

It is important to understand the power dynamics at play in horizontal bullying, to which Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2009) describes the perpetrator as usually having elevated levels of charismatic power which results in mobbing against the target, resulting in the target experiencing social exclusion and helplessness. The horizontal bullying reported is interpreted from a social identity perspective, where perpetrators engage in WB in order to improve their self-esteem and maintain a favourable in-group identity and cohesion in the organisation, whilst

other colleagues support WB to secure and maintain popularity and inclusion in the clique of the perpetrators.

The participant reports of isolation also included job isolation from managers in the form of obstructing selection and development opportunities, which is supported by Du Plessis (2017), as well as the removal of role responsibilities which corresponds with the assertion by Hodson and Sullivan (2012) on obstructionism as WB, through withholding information and resources so that the victim fails to complete the work successfully.

The aforementioned dominant WB behaviours experienced by victims in terms of physical intimidation and aggression, social isolation and job isolation are supported and categorised in the widely validated Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised that measures WB (Carroll, 2018). Whilst not explicitly classified as bullying behaviours within the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, the standards of conduct contained therein revealed that employees are required to refrain from uncivil, abusive, impolite, offensive, intimidation and aggressive behaviour towards other employees or members of the public. Despite the provision of required conduct, WB continues to flourish as these standards of conduct are not endorsed by the organisation. This further exemplifies the power disparities between the perpetrators and victims, which advanced the WB behaviours described by the majority of the participants.

65% of the employees and managers in the study described harassment as a form of bullying, which included sexual harassment in terms of derogatory sexual remarks as well as physical sexual harassment. However, only a minority of female employees within this cohort experienced sexual harassment from the predominant male management. This is consistent with Khosa (2019) who stated that female police officials experienced verbal abuse and sexual harassment at work from male police officials in management positions at South African municipal policing departments, although the prevalence of such bullying was small.

This finding emphasises Foucault's acknowledgement of power as a discourse through the analysis of social experiences (Groves, 2016) where the perpetrators' perceptions of certain individuals in the workplace, such as the perpetrators' interests in the participants as targets and viewing them as a target for having declined their sexual advances, justifies and legitimises their bullying behaviours towards these individuals.

According to Davies (2019), bullying is a form of harassment and is to be dealt with under Section 6(2) of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), which outlines harassment as a form of unfair discrimination. The municipality's anti-discriminatory policy includes a clear statement of commitment towards the eradication of unfair discrimination as cited in Sections 6(1) and 6(2) of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998).

However, female employees within the research cohort maintained that liability was not assigned to perpetrators of sexual harassment. This suggests that the municipality does not maintain or uphold the tenets of their anti-discriminatory policy, thus limiting redress to bullied individuals, and further perpetuating the cycle of bullying in the organisation. This could lead to WB becoming an institutional norm, as it embeds itself within the culture of the organisation. Through the lens of Foucault's work on surveillance in power, policies increase the scrutiny of those reporting issues of WB by management and ultimately constrains action (Medina, 2011).

The aforementioned reports of WB as harassment included 40% employee and manager narratives in the study on work-related harassment, which included excessive work, reduced work, role conflict and role ambiguity. A study by Andersen et al. (2018) in the civil service acknowledged these role stressors, barring a reduced workload as manifestations of WB behaviour, whilst Bruursema et al. (2011) corroborated a reduced workload as a form of WB. Salin and Hoel (2020) further supported the participants' experiences of workplace and role stressors as harassment. Role overload was furthermore categorised as a WB behaviour into the said Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised in terms of impossible job demands (Carroll, 2018).

The local municipality's collective agreement on discipline and anti-discriminatory policy are silent on workplace-related harassment. Role profiles within the municipality provide clear, specific and measurable duties and objectives to direct employees towards meeting organisational objectives. However, these role profiles also include a vague statement of undertaking additional related duties or assignments, which can increase the risk of work-related harassment as indicated above.

Through the JD-R Model, WB can result in victims experiencing role conflict and social isolation, elevated levels of psychological stress including exhaustion and shame, as espoused by Mayer et al. (2017). These in turn can lead to reduced work engagement and productivity.

45% of the employees and managers within the research sample experienced victimisation and undermining as WB behaviours. Victimisation included the use of the performance management system as a punitive measure in terms of not conducting performance reviews, being deprived of salary and financial benefits, as well as having insufficient time to prepare for such assessments. A study by Berlingieri and D'Cruz (2021) support these notions through the lens of Foucault's discourse of power, whereby the ideologies and discourses of performance management over employee rights, are in fact endorsed by top management. This creates a dissonance in the understanding and use of what is legitimate and illegitimate power by organisations and management, to support and legitimise the existence of WB in organisations. It is therefore postulated that victimisation destabilised a number of the participants at the local municipality.

The victims' experiences of being undermined included discrediting tactics to cause harm to their personal and professional reputation. This is corroborated by Carrim, (2016) where gossip as a form of WB behaviour was utilised to hurt a highflyer's reputation. In the results above, the perpetrators sought to delegitimise the participants in the eyes of their peers so that they would not have a support network and be socially isolated. A study by Salin and Hoel (2020) added their empirical support to this finding, as it revealed that low levels of social support exacerbated the social isolation experienced by the victims of WB and increased the risk to subsequent WB incidents.

In other instances, employees and managers of the study experienced discrediting to such an extent that the perpetrators, being openly supported by management and the leadership, wanted to have them forced out of their jobs and this was done through mobbing. This is supported by Duffy and Sperry (2012) when an individual is bullied by a group of individuals for the purpose of being removed from the organisation. This suggests that WB is clearly embedded in the organisational hierarchy and endorsed by the municipality, as evidenced in the participants being transferred to different departments, receiving fabrication of claims against them by the

internal Ombudsman due to the victims' compliance with legislation, organisational policies and procedures.

40% of the employees and managers in the research cohort experienced WB in the form of public humiliation, whilst 30% of the employees, including a manager, experienced intrusion in terms of an invasion of personal privacy. In sharing their narratives on WB, the participants revealed their experiences of public humiliation from managers in the context of meetings and in open plan offices, where the bullying would take place, whilst intrusion included surveillance that invaded the participants' privacy. It is inferred that WB in the form of intrusion aims to control the participants' movements and to let them know that they were being closely monitored. Participants reported that surveillance took place via email communication, during meetings, through the spying of colleagues as well as through monitoring their movements at ablution facilities. An example of surveillance is illustrated by a participant (RP 2) below.

RP 2: *"they did this Teams meeting regarding EAP and HR prepared that, and they sent one of my colleagues to make sure that I log on. And then I said why would someone send you to ask me to log on? Because they want to know who raised their hand, who asked this who asked that …"*

The participants' experiences of humiliation and intrusion are closely supported by Peng et al. (2019) where abusive supervision was described as WB that included behaviours such as ridicule and invading employee privacy. This notion, along with the study findings, can be interpreted through the lens of Foucault's surveillance theory where modern workplaces have utilised technology as a circuit of social power in increasing transparency into the lives of their workforce, collecting data and information about their workforce to the point of having certain aspects of their privacy breached (Sheridan, 2016). These behaviours are not addressed in the municipal collective agreement and anti-discriminatory policy, suggesting that the basic human rights on the protection of privacy, psychological integrity and the prohibition of unfair discrimination against a person, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), may be contravened.

The reported manifestations of WB in the form of intimidation, sabotage, gross insubordination and corruption have been identified within the municipality's collective agreement on discipline as serious offences upon which the perpetrator may be dismissed for a first-time

offence, based on the Schedule 8 Code of Good Practice for Dismissal within the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995). However, within the participants' narratives of WB, dismissal of the perpetrators for WB has not occurred, further supporting the notion of policies as a form of institutional power as revealed by Hodgins et al. (2020) earlier. It also suggests that existing organisational policies cannot combat or restrain WB in organisations, due to not providing clear, alternative courses of action to decisively address the phenomenon (Mokgolo, 2017).

In the municipality's collective agreement on discipline and in the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995), there is no definition of misconduct and WB is not included as an example of misconduct, which may give rise to a lesser sanction being imposed for bullying behaviours. Similarly, the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy, aligned to the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), did not specify WB as a form of unfair prejudice, nor did it provide explicit avenues to address this issue.

4.4.2.2. Consequences of Workplace Bullying

WB had harmful consequences on the participants' psychological and physical health. The most common psychological consequences described by the employees and management included, inter alia, depression, anxiety, fear, low self-esteem and psychological distress. Similarly, Verkuil et al. (2015) revealed that WB was associated with despondency, apprehension and psychological distress. Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) also support the notion of bullied victims being debilitated by fear in response to WB. Psychological distress elaborated by the participants is pronounced within the context of the public sector, where victims that were exposed to WB on a regular basis, were more frequently absent from work to seek professional medical help for stress (Momberg, 2011).

Similarly, 30% of the employees and managers in the study described emotional exhaustion as a result of WB. A study by Neto et al. (2017) discovered that emotional exhaustion is a key component of burnout, which is linked to diminished well-being and productivity in the workplace. These findings suggest that psychological ill-health and the manifestation of physical ill-health due to WB are inextricably linked and do not occur in isolation, which is also corroborated by Nielsen and Einarsen (2012).

Given the repeated, long-term exposure characteristic of WB, and viewed through the lens of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), victims would experience elevated levels of psychological strain, insufficient recovery time and higher levels of burnout in response to these occupational demands. This can be attributed to the insufficient time available to garner coping resources and the depletion thereof in response to WB episodes, resulting in the victims feeling defenceless against the negative acts of WB inflicted upon them (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Empirical support has also been provided for damaged self-esteem elaborated by 55% of the employees and managers of the research cohort as a result of WB within the public sector, where the victims become silent, lack confidence and feel worthless, disrespected and devalued (Nguyen et al., 2019; Samnani & Singh 2016). This further results in the development of a negative self-image and shame (Mayer et al., 2017). A few employees and managers in the study regarded their experiences of WB as traumatic and associated the phenomenon with PTSD, suicide ideation and suicidal behaviour, which are corroborated by Du Plessis (2017) and Hogh et al. (2021).

Additionally, anger and irritability were reported amongst a few employees and managers within the research cohort as a result of WB. These emotions were attributed to participants harbouring resentment towards the perpetrators for engaging in role conflict as a WB behaviour towards them. This is explicitly supported by Samnani and Singh (2016) who asserts that when an individual experiences frustration due to role conflict, they may become increasingly annoyed with the individual. Upon a further review of literature on WB, empirical support has been provided for anger when the victims experienced a violation of their rights or collective rules (Power & Dalgleish, 2008) or when they endured unfair and unacceptable treatment that fractured their identity (Lazarus, 2006) through counterproductive behaviours.

Furthermore, when participants observed their peers being bullied, they felt anger and in other instances feared that they themselves would be bullied. These notions suggest that the witnesses also experience negative psychological consequences in response to WB, such as moral anger (Khumalo, 2019) and fear of retaliation (Wu, 2019).

These findings are clarified through the lens of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), whereby the interaction of high occupational demands with limited personal resources will result in the victims of WB experiencing high levels of psychological stress.

The municipality's EAP provides psychosocial support to those employees grappling with personal or work life challenges and was further described by managers and employees as one of the means to help them manage the psychological consequences of WB as per the results above.

There were moderate reports of negative physical illnesses as a result of WB from employees and managers at the local municipality, in terms of cardiovascular diseases, which are congruent with the literature by Lingen (2019). A few participants reported memory impairment due to WB, which was corroborated by Presti et al. (2019). A participant was also diagnosed with Grave's disease, an autoimmune thyroid disease as a result of WB. This is an important departure from the literature reviewed in the study. There is also a scarcity of literature reporting Grave's disease as a ramification of WB, however a study by Young (2017) provides empirical support for the victims of WB contending with this autoimmune disease long after their experiences of the phenomenon. This suggests that further investigation of physical-ill-health as a consequence of WB is necessary in order to achieve a comprehensive insight of this interaction.

This local municipality has a special Unit dedicated to helping and managing the employees' health and safety through the provision of medical screenings and medical reports, to ensure that they are able to receive appropriate medical care and perform optimally at work. However, the disregard of medical recommendations and intimidation of medical personnel in the Unit emphasises the pervasiveness and extent of bullying on the victims. This notion was commented on by participant (RP 7):

RP 7: *"they called me to tell me that you know, we are not in agreement with the Department O Report, so you are not you are not allowed to work remotely … Then I ask doctor, Doctor, why is the municipality want to talk to my doctor? Your seniors or your supervisors, your managers, they reported me to my Supervisor. They said I'm too lenient on you. So that's why you were asked to sign the consent for us to contact your treating doctor."*

Psychosomatic complaints as a result of WB were regularly described by the employees and managers of the study, in respect of insomnia, fatigue, weight fluctuations and headaches. These same findings were corroborated by Pereira et al. (2013) in relation to anxiety and sleep disturbances as repercussions of WB, and Lever et al. (2019) in respect of sleep changes, fatigue, headaches, weight gain and weight loss, as a result of WB.

It is therefore logical to find the participants' reports detailing how WB contributed towards leaving behind a trail of damaged interpersonal relationships. In this vein, 40% of the employees and managers within the research sample described how their families had been negatively affected by virtue of their experiences of WB, primarily in terms of fear and anxiety over their well-being and safety. In addition, an employee reported divorce as a result of WB. This notion is consistent with the findings by Kalamdien and Lawrence (2017) who opine that the victims of WB experienced work-life conflict due to impaired relationships with their families, inclusive of (Namie & Namie, 2011) couples experiencing separation as a result of WB.

These findings suggest that through the lens of the JD-R Model, the victims may experience an interaction of WB and high psychological strain-reduced peer and life satisfaction, which may deplete the levels of their resources and coping mechanisms to effectively deal with WB, resulting in diminished motivation and productivity.

90% of the employees and managers in the study described lower productivity and a loss of motivation by virtue of WB, which is further corroborated by Vveinhardt et al. (2018). Participants attributed this due to increased time spent in negative, ruminative thinking about their WB experiences, struggling with the psychological and physical ill-health reported above, being absent from work and utilising sick leave to deal with the incidents (Lever et al., 2019). In addition, all participants accepted the burden of having to defend themselves against WB (Mokgolo, 2017). It is suggested that this could have further adverse consequences for the victims in terms of invoking poor performance management procedures, should their organisational objectives not be achieved.

It is therefore not surprising to find moderate reports of psychological, behavioural changes in terms of the employees and managers becoming defensive and hypervigilant, because they felt

threatened by WB. According to Simunovic et al. (2013), defensive behaviour is in response to fear-based emotions associated with WB, whilst Hoel et al. (2010) provides empirical support for hypervigilance as a result of WB. Examples of defensive behaviour reported by participants included withdrawal, rebuilding and preserving their personal and professional reputation in their management and peer networks.

30% of the employees and managers at the local municipality also described feelings of mistrust against the organisation for failing to adequately protect them and offer appropriate redress to them as bullied individuals, which could be construed as a breach of the employment contract. This is supported by Rai and Agarwal (2018) who referred to the breakdown of the trust relationship between the employer and the employee by virtue of WB, which is in essence a violation of the employment contract. Redress mechanisms in the municipality's collective agreement on discipline and anti-discriminatory policy are very limited and include the opportunity for aggrieved employees to lodge a grievance, pursue dispute resolution processes and lodging an appeal, should they not be satisfied with the outcome of these processes. This demonstrates a lack of organisational support, which is further substantiated as an antecedent of bullying in the results above.

More than 50% of the participants offered additional organisational consequences of WB that corresponded to the conclusions of recent studies, such as a toxic organisational culture, a hostile work environment (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019) and a demoralised workforce (Yildiz, 2018).

At an interpersonal level, which is also a characteristic and contributing factor to the toxic organisational culture, it includes moderate employee and manager narratives on mistrust (Rai & Agarwal, 2018); damaged interpersonal relationships (Otema et al., 2022) as well as workplace deviance (Sischka et al., 2018). Employees and managers in this study reported a rise in dishonesty and misuse of organisational time and resources amongst their peers, which are examples of workplace deviant behaviours as a form of WB (Thiam, 2018).

Ultimately, this has affected the organisational culture of the local municipality to such an extent that some participants have reported a total lack of ethics and ineffective service delivery to the public. This has been supported by Rasheed (2014) who asserts that a loss of ethics,

insufficient accountability and engagement in corruption, has become so widespread within Africa that such behaviours have become institutionalised as part of African norms when it includes public service delivery. The municipality has undertaken diagnostic organisational culture surveys that corroborate these results. In response to the survey findings, the municipality has developed organisational values and implemented change management awareness programmes for employees in an attempt to transform the organisational culture. However, the findings at the local municipality indicate the widespread pervasiveness of WB.

The creation of a toxic organisational culture could be interpreted through the lens of Foucault (1991) in terms of knowledge being the evidence of social reality. In this context, WB becomes an acceptable cultural norm of the organisation, influences how individuals define themselves as victims, passive bystander or fellow perpetrator of WB and determines their behavioural responses to workplace deviance and related bullying behaviours through a misguided perception of power.

WB has resulted in increased organisational financial costs well documented in the literature and viewed through the lens of 50% of the employees and managers in the study. These include increased turnover and turnover intentions of talent and early retirements (Sheehan et al., 2018; Beukes, 2019), which lends itself to a loss of institutional knowledge (Smit, 2014); extended sick leave and absenteeism (Lever et al., 2019; Otema et al., 2022) and a poor organisational reputation (Vveidhardt et al., 2018) in terms of participants experiencing reduced organisational identification. The municipality has responded to this through increased employee engagement campaigns and by building a credible employee value proposition as part of its talent attraction and retention initiatives. However, despite providing their employees with a collective voice, there remains a poor endorsement of organisational policies and employee recommendations made, as outlined in the results above. This suggests that the municipality may not always validate employee concerns and has limited commitment towards the eradication of WB.

15% of managers at the local municipality also described receiving compensation claims for WB (Davies, 2019) and observed colleagues being medically boarded with mental disabilities by virtue of WB. In fact, Nielsen et al. (2017) demonstrated an inextricable link between experiences of WB and an increased likelihood of an early retirement due to disabilities.

These findings can be understood within the context of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) where turnover intentions, turnover and a damaged organisational reputation are all negative organisational outcomes in response to individuals experiencing high occupational demands, elevated psychological stress and poor motivation levels. This should serve as a stark warning to organisations of the ramifications and significant losses by reason of WB, that threaten not only the lives of the victims and the workforce, but also the sustainability of the organisation.

The aforementioned reports of dishonesty, deviant workplace behaviours, being absent from work and low productivity, transgress the standards of conduct within the municipality's collective agreement on discipline that employees are required to adhere to. This suggests that WB results in widespread negative organisational consequences that do not support the organisation's hierarchical culture of uniformity and control (Samsudin et al., 2020), which is reflected within the collective agreement in terms of compliance to policy and practice. This in turn may increase the risk of victims and employees being bullied further for violating institutional norms.

These behavioural consequences highlight the hidden social power seeking to resist power within the organisation, in that resistance is present in the presence of power (Foucault, 1991). However, the increased likelihood of WB through the use of discipline for non-compliance with organisational standards of conduct can also be understood through the theoretical lens of Foucault where the purpose of organisations is to develop and enforce organisational statutes, strategies, and systems to create networks of power, as well as control the dominant discourse through the use of continuous discipline (Stokes & Clegg, 2002).

4.4.2.3. Antecedents of Workplace Bullying

As indicated earlier, a misuse of authority was described by the majority of employees and managers in the study as a tactic culminating in abusive leadership as an antecedent of WB. This is supported by studies that revealed 75% of middle and senior management, by virtue of their positional power, were identified as perpetrators of WB who inflicted abusive supervision on their subordinates (Botha, 2010; Peng et al., 2019). The employees and managers in the study described abusive leadership to include mobbing by management together with HR, senior leadership, trade unions and politicians.

Mobbing with HR was more prevalent in the employee accounts of WB at the local municipality. This was attributed to HR prioritising their relationship with management and trivialising the severity of WB complaints from the victims. A study by Harrington et al. (2012) discovered that human resources personnel distrusted the bullying claims by the employees and found them to be a difficult topic best avoided. Instead, they prioritised their relationships with their managers so as to avoid any adverse consequences in their relationship with management.

Upon reviewing the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, there were no criteria listed for the Presiding Officer breaching the requirement of neutrality in casually engaging with parties or their representatives whilst presiding over the case. This was captured by RP 10 as follows:

RP 10: *"the HRM who was there is the same HRM who presided on that issue previously of course with an HRO who was working with a Manager to rectify what has happened in the past. it was another very bullying tactic because officially I was allowed not to work in this environment through the grievance which was accepted and signed by all people involved. So why must I be thrown back and be made to relive that again. So I felt it was unfair. For some reason all those pleas did not find fertile ground with all people who were there. So they felt that no, I should go there because the Manager was saying I should."*

Mobbing by management and trade unions were more commonly elaborated on in the managers' narratives of WB at the local municipality. This was done to coerce participants into complying with unreasonable instructions or risk facing negative consequences. This emphasises how management prioritised their relationships with trade unions who were given decision making power over Line Management decisions, which resulted in a misuse of power through bullying the participants. This is supported by Akella (2016) whereby WB is the result of exemplified, authorised and unequal power differentials. Alternatively, this finding suggests that management, in transferring decision making power to trade unions, could be an attempt to curtail collective resistance from trade unions against the prevailing abusive leadership by management towards the employees.

However, some employees and managers in the study were assertive in resisting mobbing, which resulted in them facing further victimisation, in terms of being transferred to work in

different Departments. This is corroborated by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) where some perpetrators may perceive assertiveness as aggression, which could lead to a vicious cycle of WB. In other situations, the participants reported that managers utilised reward power in the form of increased remuneration to silence trade unions from assisting employees, and thereby exposing employees to an increased risk of WB, in the absence of such support.

This is a noteworthy departure from the literature, and in a recent study by Seifert (2021) which captures the divide and rule approach inherent in WB by management over workgroups, in reducing trade union intervention through manipulation and intimidation, to uphold the dominant ideology, which is to maintain management authority.

There were moderate responses amongst employees and managers in the study on organisational political interference, organisational political appointments and organisational political affiliations within the research site being considered as antecedents of WB. This is supported by Momberg (2011) who asserts that politically motivated change is responsible for WB in organisations and can give rise to changes in the labour management process and draconian management behaviour as reported by Ironside and Seifert (2003).

This was particularly evident in a review of the municipal collective agreement on discipline, where it was discovered that the Municipal Manager and Senior Managers in terms of Sections 54A and 56 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) were stipulated to be precluded from the collective agreement. It is suggested that their exemption as organisational political office bearers from experiencing disciplinary consequences in this agreement, enabled the opportunity for potentially exerting increased organisational political interference in the organisation.

The most common manifestations of organisational political interference reported by the managers of the research sample included bypassing the reporting lines of superiors inflicting upward bullying through gross insubordination towards managers and leadership, attempting to ensure compliance with organisational policies and procedures. A vivid description of workplace violence through upward bullying was illustrated by RP 9 as follows:

"I think he was a Head of the Unit E. When he came here, I think it was, I heard that he was kicked out of the depot and they even stoned him and his vehicles." These instances of organisational political interference are supported by Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) who asserted that the quest for power between political leadership and professional leadership enabled WB to flourish across the organisation.

In light of the above, it is therefore not surprising to find that abusive leadership was upheld primarily to ensure deviation from organisational policies, procedures, municipal regulations and legislation, and compliance with unlawful and unreasonable instructions, which advanced the spread of WB at the municipality. This is congruent with the findings by Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) reporting a lack of compliance to legislative provisions within the South African government structures and seizing the opportunities to engage in fraud and corruption (Ndevu, 2019).

The lack of non-compliance to legislative provisions creates fertile conditions for WB to flourish, particularly when there is no consequence management in place for non-compliance. For instance, a manager of the study reported that the perpetrator was promoted after having bullied a large number of staff members, which is supported by Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) where perpetrators were rewarded with promotions despite displaying WB behaviours in the civil service. This clearly demonstrates the blatant endorsement of WB by the organisation. Moreover, it communicates a message to organisational members that WB will not affect advancement in their careers within the municipality.

Through the lens of Foucault, the conceptualisation of power as a discourse whereby discursive power in social interactions permeates the organisation, by exploiting other less powerful employees through WB, which is justified and legitimised in order to achieve their self-interests (Groves, 2016). It is therefore suggested that an institutionalisation of workplace bullying is created in the absence of consequence management.

Consequently, 80% of the employees and managers in the study shared a common narrative on a perceived lack of leadership and organisational support as resources to assist victims in dealing with WB and obtain redress, thereby encouraging the spread of WB across the organisation. This is supported by Karatuna (2015) who discovered that leadership, in receiving

formal complaints of bullying from victims, ignored the problem, elected not to believe the victim and blamed the victim for the bullying.

Similarly, a lack of organisational support of not knowing where and how to report bullying, as well as non-compliance with grievances and disciplinary procedures within the prescribed timeframes, contributed to the perpetuation of WB. When reviewing the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, there was no specified time period for Presiding Officers to abide by in determining a new date for the commencement of a disciplinary hearing. It is suggested that this could cause unnecessary delays in the victim's case on WB being heard, delay in sanctions being imposed to implement corrective justice, as well as undue stress for the victim. This notion was further captured within the context of a participant's utilisation of alternative dispute resolution procedures espoused within the municipality's collective agreement on discipline.

RP 7: *"The Commissioner just decided, nje ... he said he has developed a self-interest in the case therefore he's conflicted, he just cannot proceed with the arbitration. Then he tried to find another Commissioner. There were no other Commissioner that were available ... I had to go away and re-apply for arbitration. I was only given the dates for the arbitration, it will take place in the first quarter of the year ... now I have to wait for such a long time without getting paid."*

This highlights a further flaw in the management of the dispute resolution procedures at the municipality in relation to the possible implicit bias of the Presiding Officers over disputes. This is because, according to the municipality's collective agreement, parties in dispute were only allowed to select existing arbitrators from a pre-determined division of the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC), which can further exacerbate bullying and limit redress for the victims of WB.

Empirical support is provided by Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) for these notions, whereby a lack of organisational support, such as the absence of an organisational policy that provides clear guidelines on how to combat and eradicate WB, limits the human resources practitioner's ability to control WB effectively, further exacerbating the spread of this phenomenon in the workplace. Overall, it is suggested that the scant leader and organisational support on WB reveals the extent to which the phenomenon is endorsed across the organisational hierarchy,

which further serves to maintain the collective silencing of the employees who dare challenge the prevailing status quo.

Through the JD-R Model, victims already experience psychological strain as a result of high job demands, which is amplified by a lack of job resources, such as limited organisational support. This leads to higher levels of psychological stress, the inability to deal with WB effectively and may diminish organisational commitment, contentment in the job and turnover intentions.

Instead, participants experienced destructive leadership styles in the form of autocratic leadership, which is conducive to WB as it instils terror, unchallenged obedience and discourages dialogue in the resolution of problems (Salin & Hoel, 2020). The managers and employees of the study reported that autocratic leadership within the organisational political spectrum is interpreted by leaders and employees in terms of how leaders are expected to behave, which perpetuates WB across the organisation. This notion is corroborated by Akella (2016) and emphasises the internalisation, rationalisation and perpetuation of WB as a cultural norm (Samnani, 2013).

Similarly, the employees and managers of the research cohort described how management purposefully maintained power by fomenting tension among team levels and encouraging competition for resources amongst colleagues. This is supported by Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) in the civil service that is identified by competition for resources and demonstration of competence under such conditions, can result in bullying as well. It is suggested that the perpetrators of WB at the local municipality actively sought to prevent and dismantle any form of possible collective resistance inherent in interpersonal relationships towards the prevailing management authority, through the creation of vicious cycles of WB at different organisational levels.

Additionally, a laissez-faire leadership style was reported amongst a minority of managers in the study which further perpetuated WB within the municipality. This is supported by Glambek et al. (2018) who maintain that leaders with a laissez-faire leadership style avoid intervening in instances of WB due to not providing sufficient supervision over the interpersonal relations of their subordinates, as well as not having the required knowledge on how to deal with such

incidents. Empirical support has also been provided for autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles exacerbating the spread of WB (Samnani, 2021).

These findings in respect of abusive leadership and organisational political interference as antecedents of WB towards participants suggest that WB is not merely an individual concern that affects organisations, but an organisational concern that affects individuals. This is corroborated by Mannix-McNamara (2021) whereby organisations and individuals create and reproduce power in an interconnected manner. In addition, it is also suggested that organisational political interference provides a negative image of the ruling political party, which implicates itself at organisational level.

These antecedents of WB can also be interpreted through Foucault's governmentality of power whereby institutions as systems of power uphold their dominant institutional norms and practices, and through these mechanisms and normalising judgements endeavour to coerce employees to willfully subject themselves to these practices or face repercussions for disobedience and resistance (Sheridan, 2016).

Whilst there may be no definitive perpetrator and victim profile of WB, 90% of the employees and managers at the local municipality acknowledged certain defining personality characteristics associated with the perpetrators of WB. Perpetrators of WB were described as insecure, which is supported by Botha (2019) in that the perpetrators of WB are insecure and are obsessed with the need to control their environment or others that may threaten their fragile sense of self-worth. The perpetrators were also reported to be jealous of and threatened by a victim's competence. This finding is corroborated by Gobind (2015) where perpetrators bully individuals if they believe that those individuals are a threat to themselves in the form of "competency, popularity or experience" (p.159).

Foucault supports the notion that these cognitions of perceived threats within the environment enable the justification of WB behaviours by perpetrators against victims to maintain power and serve their self-interests within an organisation.

Additionally, perpetrators of WB crave control and have a low ethical disposition. The notion of perpetrators being controlling is supported by Baillien et al. (2009) who asserted that bullies

have a domineering character which can be somewhat abrasive and aggressive at times. According to the authors Cheteni and Shindika (2017), the notion of perpetrators having a low ethical disposition was discovered where the majority of managers within local municipalities in South Africa lacked morals, harboured negative attitudes towards ethical principles and consequently did not enforce ethical principles nor encouraged employees to uphold such principles. This supports the participants' views of the widespread deviation from organisational policies, procedures and legislation in the municipality, as indicated earlier.

Some employees in the study also described personality attributes of narcissism, deception and psychopathy to be associated with the perpetrators of WB. Narcissism and psychopathy are empirically supported by Tokarev et al. (2017) in that narcissism involve individuals with a high sense of ego and self-image, whilst psychopathy is more malicious than narcissism due to the perpetrators deriving satisfaction from inflicting harm on their targets. However, both narcissism and psychopathy involve deception, manipulation, low agreeableness and high impulsivity (Tokarev et al., 2017). This offers plausible explanations for the participants' narratives of the perpetrators portraying a façade of being religious to others, yet displaying rude, aggressive behaviours with the purpose to exploit victims inherent in WB. This view is corroborated by Munir et al. (2019) who found that perpetrators of bullying displayed a Big Five personality trait of being open to new experiences, indicating that they actively scan their environment for WB opportunities. Overall, these findings suggest that the personality of the perpetrators were a strong antecedent of WB.

However, most employees recounted that the perpetrators would target individuals who avoided conflict, had low self-efficacy and low support networks. Contrary to the literature review provided on personality as an antecedent of WB, the research findings suggest that the personality of the victims had a limited influence in determining whether they would be bullied. A recent study by Osler (2021) provides support for non-confrontational individuals being more likely to become a victim of WB.

However, employees described their peers as having low self-efficacy (Lee & Akhtar, 2007) and their limited social support (Lambert et al., 2018) which contributed towards being targeted and advanced WB across the municipality. This necessitates further investigation on the

mediators and moderators of the association between the personalities of the victims and WB (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

These findings can be interpreted through Foucault's tenet of knowledge being interpreted as evidence of social reality (Foucault 1991), whereby the victims are susceptible to the control of the perpetrators by not having support and low confidence. This in turn shapes how individuals define themselves; bullies are open to new experiences and impulsive in their pursuit to obtain control over others and their environment, whilst victims have negative cognitive appraisals of themselves as being vulnerable in the face of limited resources, and their behaviour (aggression by the perpetrators and induced submission of the victims to the perpetrator).

The JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) also illuminates the import of these findings, in that high occupational demands (WB) with limited individual and organisational resources (low self-efficacy, low social and organisational support) give rise to the victims and targets experiencing high levels of psychological strain and negative organisational outcomes, that is, reduced engagement.

The municipality utilises workplace personality assessments as part of an assessment battery for selection purposes in compliance with its selection policy. However, this is considered insufficient in diagnosing the personality traits as described by the participants above. This suggests that the perpetrators of WB may not receive appropriate therapeutic intervention, which can lend itself to WB going undetected and proliferating across the municipality.

Most of the employees and managers in the study also described prejudice on the basis of gender, race, and education, whilst ageism occurred to a lesser extent in the participants' experiences of WB. The participants reported both a 65% prevalence of male and female-perpetrated bullying, with females being the common targets and victims in both instances. Females were subjected to negative gendered stereotypes in the workplace, whilst the males were bullied through abusive supervision to enforce compliance with organisational policies and procedures.

These findings are congruent with the study by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) who found statistically significant findings, in that both males and females experienced WB. The notions of female gendered stereotypes and males experiencing abusive leadership are also supported by Salin and Hoel (2013) who stated that females were more prone to WB in the form of social discrimination, whilst males experienced abusive supervision in the form of negative social acts.

The gendered stereotypes towards females were perpetrated by male management in the study, suggesting that females had limited leadership support when addressing WB. Limited leadership support contributes to WB as indicated earlier and increases the risk of females possibly being more susceptible to bullying. This is particularly concerning in light of the municipality's anti-discrimination policy mandate for the implementation of equal oppurtunity measures for females listed as a vulnerable group requiring protection in terms of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998). This, however, does not preclude the lived reality of male participants being susceptible to bullying and their experiences of limited leadership support in related incidents. Males therefore also require improved protection by the organisation regarding bullying in the workplace.

However, whilst the municipality hosts gender-based violence workshops to give effect to the anti-discriminatory policy of eliminating unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, these workshops do not discourse on male and female employees' experiences of WB. This suggests that minimal to no awareness has been created by the organisation on gendered accounts of WB, which increases the propensity for these experiences to remain undetected and ignored in the organisation.

There were mixed findings with respect to male and female responses to WB contributing to the escalation of WB in the organisation. The majority of female and male participants approached WB in an assertive manner, where assertiveness is an attempt to take control of their situation (Omar, 2017). Conversely, female managers reported that female perpetrators of bullying internalised norms of aggression displayed by male leadership and behaved in a similar manner in order to compete for higher positions of power occupied by male management.

This is corroborated by Einarsen et al. (2011) and Keashly et al. (2020) who reported instrumental aggression being the means to achieve a desired objective such as promotional goals or a heightened self-image. This was endorsed by the organisation where a female perpetrator was promoted following her engagement in bullying staff. It is also suggested that through the lens of Foucault, the internalisation of abusive leadership by females through behaving like the perpetrators can be construed as the hidden social power in organisations (Groves, 2016) in an attempt to resist and reduce the power differentials experienced.

On the other hand, a minority of male managers in the study avoided confronting the perpetrators or reporting WB, as they feared subsequent bullying (O'Donnell & MacIntosh, 2016) and felt that by virtue of their masculinity, needed to be strong and withstand their bullying, which could perpetuate the cycles of bullying. This was also supported by Salin and Hoel (2013) who found that males were less inclined to seek guidance in relation to their experiences of WB. According to Foucault, men and women define themselves in response to power dynamics (as a victim or a survivor) and their behavioural response to it (avoidance, confrontation, aggression), which perpetuates and legitimises WB in organisations (Groves, 2016) through a gendered lens.

The study revealed that 70% of the bullies reported by participants were African, which could be attributed to Africans comprising the majority ethnic group within the workforce and population demographics. Racial discrimination was experienced mostly by African employees and management from African perpetrators in the form of tribalism, which resulted in clique mentalities and the perpetuation of WB. This view is echoed by El Ghaziri et al. (2021) in that the civil service has a large and diverse workforce, which contributes towards the increased risk of WB in these organisations.

These findings can also be acknowledged from a social identity perspective where the perpetrators engage in WB in order to improve their self-esteem and maintain favourable in-group identity and cohesion in the organisation by preserving their ethnic identities and cultural norms, whilst others support WB to obtain the preferred identity and belonging to the in-group of perpetrators of WB (colleagues). This leaves the victims of WB being identified as the out-group based on their individual differences that are not accepted by the inner circle in terms of their race.

Unquestioned obedience to seniors were also commonly reported amongst the African participants, which exacerbated WB in the organisation. This finding is a departure from literature in the current study, which could be explained by African proverbs such as "where water is the boss, the land must obey" (Adamo, 2015, p.10) and "you have little power over what is not yours" (Adamo, 2015, p.10). This indisputable obedience reflects a bureaucratic standard of conduct and mindset that is further embedded within the municipality's collective agreement on discipline, requiring organisational members to obey all lawful and reasonable instructions.

A minority of Indian employees and managers in the study described experiences of unfair discrimination from Africans through the Employment Equity policies and Affirmative Action measures, which according to the Democratic Alliance, as the opposition party to the African National Congress "tends to benefit the middle class and those who are politically connected." (Breakfast & Maart, 2019, p.2). A study by Meyer and Kirsten (2014) also revealed that victims experienced racial bullying in the form of discrimination through affirmative action measures, whilst their co-workers experienced psychological violence on the basis of race and being the racial minority.

The local municipality's anti-discrimination policy captures the spirit and purports of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) in the elimination of all forms of prejudice in organisational policies and practices. This is achieved through the implementation of affirmative action measures for designated groups who have been previously disadvantaged under the Apartheid regime. The policy further holds the Municipal Managers, executive management and Employment Equity related forums and committees accountable for the development, implementation and monitoring of the achievement of numerical goals, affirmative action measures and targets.

However, the Indian participants revealed that the implementation of these measures are inconsistent, over-subscribed in employment practices and are geared towards ensuring organisational political appointments. This resulted in these participants describing the marginalisation of the non-designated groups from selection and development opportunities to advance their careers in the municipality. This is supported by Woodrow and Guest (2017) due

to anti-discriminatory policy provisions not being sanctioned by the leadership of the organisation.

In doing so, Samnani and Singh (2016) assert that the inconsistent application of anti-discriminatory policies, procedures and equity legislation could result in the perpetrators learning that the organisational climate legitimises or even institutionalises WB with no consequence management, and thus may utilise such social power against minority groups whom they perceive to be disadvantaged by WB. This is evident in the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy, as there is no directive to stakeholders on how to proceed once numerical goals and targets with respect to affirmative action have been reached, nor is there any listed provisions on consequence management for discriminating against non-designated groups on these grounds.

As discussed throughout the thesis, power as discourse is evident in the written political dispensation of the South African Employment Equity legislation and associated anti-discriminatory policy provisions that provides insight into the hidden power (Groves, 2016). This would include suitable redress in the form of affirmative action measures for previously disadvantaged ethnic groups that have resulted in a new, dominant post-apartheid ideology in South Africa.

This in turn determines the way knowledge is understood, interpreted and the behavioural responses of individuals in response to these power dynamics (Foucault, 1991). Concerning the shift in power dynamics, some previously disadvantaged groups exert their newly acquired power and influence upon ethnic minorities through WB, exacerbating the spread of the phenomenon in the organisation. It, therefore, suggests that there may be a selective application of policy provisions to segregate and hinder equal employment and development opportunities for all members of the workforce. Consequently, these policy provisions provide credence and legitimisation of institutional bullying in the form of unfair discrimination towards minority groups in the municipality.

75% of the employees and managers in the study reported that the perpetrators were older than themselves. A minority of female employees and managers in the study reported being victimised because of their age, with younger participants being victimised more than older

participants. These findings are supported by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) who researched WB across six different industries, including local government structures in South Africa and discovered that younger employees were bullied on a larger scale, compared to older employees. These participants described that they were bullied because of their high achievements and being appointed into roles at a young age. This suggests that young participants were considered a threat to the older perpetrators in respect of their competence and achievement orientation, which is also supported by Gobind (2015).

The African proverb by Adamo (2015) "however clever a young man may be, he cannot do things as an elder would do them because he lacks experience." (p.10) also illustrates unfair discrimination based on age, as reported by the participants. However, age was considered an antecedent of WB by a minority of the participants.

55% of the employees and managers in the study held higher qualifications than many of the perpetrators. These findings do not support the findings by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) which show that employees with lower education or qualifications were bullied more frequently than those with higher education or qualifications. Conversely, these notions support a study conducted by Ariza-Montes et al. (2014) who discovered that those who were highly educated and occupied high positions in management also experienced WB.

Most employees and managers within the research cohort revealed that the majority of the perpetrators of bullying were organisational political appointments, lacked skills and were threatened by their competence and achievement orientation. Foucault maintains that power as a discourse is perpetuated when bullies analyse social experiences and their work environment (in this case the identification of a perceived threat to their professional status) and hence justify their bullying behaviour (Groves, 2016) to safeguard their professional and social standing within the organisation.

Overall, the municipality gives effect to its anti-discriminatory policy provisions through diversity management workshops and interventions. However, there is little to no awareness to determine if these workshops and interventions specifically address WB in the form of prejudice on the social phenomena as reported above.

Under-reporting of WB by the victims and bystanders was described by 75% of the employees and managers due to fear of victimisation. This notion is supported by Uys and Smit (2016) who posit that whistle-blowers of WB are less likely to report WB when faced with potential consequences from the organisation and management, such as victimisation, isolation and loss of employment. This suggests that retaliation is regarded as institutional bullying in an attempt to silent collective resistance from individuals and supporting the bystanders that seek to challenge the organisation's dominant ideology and cultural norms. In fact, retaliation against whistleblowers in the organisation are often communicated within the workforce and publicised in newspapers. This may act as a deterrence to report WB, whilst creating a culture of fear, submission and bullying in the organisation. On other occasions, the bystanders inflicted blame on the victim instead of supporting them, which is supported by Cilliers (2012).

However, a minority of the participants were not passive bystanders, as they confronted the perpetrator about WB, which led to them becoming victims themselves. This is congruent with the findings by Peng et al., (2019) in terms of bystanders being met with counter-aggression from perpetrators of WB, increasing the spread of its occurrence across the organisation. Additionally, employees in lower occupational levels depended on their jobs as their *'bread and butter'* (RP 2) that led to the acceptance and perpetuation of WB in the municipality. Similarly, Loya (2017) emphasised that unskilled workers highly susceptible to WB, as they are dependent on their jobs for their survival.

These findings highlight Foucault's (1991) conceptualisation of the creation of knowledge and perceived evidence of common reality by bystanders who were aware of the organisational and cultural endorsements on bullying, which influenced how they defined themselves (potential victims of WB) and their behavioural reactions to such power dynamics (such as not assisting victims of workplace bullying or passively accepting bullying), thereby self-regulating their conduct in obedience to these requirements or risk facing repercussions for their disobedience to institutional norms (Sheridan, 2016).

4.4.3. Interrogation of Emotion-Oriented and Problem-Oriented Coping

Cognitive appraisals were illustrated by the participants in their experiences of WB, which shaped their responses, coping strategies and individual well-being. This emphasises coping as a fluctuating state, depending on cognitive and situational appraisals of the stressor posing a

threat or not (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) and their response to the stressors in terms of utilising cognitive, behavioural coping resources (Dehue et al., 2012) and environmental resources at their disposal to buffer against the repercussions of WB. It is therefore advanced that individuals are not always passive or defenceless in responding to WB unless there is an absence of individual and organisational resources, in which case they may simply react in a negative way to the phenomenon.

The employees and managers made extensive use of emotion-oriented strategies and problem-oriented strategies. Emotion-focused coping included most notably the avoidance of the perpetrators, obtaining social support from colleagues, spouses and family, and engaging in defensive behaviour, whilst the use of substances occurred, but to a lesser extent. These findings are supported by Lee and Lim (2019) who assert that emotionally focused coping is characterised by the suppression of emotions, mental and behavioural disengagement, avoidance, self-care and searching for emotional support from others.

It was discovered that refusing to report WB and engaging in the use of substances were espoused by a minority of male managers in the study. These findings are corroborated by Salin (2003) whereby males were less likely to engage in help-seeking behaviour, as well as O'Donnell and MacIntosh (2016) who discovered that substance abuse provided male victims with temporary relief. This study also revealed that males coped with bullying through withdrawal, avoiding all contact with the bully.

Through the lens of Foucault (1991), the power imbalance inherent in WB is evidence of social reality for the victims, which has the potential to define themselves as defenceless in response to bullying, and hence their behavioural response to bullying in the form of avoidance-based coping.

The majority of the employees and managers of the research sample reported receiving social support and venting through the interviews in the study, which was regarded as partially effective, as they were able to release painful emotions associated with WB and have their experiences and feelings validated. This was in contrast to the lack of leadership and organisation support that did not give credence to their experiences and failed to provide them

with appropriate redress. The use of humour amongst team members reported by a minority of managers served to create a pleasant work environment, which is supported by Akram (2021).

These findings are also supported by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) who assert that emotion-oriented strategies may assist victims to reduce and cope with negative emotions in the short term, and are effective when the stressor is uncontrollable (being exposed to regular and enduring WB in the absence of redress), but prevents the ability to actively and directly deal with the problem at hand. Correspondingly, Finchilescu et al. (2019) maintains that social support does not significantly mediate the effect of high levels of WB on the mental well-being of victims.

Defensive behaviour was also commonly described by the employees and managers in the study. This included depending on regulated procedures and acquiring professional expertise through legal avenues, which were not just a consequence of WB, but provided them with peace of mind knowing they would be able to defend themselves confidently. A minority of the employees and managers in the study also engaged in the provision of social support to colleagues who had been bullied. These findings suggest that these traditionally emotion-oriented coping mechanisms became problem-oriented coping mechanisms characterised by seeking support within the environment to solve a problem (Lee & Lim, 2019).

It is suggested that emotion-oriented coping mechanisms such as avoidance, defensive behaviour and seeking support from peers for instrumental purposes for resolving the problem were attempts to reduce power differentials inherent in WB between the victim and perpetrator as well as create physical distance to ensure the self-protection and self-preservation of their physical and psychological well-being damaged by WB. This can be interpreted as the hidden social power proposed by Foucault, in an attempt to resist and reduce the inherent power differentials experienced (Groves, 2016).

However, the use of avoidance and social support for the purposes of emotion-focused coping was less effective in reducing psychological stress in the face of persistent WB. This was reported by a manager (RP 13) as follows: *"I think emotionally I do have some scars that I've healed or maybe I'm still healing from them ..."* This emphasises the deleterious consequences of WB that the victims struggle with long after their experiences of WB. Empirical support was

available and provided for the ineffectiveness of emotion-oriented coping, whereby avoidance in response to WB drastically reduced the self-esteem, well-being and job satisfaction of the victims (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

According to the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), repeated and persistent episodes of WB leads to the elevation of mental strain in victims as there is less time to recover from each episode, low resources as their energy levels become depleted over time, ineffective emotional social support to mitigate the bullying, which also result in organisational repercussions including low contentment with their job and reduced capability to actively address the situation at hand.

To avert feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, employees and managers who were of the Christian faith described how they drew hope and strength from God, praying for His intercession in their experiences of WB. This served to further illustrate the recognition and construction of WB as a spiritual issue, as indicated earlier.

It is suggested that the victims' faith, hope and trust in God emphasise their dependency on God as a mighty warrior to intercede and help them against their spiritual warfare of WB. This notion is captured in James 4:7 in the New King James Bible (1979) *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you'* as well as Psalms 37:5-6 *'Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday."*

These findings are a noteworthy departure from the literature reviewed in the study and corroborate recent, emerging literature that acknowledges the role of faith in God as an effective coping mechanism in assisting victims to cope with WB (De Clercq, 2022).

Additionally, some employees in the study drew on their faith to exercise forgiveness as well as adopting the principle of respecting others regardless of the devastating harm and suffering inflicted on them through WB, to assist them to transcend their painful experiences. These emotion-focused strategies were described by the victims to be effective coping mechanisms. Correspondingly, van Heugten et al. (2021) discovered that when victims cope by engaging in

forgiveness towards their perpetrators, they experienced restored health and well-being, post-traumatic growth, peace of mind and increased resilience.

Empirical support for maintaining the respect of others outlined by managers of the sample cohort is provided by Omari and Paull (2015) as a fundamental ethical value underpinning local government service delivery. Furthermore, respect for others is enshrined in Section 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) in terms of the safeguarding, respect and protection of the dignity of all persons. The municipality endeavoured to foster mutual respect for others through awareness sensitivity diversity management workshops, in compliance with its anti-discriminatory policy provisions on diversity management. However, the lived realities of WB suggest the erosion of respect and dignity that is contrary to the attainment of diversity management objectives. It is the victims who have to somehow find the strength to maintain respect for others despite the disrespect and the violations of dignity experienced through WB.

Utilising the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), it is postulated that high occupational demands of WB, coupled with resources such as religion and personal values served to lessen the negative impact of WB, resulting in a reduction of psychological strain (increased resilience) as well as positive organisational outcomes such as improved interpersonal relationships.

Some employees and managers of the research sample also utilised and described the effectiveness of psychological resources, most notably resilience, in coping with WB. Resilience was harnessed through sharing experiences of WB with their peers, whilst searching for opportunities to activate their strengths in the midst of enduring the phenomenon. These notions are supported by Annor and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) who aver that resilience moderated and strengthened the association between WB and self-reported happiness. This is further supported by Rai and Agarwal (2018) as well as a study by Lee et al. (2021) who found that victimisation and its effect on depression were partially mediated through resilience.

It is therefore suggested through the said JD-R Model, that resilience serves to reduce psychological strain and increases learning opportunities and experiences to control WB. Thus, resilience can be regarded as a protective mechanism for the health and well-being of victims.

This was followed by a small number of employees and managers in the study coping with WB through an internal locus of control, optimism and gratitude, which were considered to be effective to some extent. The victims usually focus on that which is within their control, however, view WB as something beyond their control and their ability to deal with it, which suggests possible lower levels of self-efficacy. This notion is supported by Tuckey and Neall (2014) whereby subjection to WB resulted in lower self-efficacy amongst victims.

It is therefore suggested that within the context of the JD-R Model, individuals with diminished self-efficacy may perceive that they do not have the confidence in their capabilities or access to relevant expertise to deal with the negative stressor of WB. They may experience higher levels of psychological strain by dwelling on the negative situation, and with no solution at hand. This could result in higher levels of burnout due to feelings of depersonalisation, as espoused by Livne and Goussinsky (2018) and negative organisational outcomes.

Conversely, focusing on what is within one's control can serve to invoke a sense of accomplishment and mastery, which are key elements of self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1997). This suggests that building self-efficacy in bullied individuals can potentially serve as a protective buffer against the ramifications of WB. However, Lin et al. (2020) discovered that self-efficacy served to only partially mediate the relationship between the negative effects of victimisation inherent in WB and mental wellness.

A few employees at the local municipality reported using optimism to cope with WB, which produced mixed findings in terms of its efficacy as a coping resource. For instance, optimistic employees attributed the stressor of WB to factors beyond their control, resulting in them experiencing less mental and physical health impairments. This is supported by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) where optimistic individuals regard the occurrence of adverse incidents due to outward, passing and circumstantial factors, are less inclined to consider WB as threatening (Mishra, 2013) and their work environment as stressful (Setar et al., 2015).

Personal occupational resources, such as optimism, viewed through the lens of the JD-R Model, can potentially reduce the levels of WB as a stressor, due to positive emotions and hope about the future. This can improve feelings of self-worth and how to deal with the situation at hand,

thereby reducing psychological strain and improving motivation levels, work engagement and productivity.

However, the employees also reported the use of optimism as a façade to not let others know that they are struggling to deal with WB. This is corroborated by Thiam (2018) whereby victims of WB may fear losing social status within the organisation and may project unrealistic optimism to others which is stressful, resulting in negative health consequences and reduced social standing in the organisation. The employees' and managers' narratives of gratitude demonstrated a cognitive re-appraisal of WB beyond the context of self, taking cognisance of the severity of bullying experiences that others endure in the organisation. However, gratitude is linked to an increasing risk of acceptance of WB, as discovered by Akram (2021).

Through the lens of the JD-R Model by Schaufeli (2017), the interaction of high occupational demands, namely WB with high occupational resources of gratitude and optimism moderates the interaction of psychological strain and negative organisational outcomes relationship for the participants. This is evident where, despite the victims' acknowledgement of the severity of bullying endured by others, and gratitude for not going through such circumstances and being optimistic, their wellbeing-organisational outcomes relationship was still negatively affected. It is therefore suggested that gratitude and optimism in the face of persistent bullying are less effective in protecting victims against the repercussions of the phenomenon. This is also evident, despite the majority of employees and managers receiving psychosocial support as a workplace resource via the EAP of the municipality, they were still affected by the consequences of WB.

The vast majority of employees and managers also utilised problem-focused strategies, which included reporting WB to their management and HR, utilising labour relations procedures such as disciplinary hearings and grievance procedures to attain redress as well as being transferred to a different department. However, these mechanisms within the context of the municipality were regarded as ineffective by the participants due to the lack of leadership and organisational support received from HR, which served to exacerbate their experiences of WB, as indicated earlier.

For example, an employee was abandoned by the trade union representative shortly before proceeding with arbitration over a WB dispute.

RP 7: *"He even let me go to CCMA alone without a representative, the very same shop steward. The day before I reminded him. On the day of the CCMA sitting, I told him that please don't forget uh that the CCMA sitting is scheduled for today. He said bye bye I see you when you come back."*

Despite the municipality's collective agreement that is aligned with the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995), there were no criteria explicated for good cause shown when an employee or his/her representative failed to attend such proceedings. This was illustrated by participants RP 7 and RP 11 in the results of the study, where different people attended the proceedings at each session. In contrast, the study revealed a novel finding by RP 11, elaborated on in the results of the study, where the proceedings were not recorded by HR. There were no consequences or risks of liability specified within the municipality's collective agreement for not recording proceedings at a disciplinary hearing. In fact, this failure to record proceedings is in direct contravention of the municipality's collective agreement requirement to record all the proceedings at disciplinary hearings. These findings appear to legitimise the perpetuation of bullying in the municipality, without always giving ethical legitimacy to policy, procedural and legislative provisions.

Additionally, the transfer of victims from their roles and departments by managers was regarded as a partially effective coping mechanism, as on the one hand, it decreased the victims' subjection to WB, yet also revictimised victims as a form of punishment for coming forward about their experiences of WB. These views are corroborated by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) where the transfer of victims to another department was an inane solution implemented by HR that left victims feeling vulnerable and with the perception that the bully was protected by the organisation.

These ineffective problem-focused strategies emphasise a central tenet of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), in that WB with low or no job resources such as leadership and organisational support results not only in high levels of psychological strain and ill-health of the victims but also in negative organisational outcomes such as diminished contentment in a job, disengagement and an increased motive to leave the organisation.

It is thus not surprising to find that the employees and managers in the study also made use of assertive communication, indicating their lack of acceptance and resistance towards WB which were perceived as an effective coping mechanism. This can be interpreted through Foucault's notion of the hidden social power in an attempt to resist and reduce the power differentials experienced in WB (Groves, 2016).

Empirical support for assertiveness as an effective problem-focused coping mechanism is provided by Omar (2017) who reports that individuals with high levels of assertiveness take active steps towards taking control of the situation, which fosters higher levels of assertiveness and resilience in coping with WB. In some instances, however, assertive communication exacerbated WB experienced by the participants. This notion is consistent with the findings by Bernstein and Trimm (2016) where some perpetrators of WB may perceive assertiveness as aggression, which could lead to a vicious cycle of WB.

Through the JD-R Model, it is suggested that high occupational requirements (WB) and high occupational resources (assertiveness) result in elevated psychological stress in the victims of WB (counter aggression from perpetrators) as well as high levels of motivation (the willingness to take control of the situation to resolve the workplace stressor). Consequently, this interaction between occupational demands and occupational resources will have either a favourable or negative influence on the psychological strain-wellbeing relationship of the victims of WB.

The participants also commonly described the use of EAP counselling at the municipality to be a less effective coping mechanism in terms of the poor competence of therapists, reduced objectivity and poor solutions provided. According to observations of RP 11, it appears that the EAP invoked secondary victimisation on the victims as their reports were written by other counsellors, and not the counsellor who conducted the counselling sessions. This emphasises how the EAP as an organisational support system did not provide the necessary psychosocial support in this instance.

In contrast, participants found external counselling to be highly effective in assisting them to manage WB. These findings emphasise the importance of clearly outlining the role of the psychologist or counsellor and confirming expectations between client and therapist from the outset (Ferris et al., 2021). The findings also illustrate the need for having an independent and

confidential EAP that provides psychosocial support and counselling to all parties involved when dealing with WB (Mabunda, 2019).

Receiving effective external counselling can be interpreted through the lens of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), where high occupational demands (WB) together with high occupational resources (psychosocial support through counselling) results in lower levels of psychological strain and more positive organisational outcomes (increased motivation, engagement and work commitment).

STUDY OBJECTIVE 2: TO DEVELOP SUBSTANTIAL INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF WB WITHIN A LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

4.4.4. Recommendations to Prevent and Manage Workplace Bullying

4.4.4.1. Leadership

65% of the employees and managers in the study emphasised the crucial role of leadership accountability to reduce and eliminate WB at the research site. This included the requirement for leadership to display participatory leadership, transparent communication, elevate employee wellness on the leadership agenda and eliminate organisational political interference to combat WB. 61% of the 65% of employees and managers who made up the participants also elaborated on the delivery of consequence management through the consistent implementation of discipline and publication of the perpetrators' details.

The recommendation of participatory leadership is supported by Hoel et al. (2010), which has been demonstrated to reduce the likelihood of WB. The desired leadership behaviours of inviting open communication, paying careful attention to the viewpoints of employees as well as demonstrating care for the interests of others, from the participants are corroborated by Magee and Frasier (2014) in serving to reduce the high-power distance and impersonal nature of hierarchical relationships between superior and subordinate characterising the public sector industries. These behaviours are particularly important and congruent with the African leadership paradigm (Mbigi, 1995) and promote the prioritisation of employee wellness through leadership.

The recommendation of the elevation and prioritisation of employee wellness has been acknowledged by Cowan et al. (2021) for the HR profession to navigate the organisation towards achieving its objectives and create a positive workplace culture. In view of the employees' and managers' recommendations in the study, this should be extended to leaders who are instrumental in ensuring the achievement of such objectives.

The recommendation of consequence management is supported by Einarsen et al. (2017) whereby implementing punitive measures such as formal sanctions, provided the most effective results in concluding WB cases. Examples of formal sanctions include written warnings, demotions as well as dismissal (Salin et al., 2018b). The publication of perpetrator details as requested by participants is echoed by Einarsen et al. (2020) whereby the outcome of formal WB complaints and discipline should be publicised by the organisation.

In addition, some managers and employees of the study recommended the inclusion of WB as a problematic case to be made part of the performance plans of Line Management and Human Resources, together with the delivery of consequence management for a lack of accountability in fulfilling their responsibilities towards the control and elimination of bullying. It is suggested that these recommendations for consequence management serve as negative reinforcement for perpetrators engaging in undesirable behaviours in the workplace, such as bullying, which can serve to reduce the spread of the phenomenon in the organisation.

Empirical support for the participants' recommendations for consequence management being extended to Line Management and HR in not upholding their commitment to prevent and manage WB has also been supported by Yukl et al. (2013) which can further assist in ensuring accountability, prohibition, prevention and management of bullying.

The recommendation for the elimination of organisational political interference is also a noteworthy departure from the literature and addresses the need for systemic reforms initiated by the administrative leadership. This includes the creation and advancement of a WB policy, legislation and by-law changes as espoused by the participants in this study. These are supported by Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) whereby an anti-bullying policy in response to political unrest and investigations into local government structures from external organisations would show that the organisation considers bullying to be a serious issue that will be dealt with.

Bozin et al. (2019) also advocate for the integration of legislation, case law and restorative justice to provide appropriate relief and redress for the victims, which may serve to prevent and manage bullying across the organisation.

After much anticipation, the legal lacuna on WB in South Africa has been bridged through the adoption of the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work on 18 March 2022 and is issued in terms of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998). The Code includes and expounds specifically on WB as violence and harassment at work, providing explicit direction on the identification, prevention and management of harassment, which would aid organisations in drawing up and implementing their harassment policy.

The Code outlines legislative provisions in which the phenomenon may be dealt with, most notably Section 6(3) of the Employment Equity Act, to include WB as well as Section 186(2) of the Labour Relations Act, that pertinently addresses unfair conduct pertaining to any demotion, skills training or provision of benefits that are deemed to be forms of WB. The municipality has taken proactive steps towards engaging a legal firm to educate its workforce on this Code, however, the implementation thereof is still to be realised in the organisation.

4.4.4.2. Anti-Bullying Policy

35% of the employees and managers in the study proposed that a WB policy should be created and administered at all organisational levels. This is supported by Lustig (2019) who asserts that the anti-bullying policy should be implemented at an individual, group and organisational level. The recommended WB policy provisions include an explicit conceptualisation of the phenomenon, behaviour classified as WB, reporting, timelines for investigation and conclusion of related complaints as well as relevant stakeholder responsibilities in controlling and eliminating WB. These noteworthy recommendations are important considerations towards the eradication of WB and are congruent with the spirit of the International Labour Organisation Convention on Violence and Harassment (C190).

The notion of stakeholder consultation is corroborated by Einarsen et al. (2020) who also highlight the importance of consultation, stating it may be better to develop a new policy in a participative policy setting to counter resistance, which should include employees in the

information-gathering and policy review updates so that they do not feel marginalised from the process. This notion is further endorsed in the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy provisions in terms of consultation, consensus-seeking and inclusivity to be cognisant of and mirror the interests of all employees within the organisation.

Viewed through Foucault's notion of disciplinary power, an anti-bullying policy would serve as a surveillance mechanism, providing the yardstick of acceptable conduct in the workplace, to make organisational members self-regulate their conduct, and subject themselves to the organisation's dictates or face negative repercussions for conduct that violates the anti-bullying policy requirements (Sheridan, 2016). This will assist to deter resistance, uphold institutional norms and enforce normalising judgements against WB.

Similarly, through the lens of the JD-R Model, the WB policies, the leadership and organisational support described earlier, are all organisational resources that serve to reduce the psychological stress experienced as a result of the phenomenon, and foster motivation by assisting organisational members at all organisational levels to achieve the goals of preventing and managing bullying across the organisation.

4.4.4.3. Metrics

50% of the participants comprising employees and managers recommended the use of various metrics to aid in the identification, planning, monitoring and evaluating of WB and related interventions. It was recommended that competency profiling of key competencies such as mutual respect with associated behavioural indicators needed to be measured and reported on to mitigate against WB. This is particularly important when bullied individuals feel disrespected within the civil service (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, respect is regarded as one of the fundamental ethical values underpinning local government service delivery (Omari & Paull, 2015). It is also a legislative requirement within Schedule 8 of the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995) Code of Good Practice for dismissal where it is stipulated that the employer and employee should display mutual respect towards each other.

It is therefore suggested that respect be measured as an ethical value within individuals through personality assessments. The SHL Occupational Personality Questionnaire measures competencies in terms of the way people are likely to feel, behave and think at work (Joubert & Venter, 2013) such as adhering to principles and values, which can be used to measure and develop such competencies at an individual level. Personality assessments have been utilised by the municipality for selection purposes in compliance with its recruitment policy. However, it is unclear regarding the extent to which the municipality has utilised the data-driven insights from these assessments to recruit ethical employees and management.

Diversity management interventions at the team level were recommended by 20% of the employees and managers in the study to improve interpersonal relationships and prevent WB. Diversity management interventions are fundamentally underpinned by appreciation and respect for others (Jackson & van de Vijver, 2018) and thus can be measured and serve to improve social tolerance. This would give credence to the implementation of the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy mandate of promoting diversity throughout the organisation. A study by Gardner et al. (2016) further asserts that diversity management interventions foster the development of inclusive work teams, creative problem-solving, increased innovation, and improved performance, all of which are positive, measurable outcomes that can reduce the consequences of WB and inhibit its spread across the organisation.

However, the success of diversity management interventions in preventing and reducing WB cannot be done independently but are dependent on the simultaneous implementation of leadership development interventions (Salin & Hoel, 2020). This highlights the importance of leaders being committed to living and modelling values associated with diversity management such as respect and appreciation for one another and different cultural groups, collaboration and the creation of common goals if diversity management interventions are to be viewed as credible and supported by the employees and teams. This is supported by the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy that assigns leadership, executive management and Unit level accountabilities for adhering to the implementation of the policy and Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), including the promotion of diversity management in the organisation.

Employees and managers in the study also recommended the use of anonymous leadership effectiveness surveys to determine the extent of team satisfaction with their superiors and

inform the development of leaders. It is suggested that this would assist leaders to become inspiring role models that staff would want to emulate in mindset and behaviours. Support for the use of anonymous complaints or satisfaction surveys has been provided by Fick (2016) to obtain insight into the beliefs or confidence of the employees on their organisation's stance, both positive or negative, towards preventing and dealing with WB.

Importantly, the use of psychological assessments such as personality assessments and emotional intelligence assessments were commonly requested to be utilised as a part of selection processes to assess key competencies in respect of working with people, stress management, aggression and the need for control, thereby preventing WB from the outset. This is important as emotional intelligence moderates the association between WB and the negative effects of the phenomenon in the public sector (Raman et al., 2016).

It is suggested that these behavioural competencies reported by the participants can be measured through emotional intelligence and personality psychometric assessments. A South African study by Kotzé and Nel (2017) provides empirical support for this notion in terms of psychometric assessments, emotional intelligence and personality, focusing on relational behaviours and thus predicting authentic leadership in individuals. Additionally, personality attributes such as aggression and the need for control can be measured by integrity assessments in terms of intimidation and manipulation (Horney, 1950). If the integrity of leadership is high, leaders are more likely to be consistent in displaying ethical standards and behaviours in organisations and are less likely to derail in the midst of workplace stressors such as bullying (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2019). It is suggested that the use of these psychometric assessments would contribute to upholding the provision of the municipality's collective agreement, that is, requiring employees to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, which may assist in reducing and preventing WB in the municipality.

This has important implications in how organisations utilise the results of these psychometric assessments to effectively screen individuals, to curtail WB traits whilst providing focused, customised interventions in cultivating the desired personality attributes at an individual and team level to prevent and manage the phenomenon of bullying effectively amongst existing employees and management.

Correspondingly, a few employees and managers of the research sample recommended that emotional intelligence be developed and monitored within teams to curtail WB. This is suggested to provide each team member with introspection and development in respect of their emotional self-awareness and how their emotions influence their interpersonal relationships as well as their approaches to decision-making and stress management. It is therefore postulated that emotional intelligence can be a viable tool for empowering teams and reducing WB. These notions are supported by Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021) in terms of emotional intelligence, team building and stress management as part of anti-bullying training for teams. Similarly, a study by Cho et al. (2016) revealed that emotionally intelligent employees are likely to become more aware of and more sensitive and considerate of their coworkers' feelings, all of which can assist in the reduction of WB.

Additional metrics described by a few managers of the research cohort included disseminating the findings of this study to leadership, as well as the employees' recommendations for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of organisational policies and WB interventions. It is suggested that this would assist in enabling leadership to prioritise, plan and direct the implementation of WB interventions in a proactive and timely manner, which would serve to prevent and manage the phenomenon. Kirk (2017) asserts that evaluative measures should be developed to measure and review outcomes on an annual basis.

Through the lens of the JD-R Model, the reported metrics on WB can serve as an organisational job resource to prevent the introduction and management of bullying proactively. This would further serve as a protective mechanism to prevent and reduce psychological stress as a result of WB on organisational members and promote positive individual and organisational well-being, including elevated levels of engagement, productivity, commitment and lower levels of absence, staff attrition and intent to leave the organisation.

4.4.4.4. Education and Awareness Training on Workplace Bullying

45% of the employees and managers of the research sample recommended education and awareness training on WB to build capacity in the prevention and management of the phenomenon, which is further supported by Salin and Hoel (2020). Employees and managers in the study suggested that the content of anti-bullying awareness workshops to staff and

witnesses include an understanding of what bullying is, identifying the signs and behaviours of the phenomenon as well as how to intervene and report it in the organisation.

These notions are supported by Salin et al. (2018b) who asserted that anti-bullying policy workshops and awareness training must be extended to all employees and levels of management to aid their comprehension of the conceptualisation of WB, and its harmful impact and costs at all levels of the organisation. A few employees and managers in the study further emphasised the importance of empowering victims and those having witnessed bullying incidents to report these. This is supported by Fick (2016) in terms of victims and bystanders receiving training on communicative reporting techniques and accountability in reporting WB to the relevant authorities to combat the phenomenon.

A few managers as per the sample cohort further recommended that HR demonstrate the reality and zero tolerance of WB to staff within the organisation through the use of interactive media on internal municipal communication platforms such as newsletters. This is supported by Fick (2016) who emphasised that the practical component of anti-bullying training for HR practitioners should include identifying the characteristics of WB as well as the use of simulations. It is therefore suggested that there be regular, consistent and timeous communication with organisational members at all organisational levels on WB interventions within the municipality, to positively influence employee receptivity and commitment to embrace the reduction and elimination of WB.

It is suggested that anti-bullying awareness training vide workshops would assist perpetrators to become aware of their harmful and unacceptable behaviour and increase their awareness of the potential consequences and sanctions that could be imposed for engaging in the bullying of other employees. Thus, anti-bullying training may inspire a change in the perpetrator's conduct without the need for formal disciplinary and punitive measures (Salin et al., 2018b), which may reduce the likelihood of WB flourishing in the organisation. A few employees and managers in the study also suggested that the perpetrators also need to learn how to appreciate each person and their value to the organisation. To this end, diversity management training should be implemented across the workforce to foster respect and appreciation for each person, as indicated by Jackson and van de Vijver (2018) earlier.

Some managers of the research sample further recommended customised training for Line Management in respect of management coaching and communication on how to deal with WB, which is supported by Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021), as well as the creation of a healthy organisational culture. The creation of a healthy organisational culture through diversity management is also enshrined within the local municipality's anti-discriminatory policy that holds the Municipal Manager accountable for fostering a culture that values and responds to the diversity of employees, which can prevent the spread of WB.

Given these findings, it may be worthwhile to include the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy provision for Line Management accountability in maintaining fair treatment practices to prevent and manage WB. Empirical support for creating a culture that is not conducive to WB is supported by Lustig (2019) who emphasises that the effectiveness of anti-bullying training cannot be effected without integrating culture into the training, to influence the development of such training to prevent and manage the phenomenon in organisations.

It is therefore suggested that the development of a healthy organisational culture would entail on the one hand, accommodating the participants' reported requests for openness, honesty, treating employees fairly and with consideration, which are supported by Cheteni and Shindika (2017) as part of the anti-bullying training for leaders. Additionally, these scholars assert that the creation of a healthy organisational culture within local municipalities would entail institutionalising ethics as a vital component of work, the organisation's core values, cultural norms and ensuring accountability for leader's and their followers' ethical conduct or lack thereof to prevent and manage WB.

Further to leadership development training based on South African Labour legislation recommended by some employees in the study, it is suggested that leadership training also include the feedback from individual and team leadership assessments to cultivate leadership styles that are conducive to the prohibition of WB. For instance, employees in the study recommended screening individuals through the use of emotional intelligence assessments, which paves the way for developing leaders in this psychological construct. Accordingly, the use of emotional intelligence assessments has been proven to enhance authentic leadership in leaders and thereby prevent and manage WB (Kiyani et al., 2013).

It is therefore suggested that the development of participatory leadership, authentic leadership, transformative leadership, and ethical leadership styles amongst leaders in the workplace would assist in curtailing WB. This has received empirical support from Hoel et al., (2010), Nielsen (2012), and Salin and Hoel (2020) respectively. It is imperative that leaders model their behaviour to inspire other employees to cultivate the desired thoughts and behaviour associated with these leadership styles and thereby reduce the spread of WB at the municipality.

Anderson (2018) maintains that leaders cultivating psychological capital in their followers in the form of resilience, hope, optimism and self-efficacy, are characteristics of authentic leadership which would serve to renew and replace destructive mindsets towards bullying as well as provide followers with the necessary experiences and skills to deal with and overcome these adverse situations.

Additionally, a few managers of the research sample recommended that shop stewards be capacitated to deal with WB and prohibit its spread across the organisation, which is supported by Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021) who advocate for anti-bullying training to be extended to the legal professionals.

Despite customised training recommendations for Line Management, leadership, HR and trade unions, there were also common training objectives for each of these stakeholders suggested by the majority of the participants. These included knowledge on dealing with WB and thereby prevent its spread in the organisation. It is suggested that group-based training amongst these stakeholders take place to develop competence in the identification, reduction and prohibition of WB, create interdependencies and align efforts towards eliminating bullying from the organisation. Blum and Beck (2015) supported this notion, stating that a shared responsibility approach when applied to training, resulted in success.

Possible and recommended examples of integrated training for these stakeholders include training on the provisions and applications of the organisation's WB policy and legislative provisions in different cases of WB (Lustig, 2019), interviewing skills, investigative and screening techniques for the identification of the phenomenon, problem-solving skills, provision of support for victims, induction training (Fick, 2016), conflict resolution and conflict management techniques (Gardner & Cooper-Thomas, 2021).

The municipality's anti-discriminatory policy outlines Line Management, Leadership and HR accountabilities for identifying and eliminating employment and affirmative action barriers. It is thus further recommended to have these components included in the shared anti-bullying training for these stakeholders.

Through the lens of the JD-R Model, anti-bullying training and awareness campaigns are invaluable job resources that serve to increase the employees' levels of self-efficacy to be able to acquire, practice and master new competencies essential to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to prevent, manage and reduce the spread of the phenomenon across the organisation.

4.4.4.5. Team Interventions on Workplace Bullying

As indicated earlier, employees and managers of the study recommended the implementation of diversity management interventions and the development of emotional intelligence at the team level to assist in the reduction of WB.

A minority of employees and managers of the research sample further recommended the need for the creation of psychological safety in teams through conflict resolution and building trust. These notions are affirmed by Dollard et al. (2017) who asserted that for employees to feel psychologically and socially safe, there must be explicit procedures that directly address bullying, procedures to reduce workplace demands on employees that exacerbate the phenomenon, and procedures that address the management of conflict before the risk of escalation into WB.

Furthermore, the implementation of such procedures would increase employee trust in management and organisational efforts to attend to incidents of WB as well as increase levels of security and self-control among employees who would have an improved understanding of how to report these incidents (Zahlquist et al., 2019). It is therefore suggested that these interventions can assist in reducing a hostile working environment associated with WB, and thereby reduce the spread of bullying within teams and the organisation.

It is suggested that diversity management interventions, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution and the creation of psychologically safe teams can contribute to the development of

what Foucault acknowledges as hidden social power which when exercised collectively and regularly can create a strong resistance against power differentials (Groves, 2016) inherent in WB throughout the organisation.

Through the JD-R Model, these team interventions are considered to be high workplace resources and a protective buffer against high workplace demands of WB, which can serve to reduce psychological strain as well as increase productivity, engagement and reduce the phenomenon within teams and the organisation.

4.4.4.6. Independent Investigation of Workplace Bullying

A minority of the employees and managers of the research sample recommended that an independent department within the organisation be created to investigate WB complaints, including bullying perpetrated by senior officials in a timeous manner and to maintain confidentiality in respect of such investigations. A viable proposition suggested by Hollis (2019), is for the Ombudsman to assume responsibility for the impartial investigation of complaints of WB and to recommend remedies for changes in organisational decisions.

Prokopenko (2020) also asserts that confidentiality must be maintained for those who report occurrences of WB, and during the investigation of related cases. These included victims, targets and witnesses who would be deemed whistle-blowers and who will require protection from possible fear of reprisal and retaliation (Uys & Smit, 2016). This is supported by the municipality's collective agreement on discipline which asserts the implementation of precautionary suspensions pending disciplinary hearings against those that tamper with investigations, interfere with potential witnesses or engage in further acts of misconduct.

However, 30% of the employees and managers of the research cohort acknowledged the crucial function that HR assumes in the investigation of WB cases and recommended the need for neutrality amongst HR practitioners in investigating related cases. This is supported by Mokgolo (2017) where HR is to be tasked with the responsibility of confidentially and the impartial investigation of bullying incidents. A few managers of the research sample also recommended the need for HR to ensure adherence to the management and conclusion of internal grievance and disciplinary processes within specified timeframes, as stipulated in organisational procedures or face consequences.

This suggests that the implementation of organisational justice, particularly procedural justice and distributive justice, is required to eradicate WB. This notion is supported by Baldwin (2006) who emphasised that for procedural justice to be impartial, the application of organisational procedures must be consistent, neutral, accurate and ethical, whilst distributive justice must ensure perceptions of fairness, equity and balance amongst all employees in the organisation. This is imperative for local government structures that have come under scrutiny for a lack of compliance with legislation as indicated by Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) earlier, which has created an ideal environment for WB to flourish.

It is suggested that the implementation of procedural justice along with distributive justice in the form of consequence management for perpetrators of WB and non-compliance to organisational procedures within the local municipality, would assist in creating a credible organisational reputation through the lenses of organisational members and the public. This may serve to address all aspects of WB more effectively at the local municipality.

The notion of corrective action through discipline is enshrined in the municipality's collective agreement, outlining sanctions that could be imposed for misconduct, ranging from less severe sanctions such as warnings and final written warnings to more serious sanctions such as suspensions, withholding salary increments and dismissal for misconduct. It has been discovered that implementing punitive measures such as formal sanctions provided the most effective results in concluding WB cases (Einarsen et al., 2017).

With the JD-R Model as a backdrop, it is suggested that the independent, confidential, consistent and timeous investigation of WB complaints would serve to reduce psychological strain in the form of stigmatisation and victimisation of parties during the process, encourage the reporting of the phenomenon, facilitate a swift response on cases reported, thereby increasing the likelihood of victims receiving appropriate redress. This may result in positive organisational outcomes such as the reduction and elimination of WB within the organisation.

In contrast, the municipality's anti-discrimination policy is silent on available redress to victims of WB in the form of prejudice. However, Section (60) of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) makes provision for redress against vicarious bullying, where the victim can claim from the employer, rather than the perpetrator at their discretion if the phenomenon is found to be a

form of harassment in terms of unfair discrimination under the Act. This statutory provision is therefore worthwhile considering as part of the recompense for victims of WB, which should be made known to employees. This could serve to reduce bullying in the workplace.

4.4.4.7. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

30% of the employees and managers of the research sample recommended rehabilitative counselling for both bullied individuals and bullies via the EAP of the organisation. This support by the EAP is reinforced by Mabunda (2019) through the provision of independent, confidential psychosocial support, information and counselling services to victims, targets, witnesses and perpetrators to buffer the negative consequences of WB on their health and well-being.

Employees recommended that counselling for perpetrators should focus on making them aware of the negative impact of their behaviours that leads to WB, which is supported by Kalamdien (2013) and help them deal with any underlying issues that may be contributing to their behaviour. Studies reveal that victims experience shame due to the destruction of self-esteem and self-identity through WB (Mayer et al., 2017), whilst perpetrators express anger in the form of bullying whilst denying and displacing shame to preserve their social standing and identity of success through dominating others (Braithwaite, 2013).

It, therefore, becomes important for rehabilitative interventions for victims that focus on rebuilding their self-esteem, which have been proven to reduce WB (Shim et al., 2019) as well as cultivating and strengthening their coping resources such as religion, forgiveness and psychological capital in the form of resilience, optimism and self-efficacy, as indicated earlier. This is important as spiritual teachings reveal the purpose and meaning of life, the value of one's existence in this world by utilising the suffering experienced to bring about liberation and comfort, and thereby obtain a balanced perspective of one's suffering (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018).

Furthermore, psychological capital has been scientifically proven to reduce burnout experienced by bullied individuals (Bae et al., 2021), which may increase the effectiveness of individual coping dispositions in response to bullying.

Suggestions of rehabilitative care for perpetrators of WB with cognisance of the employee's recommendations and findings by Braithwaite (2013) are supported by Kirk (2017). The study by Kirk (2017) recommended that EAP interventions for perpetrators should focus on creating awareness of the destructive consequences of their bullying behaviour on victims as well as ensuring that they receive anger management training.

This is pertinent within the local municipality under investigation because workplace aggression was the most commonly reported form of bullying experienced by the employees and managers. Braithwaite (2013) further alludes to pride management training for perpetrators, which particularly addresses the tendency to displace shame and justify bullying on the part of perpetrators towards taking ownership and accountability for their bullying behaviour. This is seen as an important step to reduce WB as perpetrators may not always possess self-awareness about the negative repercussions of their behaviour on other individuals unless they receive feedback from others (Kalamdien, 2013).

It is suggested that through these rehabilitative interventions, perpetrators may be able to learn empathy, acknowledge the shame for the harm that they have inflicted upon victims, correct their behaviour and seek ways in which they can remedy the long-lasting effects of bullying to ensure that it does not occur again. Through the lens of the JD-R Model, it is suggested that the EAP can be a crucial resource in the form of organisational support to help strengthen individual coping resources, reduce psychological strain by restoring health and well-being to those affected by WB, and increase motivation to deal with the phenomenon. This would result in positive individual outcomes such as an improved quality of life and life expectancy (Einarsen et al., 2018), positive organisational outcomes (optimal reintegration into the workplace with increased work engagement and productivity) and the reduction of WB.

To give effect to the employees' recommendations from the research cohort for increased business partnering of the EAP with their respective departments, it is recommended that this department of the research site engage in recurrent communications of their psychosocial counselling services available to the workforce, anti-bullying training that focuses on cultivating and strengthening psychological capital as indicated by Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021), as well as pride and anger management training for the perpetrators, as espoused by Braithwaite (2013).

It is also recommended that the EAP become an important stakeholder actively contributing to the design and delivery of anti-bullying training to leadership, Line Management, HR, bystanders and trade unions on how to identify the signs of the phenomenon and a troubled employee to facilitate timeous intervention, as well as reduce the impact of physical and psychological consequences experienced by victims.

4.4.4.8. Guidance for Victims of Workplace Bullying

20% of the employees and managers at the local municipality recommended that the victims engage in assertive communication with the perpetrators by confronting them with the WB behaviours they have experienced. This is supported by Pouwelse et al. (2018) and Salin et al. (2018b) where this informal strategy aims to help the perpetrators recognise the impact of their bullying behaviour, refrain from engaging in such destructive conduct and inspire change in their conduct before considering punitive disciplinary measures if the approach is unsuccessful.

This suggests that the victims be empowered with assertive communication skills to openly and respectfully defend their boundaries in a socially acceptable manner, to not come across as aggressive towards the perpetrators, which may curtail the spread of WB. This recommendation is further supported by Escartin (2016) who advocated the rollout of assertive communication training programmes to prohibit and diminish the impact of WB. Similarly, an employee also recommended that victims stand up for themselves with respect to performing duties that are aligned with their job description whilst ensuring that remuneration is commensurate to the complexity of work undertaken to guard against an effort-reward imbalance. This employee's recommendation is supported by Engelbrecht and Samuel (2019), who revealed that the most important and valued distributive justice for employees include fairness in the way in which rewards are distributed at work.

Correspondingly, Notelaers et al. (2019) further discovered that an effort-reward imbalance increased the likely occurrence of WB and social isolation among employees. A noteworthy proposition to enhance distributive justice (creation of effort-reward balance) has been proposed by Wells and Peachy (2010) in the form of transformational leadership, which is viewed positively in the eyes of employees, as it encourages dialogue on the perceived fairness of organisational processes and procedures that affect them.

These findings have important implications for managers to be more attentive to organisational justice issues, to encourage open communication and dialogue amongst employees over decisions that may impact their careers, as well as issues that can give rise to WB within the organisation.

A few managers of the research sample also recommended that victims safeguard themselves and build a credible personal and professional reputation through performing their job duties diligently. This suggests that bullied individuals should apply, maintain and acquire the requisite knowledge and experience to obtain a sense of mastery (Bandura, 1997), overcome any knowledge deficiencies experienced and maintain a high-performance level, which may assist in terms of being insulated against the negative effects of bullying.

Additionally, a study by MacIntosh (2006) revealed that victims may benefit from journaling, which includes documenting all WB incidents, recording the encounters, saving all email and text messages correspondence which are vital in the preparing, addressing, reporting and proving their case against the perpetrator(s) in the workplace. It is suggested that these are useful problem-focused strategies that will enable the victims to dismantle the perpetrators' attempts to discredit them and delegitimise their work.

A manager of the research sample further recommended that victims use their experiences of WB for the greater good, in spearheading a group that allows victims to publicly share their survivor narratives, as well as develop interventions to address and manage bullying at the municipality. This highlights how victims may regain a sense of agency, experience individual and interactional empowerment through public speaking, as well as possibly acquire more self-efficacy in using such experiences to not only empower others but to address WB with the determination to resolve the problem.

The quest to resolve this problem is deemed to be particularly important, as WB is an organisational issue that affects individuals and an individual issue that affects organisations as a whole. It is further recommended that a steering committee be formed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the employees, to address WB (Einarsen et al. 2020), which in this study could include the victims to contribute meaningfully to this process.

Viewed through the lens of Foucault's theoretical framework on power, assertive communication training, problem-focused defensive behaviour and group public speaking on WB can be regarded as hidden social power that empowers the victims of WB with strong resistance against the power differentials (Groves, 2016) created in WB interactions at all organisational levels, which can help reduce its spread in the organisation.

Similarly, through the context of the JD-R Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), high organisational resources such as increased organisational justice and social resources which include group public speaking on bullying, can serve to reduce psychological strain experienced by victims, increase individual well-being and reduce the risk of negative organisational outcomes. The reduction of negative organisational outcomes includes turnover intentions as espoused by Engelbrecht and Samuel (2019) and counterproductive behaviours of victims as espoused by Baillien and De Witte (2009).

4.4.9. Summary of Proposed Workplace Bullying Intervention Guidelines

The following proposed intervention guidelines for the prohibition and control of WB are based on the pertinent information provided by the participants in the study, current and appropriate literature on the prevention and management of the phenomenon and postulated solutions of the researcher to further the achievement of this objective.

This includes Figure 4 below which provides proposed recommendations for the development of a WB policy in accordance with the provisions of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (C190), as well as the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work issued in terms of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), as part of the WB intervention guidelines. The local municipality in this study has developed an all-encompassing anti-harassment policy draft to include WB. It is suggested that the proposed intervention guidelines emergent from the study, inclusive of the anti-bullying policy guidelines contained in Figure 4, will assist the municipality in consolidating and providing a comprehensive anti-harassment policy geared towards the prohibition, prevention and management of the phenomenon in this context.

Through the findings of the research, it has been discovered that Leadership, Line Management, HR, trade unions, bystanders, employees, perpetrators and victims be made

aware of WB and be sufficiently capacitated on how to identify, deal and manage this phenomenon in order to prevent the perpetuation of this scourge at the municipality. Correspondingly, Table 8 provides proposed recommendations on customised and shared anti-bullying training as part of the intervention guidelines for these stakeholders where applicable, that would assist them in executing their roles and responsibilities towards combating the phenomenon. Accordingly, and subsequent to anti-bullying training, stakeholder roles and responsibilities are proposed for the prevention and management of the phenomenon in an integrated manner in Table 9. It is further recommended that resources must be provided to stakeholders for the effective execution of their functions. Lastly, Figure 5 illustrates proposed systemic intervention guidelines at an individual, group and organisation level to combat WB.

Figure 4

Proposed Recommendations for Developing a Workplace Bullying Policy

Table 8

Anti-Bullying Training Proposals for the Prohibition and Control of Workplace Bullying

Stakeholders	Training components	Research based on literature review
Leadership	South African labour legislation applicable to bullying; Participatory leadership; Authentic leadership; Ethical leadership and transformational leadership; Leadership and team effectiveness feedback for development	Hoel et al. (2010) Nielsen (2012) Salin and Hoel (2020)
Line Management	Group management coaching across the municipality to equip managers with consistent experiential learnings and understanding of how to attend to WB	
Trade Unions	Specialised training to address and prevent WB	
Line Management and HR	Provision and application of a WB policy and legislative provisions to cases of WB; Interviewing, investigative and screening techniques to identify WB; Provision of support to bullied individuals and problem-solving skills; Conflict resolution	Lustig (2019) Fick (2016) Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021)
Employees and Bystanders	Education and awareness on what WB is, identification of behaviours associated with WB; Communicative techniques and the role of accountability to report WB	Fick (2016)
Perpetrators	Awareness of harmful behaviours, potential consequences and sanctions to be imposed for WB; Appreciation of each person and the value of human resources to the organisation	Salin et al. (2018b)

Table 9

Proposed Stakeholder Matrix for the Prohibition and Control of Workplace Bullying

Stakeholder	Proposed responsibilities	Research based on literature review
Leadership	Prioritise and promote employee wellness across the organisation.	
	Endorse the anti-bullying policy, the amendment or linkage of relevant existing policies in relation to the phenomenon through relevant approval structures;	King (2019)
	Provide oversight and approval for the development of a project task team, project plans and preventative interventions on WB across the organisation;	Lustig (2019)
	Initiate transparent communication efforts and participate in change management awareness sessions to engage organisational members on a zero-tolerance approach to WB;	
	Model and embed ethical values and ethical leadership within the organisational culture;	Cheteni and Shindika (2017)
	Remain well-informed and ensure compliance with applicable South African legislation framework provisions concerning WB;	
	Create a separate budget line item in Departments to fund WB interventions;	
	Assume responsibility for WB and consistently enforce consequences for WB;	

	Foster collaboration with the government and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) to develop a framework and guidelines for the prohibition and control of WB in local government structures, to ensure the elimination of organisational political interference; Appoint and mobilise the employer, employer representatives and employee representatives to advocate for by-law amendments that would take cognisance of and give effect to the prohibition and control of WB; Monitoring and Evaluation: Leadership is to be assessed on the implementation of the anti-bullying policy, organisational policies, and related intervention outcomes as part of their annual performance reviews, and subject to consequence management in the event of poor performance; Provide progress reports on WB interventions and outcomes for the organisation on a quarterly basis to relevant stakeholders, committees and forums; and Complete annual psychological and team effectiveness assessments, incorporating feedback for leadership development purposes.	Kirk (2017)
Line Management	Provide transparency and direction to HR practitioners in the investigation and co-management of WB incidents; Facilitate and enforce decisions on WB incidents in accordance with applicable legislative provisions, the organisation's anti-bullying policy, procedures and practices;	Mokgolo and Barnard (2019)

	Maintain impartiality and confidentiality in respect of the investigation of WB incidents and parties thereto;	Fick (2016)
	Utilise personality emotional intelligence, and integrity assessment results to flag potential WB characteristics; inform decision-making in the selection process and develop mitigation measures for development purposes;	
	Personnel management: Implement organisational policies, procedures and HR management practices, mentor staff on conflict management and resolution, provide incentives to staff for displaying the required behaviours;	Mokgolo (2017)
	Provide social support to bystanders of WB and encourage them to report WB;	Sprigg et al. (2019)
	Review of organisational policies and propose amendments and/or alignment of policies in relation to WB in respect of updates to applicable legislation and regulations; ensuring that personnel are apprised timeously of such changes;	
	Monitoring and Evaluation: Line Management is to be assessed on levels of compliance regarding anti-bullying policies, procedures and practices, management of WB incidents and outcomes of WB incidents as part of their annual performance reviews, and subject to consequence management in the event of poor performance;	Kirk (2017)
	Provide progress reports on WB interventions and outcomes in their respective Unit and Department on a quarterly basis to relevant stakeholders, committees and fora; and	
	Complete annual psychological and team effectiveness assessments, incorporating feedback for development purposes.	

HR	Assume responsibility for the co-management of WB incidents with Line Management;	Mokgolo and Barnard (2019)
	Assist victims, targets and witnesses of WB to lodge formal complaints;	Fick (2016)
	Maintain impartiality and confidentiality in the investigation of bullying incidents and parties thereto, ensuring compliance with organisational procedures governing investigations, grievances and disciplinary action, and advise management on the findings of the investigations;	Salin (2008)
	Advise on applicable legislative provisions, organisational policy, procedures and practices applicable to WB, ensuring balanced support is provided to all parties and decision-makers in relation to WB claims;	Prokopenko (2020)
	Implement appropriate remedies for the victims of WB and harassment;	
	Utilise personality, emotional intelligence, integrity assessment results to flag potential WB characteristics and inform decision-making in the selection process and develop mitigation measures for development purposes;	
	Conduct inductions on the organisation's anti-bullying policy for new appointments and obtain signatures from all employees to adhere to policy requirements on an annual basis;	Lustig (2019)
	Facilitate anti-bullying policy workshops and awareness programs across the organisation on the damaging ramifications of WB and how it can be controlled;	Kirk (2017)

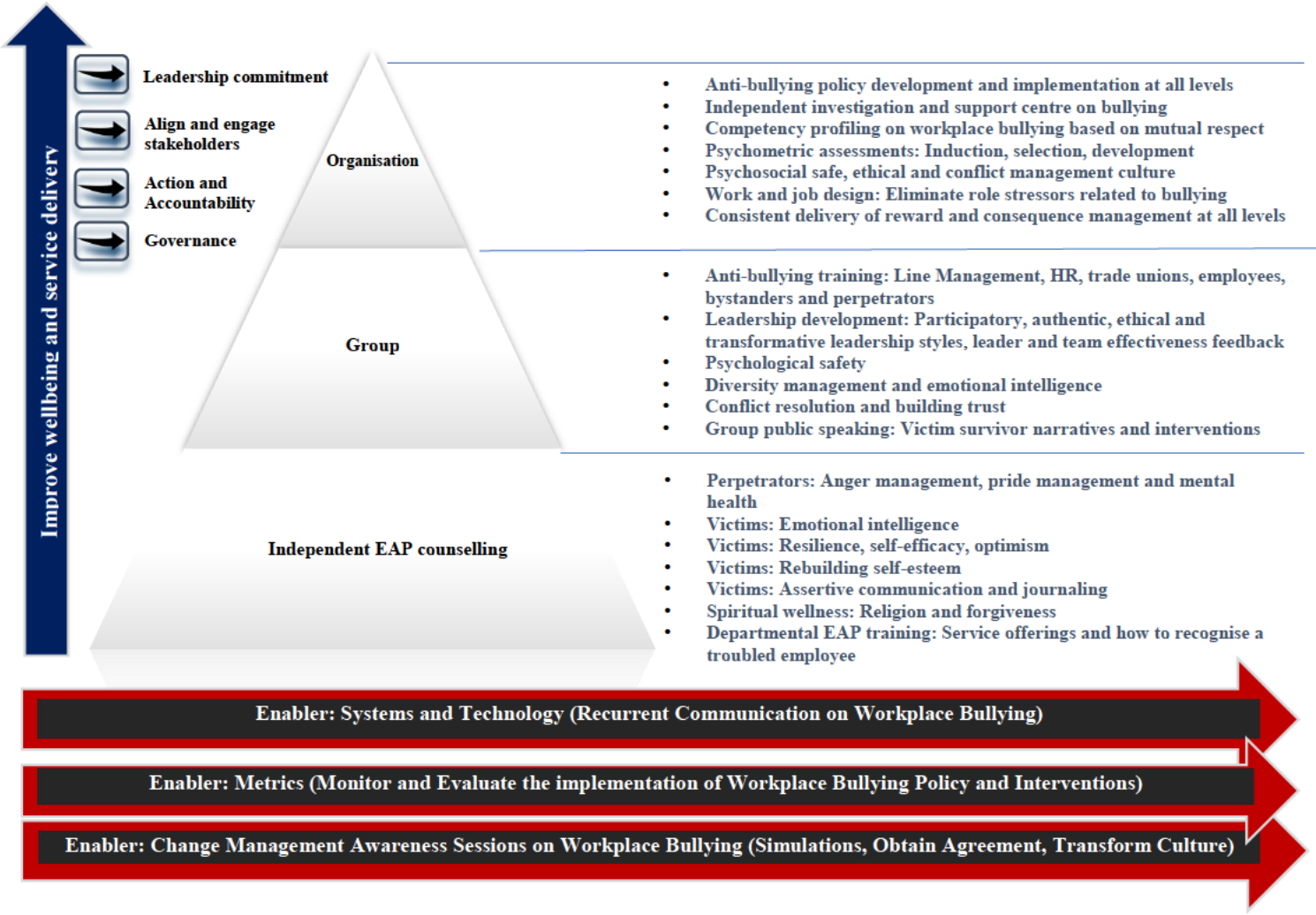
	Develop training manuals and programmes that are aligned with the municipality's anti-discriminatory policy; Analyse human capital metrics to establish trends and covert bullying (sick leave, turnover, absenteeism figures) and organisational costs associated with the phenomenon; Review organisational policies and propose amendments and/or alignment of policies, procedures and practices to include WB and in respect of updates to applicable legislation and regulations, ensuring Line Management and employees are timeously apprised of such changes; Provide progress reports on WB interventions and outcomes every quarter to relevant stakeholders, committees and fora; and Monitoring and Evaluation: HR is to be assessed on levels of compliance with anti-bullying policies, procedures and practices, outcomes of related incidents and facilitation of anti-bullying initiatives as part of their annual performance reviews, being subject to consequence management for poor performance.	Fick (2016)
Trade Unions	Stop work where targets or lives of victims, health and safety are in imminent danger; Provide information on services and resources available to victims; Collectively negotiate for improved support and legislation against bullying;	Prokopenko (2020) Mikkelsen (2004) Strandmark, (2013)

	Collaborate with the employer to attend to WB individually and at an organisational level, including involvement in anti-bullying policy development; and Facilitate awareness campaigns and offer resources to trade union representatives, their members and the organisation to support victims.	Strandmark, (2013) Rayner and Lewis (2011)
Ombudsman	Collect data about WB across the organisation to identify Departmental flashpoints of the phenomenon and develop data-driven WB interventions; Impartially investigate complaints of WB and recommend remedies and amendments to organisational decisions, policies and procedures; Ensure confidentiality for employees who report WB and for the investigation of related cases; and Ensure protection to whistle-blowers of WB in respect of possible retaliation and victimisation.	Hollis (2019) Hollis (2019) Prokopenko (2020) Uys and Smit (2016)
Health and Safety Committee	Identify and measure prospects of violence and harassment at work along with providing risk mitigation and prevention measures to control such risks; Provide training on healthy work environments that promote the protection and welfare of employees in relation to WB; and Provide avenues for employees to retrieve appropriate reimbursements for psychological or bodily injury or illness that result in an incapacity to work.	Prokopenko (2020) Salin (2015) Prokopenko (2020)

EAP	Contribute to the identification of high-risk employees, that is potential victims and perpetrators of WB;	Minor (1994)
	Increase business partnering with Departments through the provision of confidential, psychosocial support, information and counselling services to victims, targets, witnesses and perpetrators of WB;	Mabunda (2019)
	In consultation with relevant stakeholders and following counselling evaluations of victims of WB, obtain the authority to enforce decisions pertaining to their transfer out of a hostile work environment;	Richard (2009)
	Evaluate the implications and provide feedback on the organisational and workforce implications of WB;	Mabunda (2019)
	Advance the creation of WB intervention plans, strategies and policies; and	Minor (1994)
	Provide training on WB, including mental illnesses, substance abuse and stress management.	
Co-workers and Bystanders	Support targets and victims of WB;	Motsei (2015)
	Diffuse WB situations by speaking with perpetrators on the impact of their behaviours; and	Pouwelse et al. (2018)
	Report WB to the relevant authorities.	Motsei (2015)

Figure 5

Proposed Systemic Interventions to Combat Workplace Bullying



4.5. Conclusion

Chapter 4 restated the five research questions and presented the key themes emerging from the research, including participant responses in relation to their feelings, experiences and recommendations to prevent and manage WB. The findings were addressed, most of which were congruent with the literature provided on WB and were further illuminated through the theoretical frameworks of the study, namely the JD-R Model as well as Foucault's theoretical framework on power. Proposed intervention guidelines for the prevention and management of WB were further discussed and summarised as the final component of the Chapter. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings and contributions of the study. This is followed by the study limitations, recommendations for future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of Research Findings

The participants at the local municipality reported a widespread pervasiveness of WB across the research site, which was often concealed due to poor communication on the phenomenon. Based on the research findings, WB was understood as a frequent, intentional abuse of power that occurred repeatedly over a protracted period and differed conceptually from workplace conflict, with the latter being based on disagreements that could be resolved, with the acknowledgement of the risk of conflict escalating to WB over time.

Within the context of the municipality, the misuse of authority associated with WB was largely perpetrated by those in management positions, which included mobbing from management, HR, employees, unions as well as politicians, with upward and horizontal bullying occurring to a lesser extent. A range of negative social behaviours underpinned the participants' experiences of WB, most notably workplace aggression, social isolation, job isolation, harassment, victimisation, undermining tactics, humiliation and intrusion, that led to a breakdown in the trust relationship between participants and the perpetrators, as well as the creation of a toxic work environment.

WB had deleterious consequences on the psychological and physical health of participants in terms of numerous negative outcomes, inter alia, depression, anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, psychological distress, fatigue, anger, sleep disturbances, weight fluctuations, headaches, cardiovascular diseases, auto-immune disorders and memory impairment. Behavioural changes as a result of WB included being defensive, hyper-vigilant, withdrawn, recouping professional reputation and mistrust. WB also resulted in work-life interference, damaged interpersonal relationships, workplace gossip and reduced team cohesion. At an organisational level, WB resulted in reduced motivation and productivity, created a toxic organisational culture and increased organisational financial costs in terms of turnover, turnover intentions, extended sick leave, increased absenteeism and a damaged organisational reputation.

Based on the research findings, abusive leadership in the form of mobbing inclusive of HR, senior leadership, trade unions and politicians was the most commonly reported antecedent of WB derived from the abuse of positional and institutional power towards victims of WB. This was effected through destructive autocratic, laissez-faire leadership styles as well as a divide and conquer approach to management. The personalities of the perpetrators and victims and organisational political interference were also deemed to be strong causations of WB. Through the narratives of employees and managers, the purpose behind abusive leadership and organisational political interference as antecedents of WB at the local municipality was to ensure orchestrated deviation in the organisational policies, procedures, municipal regulations, and legislation, thereby achieving political leadership interests to the detriment of the employees and the organisation. A consequent lack of organisational support as well as the under-reporting of WB by victims and bystanders contributed to the escalation of bullying in the workplace.

Additionally, social phenomena such as gender, race, education and occupational level were commonly reported antecedents of WB. Gender and race produced mixed findings with respect to bullying, where both males and females as well as majority and minority ethnic groups were victims of bullying. However, there was a greater prevalence of bullying experienced by females in the form of gender stereotypes. The racial discrimination that exacerbated WB for majority ethnic groups included cultural norms of unquestioned obedience and tribalism, whilst institutional bullying through anti-discriminatory policy and affirmative action measures perpetuated minority ethnic groups experiences of bullying. Occupational levels in respect of abuse of positional power within leadership and management roles, as well as dependency on employment for survival by staff at lower occupational levels exacerbated the acceptance and perpetuation of WB in the organisation. With regards to education, 55% of participants held higher qualifications than many of the perpetrators. These perpetrators were politically appointed and were threatened by the participants' competence and achievement orientation, which contributed to their narrated experiences of WB.

Age was not regarded as a definitive antecedent of WB at the local municipality, as only a minority of younger participants reported being victimised based on their age, competence and appointments to higher-level roles in the organisation.

However, upon exploring the sociodemographic profiles of the perpetrators, the study discovered that most bullies were older than the participants, occupied managerial and leadership positions and belonged to the African ethnic group. There were also equitable reports of male and female perpetrators across the data set. This provided context to the findings of the study and highlighted the exemplified power differentials between victims and perpetrators through these social phenomena.

The research findings revealed that emotion-oriented coping, such as avoidance, defensive behaviour and social support, were less effective coping mechanisms in dealing with WB, but increased in effectiveness when these were used to instrumentally acquire and impart knowledge and lessons learnt from experiences of WB to colleagues. Religion and maintaining a sound personal value system were effective coping mechanisms that aided the participants to relinquish WB experienced to a Higher Power which liberated them from spiritual bondage, towards respect for others. External counselling, resilience and assertive communication were identified as the most effective problem-focused coping mechanisms, whilst reporting WB, the EAP, internal dispute resolution processes and transfers proved to be less effective coping mechanisms in dealing with bullying.

Based on the findings of the study, integrated, systemic intervention guidelines were recommended to prohibit and control WB in the selected municipality. This encapsulated leadership, assuming responsibility for the adoption of participatory leadership, ensuring accountability and delivery of consequence management, consistently and timeously. The development and enforcement of a WB policy along with regular recurrent communications on internal communication platforms were recommended to improve the comprehension of WB, and how it would be dealt with by the organisation, thus communicating a zero-tolerance approach aimed at deterring WB.

The establishment of support centres for victims to report WB as well as a confidential, impartial and independent investigation of WB incidents were further recommended to prohibit and control WB.

To give credence to a WB policy, it was also recommended that customised and shared anti-bullying training be provided to leadership, Line Management, HR, shop stewards, bystanders,

victims and perpetrators to assist them in the execution of their responsibilities to curtail WB. Additionally, the use of human capital metrics and psychological assessments were important to provide data-driven insights to identify WB behavioural characteristics to inform selection and development decisions as well as the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the anti-bullying policy and effectiveness of related interventions.

At a team level, diversity management underpinned by respect and appreciation for one another, along with the cultivation of psychological safety, trust, conflict resolution interventions and emotional intelligence training, were recommended to prevent and manage WB, as well as foster improved team cohesion, care and high team performance.

At an individual level, rehabilitative care through psychosocial support for victims and perpetrators by the independent EAP of the organisation was recommended to aid optimal functioning and reintegration into the workplace. Finally, it was recommended that victims maintain good job performance, be empowered through assertive communication and group public speaking dedicated to sharing their survivor narratives and designing interventions to prevent and manage WB.

5.2. Contributions of the Study

The study provided empirical support for understanding employees' and managers' feelings and lived experiences of WB at the research site, given the paucity of research within this industry in South Africa. The study also promoted the conceptualisation of WB specifically within the South African local government industry, which can be utilised to expand working definitions of WB in these contexts.

This qualitative case study advanced current research on the knowledge base on WB through the use of IPA and document analyses of organisational policy and procedural guidelines. This succeeded in achieving a deeper analysis and attribution of meaning on how employees and managers understand, experience and cope with WB, as well as their recommendations to mitigate against WB within the research site, which could not be substantially obtained through quantitative research designs. In addition, the study bridged the gap of limited interventions to control WB at local government entities through the provision of substantial, systemic intervention guidelines to inhibit bullying within the research site. The consensus on the

research findings and recommended interventions are supported by academic research literature, which demonstrates a further important contribution of this work.

Furthermore, the scientific inputs of the study are significant in that the results and intervention guidelines can be used as a guide to emphasise specific areas of concern that require to be addressed and assist the organisation in gaining some leverage over the present problem of WB. The study serves to enable and facilitate further collaboration between all spheres of government and civil society to prohibit and control WB. The research findings are invaluable as they will also contribute towards the implementation and fulfilment of the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace, issued in terms of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) legislated mandate of providing a workplace that is free from physical and psychological violence, in the context of the municipality. The study also provided a noteworthy positive input to the Organisational Psychology profession, which can assist practitioners in designing interventions for ensuring a healthy and safe working environment that mitigates WB.

5.3. Limitations

The following potential constraints may have influenced the research findings:

i. The study was a single exploratory case study design that only investigated WB within a local municipality and thus the research findings could not be generalised to local municipalities across KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. This is in accordance with case study research methodology that draws on multiple data sources to illuminate the case (Yin, 2018).

ii. The small sample size associated with qualitative research meant that the study could not provide a report on the specific pervasiveness of WB throughout the municipality under investigation, apart from the participants' self-reports, which may have been achieved more effectively through the use of a quantitative measure. However, this was not the fundamental research objective, but rather, to study and gather comprehensive information about each person under study (Creswell & Poth, 2016), namely the employees' and managers' feelings and lived experiences of WB at a local municipality. This was successfully achieved through the emerging, evolving and interpretive approach of qualitative research (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Additionally, the small sample size of twenty research participants met the objective of qualitative case study research, whereby participants had access to relevant information (feelings and experiences of bullying) that illuminated the phenomenon being studied.

iii. The Coronavirus pandemic resulted in a methodological challenge through the use of online interviews instead of in-person semi-structured interviews, where the latter may have resulted in the establishment of even greater rapport with the participants. However, the researcher endeavoured to successfully mitigate this risk through the provision of regular, transparent communication on ethical considerations outlined in the study and supportive measures to mitigate possible distress. In addition, power differentials were reduced through participant-led interviews to establish a flow of conversation and positive affirmations of their survivor skills which served to improve rapport and strengthen the interview process.

5.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the study exhibited, various future research avenues are suggested :

i. A cross-sectional study with a mixed-method research design should be conducted on WB, to include employees and managers on all occupational levels of the selected municipality. The objectives of this study should be to acquire representative findings on the pervasiveness and lived experiences of WB of employees and managers at the municipality.

ii. The study should be replicated at other municipalities in different provinces to compare and contrast the understanding of, experiences of, coping strategies and recommendations for the prohibition and control of WB to develop a holistic, substantial anti-bullying toolkit tailored to local municipalities.

iii. A context-specific instrument should be developed and validated for measuring WB as a psychological construct.

iv. A systematic review should be conducted to map evidence on the effectiveness of interventions to prohibit and control WB at local municipalities in South Africa.

v. The conceptualisation, experiences, coping mechanisms and prevention of WB should be explored through faith-based perspectives.

vi. Gendered, multicultural, multi-racial and multi-generational experiences of WB should be explored within local municipalities.

5.5. Final Conclusion

The study on WB investigated the employees' and managers' feelings and experiences of WB at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. The study achieved the research objectives through providing an in-depth understanding of how employees and managers (vide the twenty participants) construct, experience and cope with WB at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal

and developed substantial intervention guidelines for the prohibition and control of WB within this context. This was achieved through qualitative exploratory single case study research through the use of online semi-structured interviews, document analysis, IPA and reflexive journaling to illuminate the case.

The significance of the results in support of the research objectives was that WB was understood as a regular, repeated and enduring abuse of power and authority that manifested through a range of negative social acts experienced by the participants, where WB was systematically planned to induce submission of victims and created a toxic work environment. An innovative conceptualisation of WB included WB as a spiritual issue.

The experiences of WB at the local municipality revealed the predominant perpetration of vertical bullying through workplace aggression, job isolation, social isolation, harassment, victimisation, undermining, humiliation and intrusion. Consequently, participants exhibited deleterious psychological, physical and behavioural changes and ill-health that persisted long after their experience of bullying, whilst family relationships, teams, and the municipality were also negatively affected by WB. Novel physical health consequences included Grave's Disease, an autoimmune disorder including hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism. A number of emotion-oriented and problem-oriented coping strategies were utilised, with a newly added faith-based coping strategy, forgiveness and maintaining personal values of respect being the most effective emotion focused coping mechanisms; resilience, assertive communication and external counselling were found to be effective problem focused coping mechanisms against WB.

Abusive leadership, personality, social discrimination, a lack of organisational support, under-reporting and political interference were identified as antecedents that exacerbated the participants' experiences of WB in the organisation. Novel antecedents of WB included a divide and conquer management approach as well as organisational political interference, which are pertinent to understanding WB within this research site. These elements suggested overall that there was still much work to be done to control and prohibit WB at this municipality.

Against this backdrop, multi-disciplinary stakeholder roles and responsibilities were charted along with the provision of proposed multi-level interventions to prevent and manage a multi-faceted phenomenon of WB in an integrated manner. These included leadership and management interventions, policy and legislative interventions, skills training and development interventions, complaints-based and investigative interventions, change, management awareness and communication interventions, cultural transformation interventions, rehabilitative care, data analytics and monitoring interventions. A novel preventative intervention on WB was group public speaking by victims on their survivor narratives and their involvement in the design and delivery of WB interventions.

Success criteria underpinning WB interventions included the establishment of a steering committee with relevant stakeholders, accountability and delivery of consequence management for poor performance and non-compliance to reduce WB. It is recommended that the research findings and a cost-benefit analysis should be presented to leadership to ensure that the eradication of WB is prioritised on the leadership agenda as well as to inform decision making and budget allocations on the implementation of anti-bullying efforts across the research site. Additionally, the research findings should be shared with victims to aid their understanding of WB, identification of bullying tactics, enhance their survival and ability to succeed and thrive in the midst of bullying, as well as to facilitate their engagement in developing proposed bullying interventions collectively.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL APPROVAL: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

23 February 2021

Miss Ashlesha Singh (207513952)
School Of Applied Human Sc
Howard College

Dear Miss Singh,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002133/2020
Project title: Bullying in the Workplace: Investigating the experiences and feelings of employees and management on workplace bullying at a local government Municipality within Kwa-Zulu Natal.
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 19 February 2021 to our letter of 08 December 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 23 February 2022
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER

POD 7, GROUND FLOOR, INTUTHUKO JUNCTION, 750 MARY THIPHE STREET, UMKHUMBANE, CATO MANOR, DURBAN 4001
TEL: 031 322 4513, FAX: 031 261 3405, FAX TO EMAIL: 086 265 7160, EMAIL: MILE@DURBAN.GOV.ZA, WEBSITE: WWW.MILE.ORG.ZA

For attention:
Chair of Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee
School of Applied Human Sciences
Discipline of Psychology
University of KwaZulu Natal
Durban
4001

31 January 2022

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO A. SINGH, STUDENT NUMBER 207513952 - GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AS A STUDY SITE

The Human Capital Department and Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) in eThekwini Municipality, have considered a request from **Ashlesha Singh (Ms)** to use eThekwini Municipality as a research study site leading to the awarding of a Doctor of Philosophy and for the purposes of undertaking a research study entitled: ***"Bullying in the Workplace: Investigating the experiences and feelings of employees and management of workplace bullying at a local government Municipality within Kwa-Zulu Natal."***

We wish to inform you of the acceptance of her request and hereby assure her of our utmost cooperation towards achieving her academic goals; the outcome which we believe will help the municipality improve its services. The student is reminded of the ethical considerations and the Disaster Management Act, Act 2020 regulations when conducting this research. The student must take all necessary measures to ensure her personal safety during the research period as eThekwini Municipality indemnifies itself from any incidental claims that may arise. **In return, we stipulate as mandatory that the student contacts Dr. Collin Pillay to present the preliminary results and recommendations of this study to the related unit/s.**

Wishing the student all the best in her studies.

Supported

.....

Mr. Reginald Mkhize
Act. Head: Human Capital
eThekwini Municipality

[redacted]

.....

Dr Collin Pillay
Program Manager: MILE
eThekwini Municipality

I .....Ashlesha Singh.....have read and understood the conditions and hereby accept as mandatory that I will comply fully as per the stipulations above.

Signed: [redacted] Date: 31-01-2022

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH INVITATION TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

08 February 2022

Participate in a workplace bullying study

Employees and managers across all occupational levels in the City are invited to participate in an academic qualitative Doctoral research study *'Workplace Bullying: Exploring employees and managements feelings and experiences of workplace bullying at a local government municipality in Kwa-Zulu Natal.'*

Permission to conduct this study has been obtained by Council and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), having satisfied the ethical requirements for this study.

Given that this is a qualitative research study, the sample size will consist of 10 employees and 10 management members whom are willing to participate in the study in an online interview on Microsoft Teams, which will be one hour in duration.

This research study aims to provide employees and managers that have been bullied with voice to share their experiences, feelings and explore how they cope with workplace bullying as well as an opportunity to provide invaluable contributions and recommendations to prevent and manage workplace bullying more effectively in Council. The findings from this research study will be utilised to shape the development of anti-bullying policy and guidelines on workplace bullying interventions across the City to prevent and manage workplace bullying in a systematic and integrated manner.

Debriefing will be provided to participants, whom can also voluntarily engage in self-referrals into the Employee Wellness Programme by contacting the toll-free number on (0800 864 922) or emailing Serena.Frank@durban.gov.za to access free, confidential psychosocial support services if required.

The criteria for participation in the study are as follows:

a) Being an employee or manager within the local government municipality
b) Have witnessed or experienced workplace bullying at the local government municipality
c) Be able to specify the duration of the bullying (e.g., a single event/weekly/6 month or more).
d) Willingness to describe lived experiences and/or observations of workplace bullying
e) Access to online interviews on applications such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom

Should you meet the above-mentioned criteria and are willing to participate in the research study, please contact the PhD Student researcher and Industrial/Organisational Psychologist, Ashlesha Singh (Ashlesha.Singh@durban.gov.za; 031-3228348) and provide your response by the 21 February 2022.

Let us work together to take steps on a journey towards protecting, upholding and respecting the human right to dignity and to help live our organisational values of being a caring employer.

By 2030, eThekwini Municipality will be Africa's most caring and livable City

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) Research Project;
Student Researcher: Mrs. Ashlesha Singh (+2731-3228348)
Supervisor: Prof. J.H. Buitendach (+2731-2602407)
Co-supervisor: Dr. C.Z. Madlabana (+2731-2608389)

Dear Research Participant,

My name is Ashlesha Singh and I am currently registered as a student for the Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my research project is *Bullying in the Workplace: Investigating the experiences and feelings of employees and management at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal*.

You are identified and invited to participate in this study after having obtained ethical clearance for this study from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as well as authorisation in terms of the gatekeeper's permission letter to conduct the study at the local municipality, to explain the nature, purpose and ethical considerations surrounding my study and to invite you to be a participant for my study.

The aim of this study is to explore how employees construct, experience and cope with workplace bullying within a local municipality. Through your participation, I hope to understand the effect of workplace bullying has on individual and organisational well-being as well as propose guidelines towards the development of an intervention programme to prevent and manage workplace bullying. The results of the study will contribute to further research in this area of workplace bullying. Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this study. This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private.

If you agree to participate in this study, given the physical restrictions in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, you will be asked to participate in online video interviewing on either Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which will take up to one hour. You will be required to download your preferred application onto your computer or smartphone, with the option of utilising your web camera and/or or audio-recording only before entering the interview and will require a stable Internet connection. You will be required to create a separate Zoom or Microsoft Teams account for this study and delete it following the termination of this study.

By participating in the online video interviews, you are providing your consent to allow the researcher to utilise any shared image, text and/or artefact that may be provided by you during the interviews for data usage. The risks associated with this study are very minimal, however, interview questions could possibly induce feelings of discomfort or negative memories. Should you agree to participate, you are free not to answer any questions that could make you feel uncomfortable. The benefits of participating in this research include the opportunity to share your experiences and contribute meaningfully to assist in addressing bullying in the organisation. The researcher will then initiate a brief follow up interview on Zoom or Microsoft Teams with you to ensure accuracy in the capturing of your responses on workplace bullying.

Confidentiality and anonymity of information identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the researcher through the use of codes and neutral referents of the organisation in which the workplace bullying will be investigated. Limits to confidentiality are that the overall key research findings will be reported at human resources and management fora in the form of reports and presentations. It must

be noted that the researcher will consult with each participant prior to reporting findings on these platforms. Electronic devices, written interview transcripts, emails and biographical questionnaires will be kept in a cabinet under lock and key, and online meeting recordings on password protected computers with access control. Privacy and security of the data will be ensured as it will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team (researcher and both research supervisors). After five years, these materials will be destroyed.

Information received during the project will be utilised solely for research purposes and will not be released nor have any influence on any performance evaluation, selection or promotion decision, and/or disciplinary measures. The researcher will provide each individual participant with feedback on the research findings on Microsoft Teams or Zoom online platforms. The findings of this research may be used in academic publications and conference proceedings but that your identity as a research participant will be kept strictly anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study or rights as a research participant, you may contact me or my supervisors at the numbers listed above or on my email addresses (Ashlesha.Singh@durban.gov.za; 207513952@ukzn.ac.za).

Sincerely,

Ashlesha Singh

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Ashlesha Singh and I am presently completing my Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology), degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the requirements for my degree, my area of research is to explore employees and managers feelings and experiences of workplace bullying at a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. The study will further explore the impact of workplace bullying on the physical and psychological well-being of individuals as well as obtain recommendations on how to prevent and manage workplace bullying at the said municipality.

To determine eligibility to participate in this study, please answer the following questions:

1) Are you an employee or manager within the local government municipality? _____

2) Are you between the ages of 18-65 years? _____

3) Have you witnessed or experienced workplace bullying at your place of employment?

_____

4) Did your observations and/or experience of workplace bullying occur regularly and repeatedly (ranging from a weekly incident to six months or more) or was it a single event? Please specify the duration.

_____

5) Are you willing to describe your lived experiences and/or observations of workplace bullying?

_____

6) Do you have access to online interviews on applications such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom?

_____

You have been invited to participate in this study after having obtained ethical clearance for this study from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as well as authorisation in terms of the gatekeeper's permission letter to conduct the study within the local municipality. Thus, if you are an employee or are employed at any level of management within this municipality, I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

This research is a qualitative study, which is interested in obtaining a description of your understanding and lived experiences of the research phenomenon, which in this study is workplace bullying. Accordingly, participation is undertaken through the completion of a biographical questionnaire that will be emailed to you and returned to the researcher electronically, as well as an online interview with the researcher on either Zoom or Microsoft Teams (depending on the application of your preference). You will be given the option to have the online interview with a web-based camera or through audio-recording only. For the purposes of this study, you will be required to create a new Microsoft Teams or Zoom account. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. Please note that participation in the interview process is completely voluntary and you will not be disadvantaged in any way should you decide not to participate.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study, by using codes during the transcripts, written reports, and any journal article or conference presentation that may follow. Additionally, all electronic online meetings, recordings and transcribed data will be securely stored on a password protected computer with access control limited to the research team (researcher and both research supervisors). All hard copies of the interview data will be stored in a cabinet under lock and key with access strictly limited to the researcher. Privacy and confidentiality will be further upheld as all Microsoft Teams and Zoom accounts will be destroyed following the termination of the study. Similarly, all electronic data, online meeting recordings, and written interview transcripts will be removed from all storage devices and cabinets and will be destroyed after five years.

Given that the interviews will be conducted online, you will be able to select an appropriate location that is free from distractions prior to participating in the online interviews with due regard to privacy, at a time and place convenient to you. Your informed consent to participate in the study will be provided through the signing an informed consent form that will be provided to you electronically by the researcher. This signed informed consent form must be returned to the researcher electronically. You have the right to voluntary withdrawal from the study at any point without any undue consequence to you and you are not obliged to answer any question.

Your well-being is of paramount importance in this study. Whilst minimal risk may be experienced, should you feel the need for counselling after the study, you may contact the researcher or supervisors vide the contact details listed below who will initiate a referral to the municipality's Employee Wellness Programme for the management and provision of psychosocial support. You may then access the Employee Wellness Programme by contacting their toll-free number on (0800 864 922) or by email on Serena.Frank@durban.gov.za to arrange for free, confidential psychosocial support services offered through an independent service provider, Life Employee Health Solutions.

The benefits of participating in this research include the opportunity to anonymously and confidentially give voice to share your experiences of workplace bullying as well as contributing meaningfully towards preventing and managing workplace bullying.

If you have any concerns over the way the study is being conducted, please contact the HSSREC Committee telephonically on +2731-260 8350/ 4557 / 3587 or the Chairperson of this Committee, Professor Dipane Hlalele, who may be contacted by e-mail on hlaleleD@ukzn.ac.za.

The telephone number for the Committee secretariat is 031 260 4557 and their e-mail address is Dlaminid1@ukzn.ac.za

Please note that your interview responses will only be used for academic research purposes.

This is an independent study conducted under strict supervision and co-supervision of Industrial Psychologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

If you are interested in participating in this study and would like to be interviewed, please contact the researcher below to arrange a suitable time for the online interview to be conducted.

Best regards,

Ashlesha Singh

Ashlesha Singh

Researcher: PhD Student (207513952)

Email: Ashlesha.Singh@durban.gov.za

Office Phone: +2731-3228348

Dr. Johanna Hendrina Buitendach

Primary Research Supervisor

Email: Buitendach@ukzn.ac.za

Office Phone: +2731 260 2407

Dr. Cynthia Zandile Madlabana

Research Co-Supervisor

Email: Madlabana@ukzn.ac.za

Office Phone: +2731 2608389

Date: 08 February 2022

APPENDIX F: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the details below. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Where applicable, place an **X** in the appropriate box. Your participation in completing this questionnaire is appreciated.

1. Age

Under 25	☐
25-34	☐
35-44	☐
45-54	☐
55-65	☐

2. Gender

Male	☐
Female	☐
Other	☐

3. Marital Status

Single	☐
Married	☐
Divorced	☐
Widowed	☐

4. Race

African	☐
Coloured	☐
Indian	☐
White	☐

5. Educational Qualifications (More than one may be applicable)

Grades 10-12	☐
Diploma/Certificate	☐
Under-graduate Degree	☐
Post-graduate Degree/s	☐
Post-graduate diploma certificate	☐
Professional Body Membership	☐

6. Position in organisation

Leadership (TK 22-TK25)	☐
Executive Management (TK19-TK21)	☐
Senior Manager (TK16-TK 18)	☐
Manager (TK13- TK15)	☐
Supervisor (TK12-TK13)	☐
Employee (TK09- TK 11)	☐
Employee (TK05- TK08)	☐

7. Length of Service

0-5 years	☐
6-10 years	☐
11-15 years	☐
16-20 years	☐
21 years and over	☐

APPENDIX G: LETTER FROM THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

CORPORATE & Human Resources
Employee Wellness
8th Floor, Shell House,
221Anton Lembede Street, Durban, 4001
Tel: 031 311 3123

To: Professor Dipane Hlalele

(Chair: Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee)

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002133/2020

Project Title: Bullying in the Workplace: Investigating the experiences and feelings of employees and management on workplace bullying at a local government municipality within Kwa-Zulu Natal

Degree: PhD

Date: 17 December 2020

Dear Prof. Dipane Hlalele,

The Employee Wellness Programme (EWP) provides free, confidential assistance on psychosocial matters to all employees at eThekwini Municipality.

This letter serves to confirm that the Employee Wellness Department at eThekwini Municipality agree to provide psycho-social support counselling services through our external service provider (Life Employee Health Solutions) to all participants in the afore-mentioned research study.

The principal investigator for this study (Ashlesha Singh, student number 207513952) would recommend that any affected participants from the study obtain psychosocial support through the EWP. However, it must be noted that participation in the EWP is a voluntary process at the discretion of the participant.

Employees that would like to utilise the EWP may do so by contacting the toll-free number on 0800 864 922 where they can select an option of their preference in terms of face to face counselling, onsite face to face counselling or

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

CORPORATE & Human Resources
Employee Wellness
8th Floor, Shell House,
221Anton Lembede Street, Durban, 4001
Tel: 031 311 3123

telephonic counselling, which will be arranged with one of our professional employee wellness practitioners to provide them with psychosocial support services.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Dr. Serena Frank

(Senior Manager: Employee Wellness at eThekwini Municipality)

APPENDIX H: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Proposed topics	Open-ended questions	Potential follow up probes
1. Understanding how participants define workplace bullying (what it is and what it is not)	1.1. What do you understand by the term workplace bullying?	1.1. What actions and behaviours do you regard as workplace bullying? For example, do you deem behaviours such as social exclusion or abusive leadership as workplace bullying behaviours?
2. Exploring the perceptions and prevalence of workplace bullying in the organisation	2.1. How widespread do you believe this phenomenon is within your workplace and organisation? 2.2. What are your perceptions of workplace bullying at your workplace and organisation? Do you think workplace bullying differs from workplace conflict? Please explain	2.1. Can you please tell me why you perceive this to be so? 2.2. What actions and behaviours do you regard as not forming a part of workplace bullying? For example, do you deem behaviours such as a disagreement on a specific project or harassment as workplace bullying behaviours or not?
3. Exploring the manifestations of workplace bullying in the organisation	3.1. In your experience, how does workplace bullying present itself?	3.1. Can you provide examples of the types of workplace bullying actions and behaviours you have observed or experienced within your workplace and organisation? 3.2. Are you aware of the types of actions and behaviours that are regarded as workplace bullying by your organisation?
4. Causal factors that contribute to workplace bullying	4.1. What do you believe are the factors that contribute towards workplace bullying?	4.2. Can you please explain in detail how these factors contribute or give rise to bullying at work?

5. Personal experiences of workplace bullying	5.1. Have you ever witnessed or experienced bullying at your workplace?	5.2. Can you please elaborate on the nature of these events? 5.3. Would you be able and willing to describe the individuals involved in terms of their age (younger/older), gender, race and occupational level in the organisation? 5.4. Do you feel that this person's age/gender/race/occupational level has any bearing on why they bullied you?
6. Consequences of workplace bullying on participants (cognitive, psychological and behavioural)	6.1. How has your witnessing or experience of workplace bullying affected you physically, psychologically and behaviourally in the workplace?	6.2. How did the situation make you feel? Explain why do you think you felt this way?
7. Exploring the participants' coping mechanisms employed in dealing with workplace bullying	7.1. How have you coped with your experiences of workplace bullying? 7.2. What actions did you take when you witnessed or experienced workplace bullying?	7.1. Can you please discuss the coping mechanisms you have employed to deal with your experience or witnessing of workplace bullying? 7.1.1. Do you think the coping mechanisms helped you cope effectively in dealing with being bullied at work? 7.2.1. How and to whom did you report the workplace bullying actions and behaviours that you witnessed or experienced?
8. Consequences of workplace bullying on the organisation	8.1. How has your workplace and organisation been affected by these incidents of bullying?	8.2. Can you provide examples of the negative consequences of workplace bullying within the organisation?

9. Exploring how the organisation deals with workplace bullying (redress mechanisms)	9.1. In your opinion, how has the leadership of the organisation responded to workplace bullying? 9.2. Do you feel the organisation has implemented actions or redress to effectively deal with the issue?	9. Explain this more broadly.
10. Exploring how to prohibit, prevent and manage workplace bullying in the organisation at an individual, group and organisational level	10.1. What specific actions do you believe needs to happen to prohibit, prevent and manage workplace bullying?	10.2. Can you provide examples of desired interventions that may be implemented? In thinking of your interventions, what do you think can be done between individuals versus in a team setting and at an organisational level?

APPENDIX I: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK

Note to examiners: AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

APPENDIX J:

DATA ANALYSIS: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' QUOTATIONS

4.3.1. Definition of Workplace Bullying

RP 1: *"it's a matter of people taking advantage of their position, and that's usually nine out of ten times what happens in the workplace you know ... I mean there is different ways to bully people, whether its sexual, verbal and all of those things."*

RP 5: *"people are abusing their authority… abusing staff members or even laterally, you know, taking advantage of ... fellow employees or colleagues, using intimidation tactics, dominating tactics."*

RP 4: *"a deliberate attempt to make someone feel a certain way, most likely negative obviously, and not just once but on a continual basis. And whether they voice their you know displeasure or not being comfortable in that certain behaviour, that one continues just to incite a reaction."*

RP 10: *"I feel I was bullied from 2017, 2018 up until 2021 because I was, like, isolated by bullying activities."*

RP 11: *"it's constant, it's … it's done with the purpose of undermine undermining that employee."*

RP 10: *"when somebody regardless of rank makes you feel uncomfortable in different ways which are not justified while you're at work."*

RP 15: *"But because you are afraid that you'll lose your job, you are afraid that you will be charged, you end up doing something that you are not supposed to do."*

RP 14: *"something that is … creating an environment where people do not perform their duties or even communicate freely."*

RP 16: *"you don't feel safe, you don't feel happy ..."*

4.3.2. Workplace Conflict

RP 6: *"Conflict is when is when people's interests are not aligned alright but they both, but they both want something out of that situation."*

RP 10: *"conflict its where two individuals whether within the same level or different levels, they tend to disagree on something which is work related ... you can resolve it and still carry on with a good working relationship."*

RP 1: *"I think workplace conflict would be different opinions on how things should get done ... But it can turn to bullying, when it becomes, when one person has the status to authorise and do stuff and then force the other person to do something against their will."*

RP 16: *"conflict means that you have a different opinion about something you had different ends of a situation or how you perceive something right and workplace bullying is comes from that ... It may start small or it may be a continuous thing but I think conflict is part of that equation, so you can't separate it. It's not different, it's similar."*

RP 6: *"there's no scale, there's no instrument that measures the severity of workplace bullying. If I'd had that, I would have been empowered."*

4.3.3. Prevalence and Awareness of Workplace Bullying

RP 18: *"Hey I think almost all the Departments, you people do experience it. Most people they come to the sessions they are being bullied by their superiors in the Council so nje, it is something that is wide in the Council..."*

RP 12: *"I've not seen it happening, as widespread as it's made out to be, and it may definitely be happening. But I only work in work in four Units."*

RP 17: *"we don't communicate about it. We don't put articles on it on any of our … newsletters or newspapers or municipal internal communication platform or wherever we communicate."*

RP 8: *"I haven't heard any… seminars or workshops or like other than maybe what EAP sends across like, you know, like information in terms of that."*

4.3.4. Manifestations of Workplace Bullying

RP 19: *"She's stated to me if I don't obey her instruction that's lawful, she's calling the security to ask me to leave the building."*

RP 20: *"I think being in the government sector, fraud and corruption is huge so people will do whatever they need to do to cover themselves... I've had an incident where I was called into the office, three people gang up on me and that's over legislative requirements that needed to get followed, wasn't followed and I'm trying to have it corrected and three people ganged up on me..."*

RP 16: *"So what the staff have done are the people that are responsible for scanning, they don't scan my stations. They will take it and put it at the bottom of the pile right so … forcing me now not to have work."*

RP 9: *"these people will be they just gang together, they influence the workers, the work stoppages and stressing me to come to work now."*

RP 2: *"You know, when the person screams come here, I'm not going to sign your timesheet. I'm not gonna this ... screaming and shouting following you to your car."*

RP 10: *"she told the Designation C that cut him off don't give him any work. Nothing. Don't even communicate with him. So I sat for something like three months where I was just shunned."*

RP 2: *"And worst of it all was when they approached the people that I spoke to, you know that I get well along with that they must stay away from me ... They actually took they sent out an email saying that no people are allowed at the car parks simply because I was there."*

RP 4: *"I was so snappy because you have someone who wants to place their hand up your skirt but you just don't know how to report it."*

RP 17: *"I have to prepare for a performance and all of that. So, I asked my colleagues, I said … have you guys had a one on one or any performance discussion with this guy or whatever, none of them had...So why pick on me?"*

RP 11: *"She'd be going into different people's offices … blackening my name ... you know people I had good relationships with I suddenly didn't have good relationships with."*

RP 3: *"If the person who's making their report is unfortunately not a favourite to the Head, the Head will just use any other harsh words publicly in the meeting, telling that person sorry, sorry, sorry while the person is busy with the report. Stop it right there, you think this nonsense you talking about is it true? Can you please just sit down…"*

RP 1: *"I couldn't even go to the loo the man used to irritate me, like he would say Oh where were you…"*

4.3.5. Consequences of Workplace Bullying

1. Common Psychological Consequences

RP 7: *"I was attended by the specialist psychiatrist and a psychologist. I'm not sure if you know the … depression medication. I think it was Medication Schedule A and B that I was given, the very highest schedule."*

RP 8: *"all I remember is that I could, I was just, I don't know if I was crying or, but I couldn't breathe, like I couldn't, it was like I was like gasping for air. And it was the first time I believe that I had a panic attack."*

RP 6: *"the fear of losing my job somehow ... the fear of being sent to a part of the operation which is inconsequential … to become unimportant. The fear of being deprived of opportunity ... the fear of not being able to grow into the person that I that I feel I can become."*

RP 11: *"it is a… different kind of a rape, you raping that person of their self-worth, of their self-esteem."*

RP 17: *"it was the first time that I had to go in and out visiting my doctor, and I was the first time that I had to take stress pills."*

2. Common Behavioural Consequences

RP 5: *"it affects you to such an extent that you get demotivated. You don't even feel like waking up out of the bed and going to face another day because you're coming against the same type of people... I became on guard all the time."*

RP 20: *"I don't trust anyone. If you lose that you can't, it's like a mirror once it breaks and shatters, you can't put it back together as it was."*

RP 6: *"I had started communicating with him only on email so that I didn't have to so that I'd always have a record."*

RP 13: *"you would have to work double to show who you are, and what you stand for and believe in, are you really part of what they say? Oh no! It's time-consuming."*

3. Common Physical Consequences

RP 16: *"So I ended up with a hyperthyroid where I lost a lot of weight. Then I got Grey's disease and then I ended up on the other scale. Now I'm hypothyroid."*

RP 7: *"I developed insomnia. I also developed an extreme fatigue. Now I'm always suffering from headache … and I was seen by Sister AB ... she discovered that my heart was beating in a very strange way."*

RP 11: *"Long-term my memory has been affected because I think my mind suppressed things to … just make me be able to cope."*

RP 8: *"Someone is on a TTD had epilepsy for like six months was away from work it was that bad."*

4. Common Interpersonal Consequences

RP 5: *"It becomes very uncomfortable because you find that there's a breakdown of relationship between the staff member and maybe the person that's bullying them."*

RP 10: *"And then she said to me, no, I heard that … you said you got you are tired, you were sick and tired of doing your manager's work. That's where it's all started. You can see, judging from what I related to that that had nothing to do with it."*

RP 2: *"there's certain things in our Department you'd find that Indians are isolated. They on their own as well, Africans are on their own and there's no unity in that."*

RP 9: *"I've become stressed at home. It would affect me, I won't even be able to be focus on my family."*

RP 6: *"But a lot of colleagues are feel nothing to tell, to mislead or to lie um and I think that one of the problems is that we just going to end up with a lot of people retreating into themselves and just telling lies to keep the toxic relationship at a distance. And that that will be an erosion of the trust relationship."*

5. Common Organisational Consequences

RP 15: *"in municipalities you find that service delivery is deteriorating because the staff is not motivated. If all of us were motivated, were not bullied, were not victimised were not what, you will see a different picture on the ground outside. We are walking zombies, collect the salaries, go."*

RP 11: *"the people that are highly qualified they start applying out and it's also like the skills, the skills start to move out."*

RP 14: *"So the low staff morale, has been a point that we've, that I've noticed and also a poor productivity and, a rise in absenteeism. And also, people getting sick as well ... The person I'm speaking, I'm speaking about … he would take extended leave three months leave, sick leave."*

RP 5: *"It's adjusted the culture of the organisation to such an extent that discipline has fallen out of the door. And that has compromised integrity, ethics of the workplace itself."*

RP 7: *"Unloving employer, uncaring employer, a brutal employer."*

4.3.6. Antecedents of Workplace Bullying

RP 7: *"I have never get paid for September, never got paid for October, never got paid for November. My entire bonus was taken away from me. They said they were taking the money because … I listened to the doctors."*

RP 17: *"he also bullies us into doing stuff that is outside of all the regulations, outside of all the policies that we have, outside of all the SOPs that we have just because he says I'm the Designation AO, you, you will listen to me."*

***RP 19**: "this one decision we've taken, a way forward they train and remunerate me for the years to come … Everything was okay and after I give a report back to the office and I get back, they're saying it's too contradicting, what I'm saying is different and what HR is saying is nothing and then coming up with sideways."*

***RP 12:** "Your management in the sense that, will not want to damage their relationship with the unions so they rather give in than actually deal with the issues. So, for me, … and then you get bullied out from where you are because you've been doing your work properly."*

***RP 6:** "they divide and rule or they may use a scorched earth policy, so they try to damage other relationships around you so that you have no support ... he would not meet with us collectively. And then he'd have a meeting and then he would, then he would deprive us of resources. And then he'd say the two of you must work together to make this happen ... he would try and force us to work together."*

***RP 4:** "feeling disillusioned quite frankly as to how do you report it, to who do you report it and how does that person stay non-bias uh rather than say oh no we know her, you know."*

***RP 14:** "in most cases they know that he's a bully, but then nobody wants to, … actually deal with it ... or maybe they are even bullies themselves."*

***RP 9**: "So I don't think they've done much because they are being bullied …"*

***RP 3:** "I don't think anything is being done by Council as an organisation, I don't think so. They do have policies in place, they do have regulations in place, but when it comes to implementation of those policies is like talking to someone in China and then the other one is in Botswana."*

***RP 9:** "sometimes they tell you that no even your Head of Department he reports to us."*

***RP 8:** "I don't even think that they believe what they're doing is wrong because they translating what is happening in terms of the political environment into in the municipality ... because for them they think that if you act in that certain way you being a leader, you being powerful, they view it as being a person of authority."*

***RP 9:** "they would come to you and come with their maybe three hundred applications and they want it to be done ... forces you to do that thing."*

RP 5: *"junior staff undermine supervisors and Managers simply because they were employed through political contact or they affiliated with a political organisation ... and the minute a supervisor or manager starts to introduce these rules to be followed, then they start to bully the supervisor, threaten the supervisor, lodge false complaints,… just become totally insubordinate."*

RP 17: *"you actually go physically to the offices and walk around threatening all the young … investigators. They saying find something on this person, find something and I need you to report on this …"*

RP 15: *"they will be afraid to report something because I am an example to them that she was told not to report, she went ahead and now this is what she is facing. I will rather secure my job and keep quiet and you know, leave things as they are."*

RP 18: *"they told me that no when you grieve* (have a grievance) *in the Council, you won't be promoted, you won't get performance. I did not grieve, I didn't even think about it because of those reasons."*

RP 14: *"I had to intervene. I had to say hey but you know this is not right. And then he started lashing out on me. You think you are so special must I treat you differently? Must I wear kit gloves when I'm dealing with you and all that nonsense. So, I just said, you know what just leave it. I'm not gonna win this with you."*

RP 1: *"he was insecure at home so therefore he came to work and he came to exercise his, ... his authority at work because he didn't at home."*

RP 13: *"it's envy and lack of self-confidence."*

RP 11: *"So like there were no boundaries with her … she felt she owned you... they have no ethics, they have no moral compass, they have no values so nothing is too low that they will not stoop to do that."*

RP 16: *"So they want, like, people to admire them. They have like, a set group and it comes easier to individuals who are prone to narcissism. She must always be the centre of attention, right, and if you … like outshine her...then it becomes an issue for her. Then she will do something to like, shove you off your pedestal kind of thing, right."*

RP 4: *"But he is the one who takes joy or finds something worth you know … just rattling other's cage."*

RP 2: *"They'll be known as that person that, oooh, they so godly, they so this, they so that, they so that. Wait until they in the Departments, then you will know the person. They are aggressive ... And then they want other people to portray them as these Christians, believers, sweet, humble speaking all of it."*

RP 1: *"I was a soft person and I was a people pleaser kind of thing, I'm an easy target because I never confronted, I never stood up for myself for that matter and I never brought it up as a problem."*

RP 6: *"I always want to be growing, I don't want to stand still. So as soon as that was identified, then the status quo wasn't to nurture the achievement. so that that person can grow and even outgrow the environment. It was to hold them back and suppressed and I just found it to be a very, ... draconian management style."*

RP 20: *"I've noticed that people that are not so quick at grasping things, you'd find that a senior would try and push their way to try and get them to do what they want to have done."*

RP 2: *"maybe they perceive you to be not connected or not knowledgeable of the people that could address your issue, then the person takes advantage of that and then they think they can walk over you anyhow..."*

RP 4*: "…. she is just way too high she needs to be brought down to size."*

RP 17: *"he uses the female term as like you know, when you engage with females they always, you know they so emotional."*

RP 8*: "as woman we become so hungry for power and to be in power … because also we want to prove ourselves against the other male counterparts that we can do this, that we become too aggressive...we become chauvinist."*

RP 3: *"they wanted was just to have me locked up there and then I would have a criminal record and then that would be the end of me."*

RP 10: *"my feeling is that they did talk among themselves to say that no, he said he won't be involved and said her no he reports to me now he will go which is why she did not even tell me what is happening."*

RP 17: *"my Municipal Manager, my immediate boss who treats you … differently because…you young in the organisation, you young in the role."*

RP 2: *"because I'm Xhosa so what we are taught back home, it's totally different. No favours or deals will get me to the next level. Then you come into such a space where you find that Zulu's they told a different story. That your superior is your God. You worship the ground. So that's why it's so easy for them to do them anyhow."*

RP 16 *"I think it's happening everywhere because especially now with this, … Affirmative Action and then Employment Equity policies in place ... I was just looking at the appointment listing today, everything there's not one Indian surname or White surname or Coloured surname. Every person that's been promoted is a Black person and if they can't find a suitable Black person, they say it's non appointment ... it's like it's just like a reverse apartheid …"*

RP 5: *"I believe that, … incompetent people have been put into positions… political people have been put into positions and you always have this conflict where merit versus politics and, once a person feels undermined, they start to bully."*

RP 15: *"And, the other thing is people are intimidated by your qualifications. You are doing Qualification P now, you are going to go into the workspace, your Manager is a female, your Manager has only Degree. She will treat you different because she will think that you are coming to take her job."*

RP 12: *"I in most instances, I represented the municipality at the arbitrations. So, we continued to succeed. So, the result we became a threat to people and they then formed their alliances with Designation CLR and there were people that are up to Municipal Manager."*

RP 2: *"they have employed, …people that went to government schools, people that come from very poor backgrounds, that feel that if I lose this job, then it's the end of me, so I really cannot. They take everything..."*

4.3.7. Coping with Workplace Bullying

RP 9: *"I'm not a person who likes to drink alcohol, so sometimes I will just take a sip ... just to try to forget what has happened at work."*

RP 2: *"I started being out of contact with everybody, even the closest people to me, I said for them to be treated well at their workstations, it's fine, I'll be on my own. So, I operated from my car."*

RP 3: *"But it's okay, I'm a big man you know if you are a big man you have to stand these things. I didn't talk much about it ..."*

RP 14: *"we had solid team ... if somebody else would get a beating, we would call that on that day we will all come and you know, assure the each other you know and until, and we will talk about it. And sometimes we will even joke about it ..."*

RP 13: *"it is good to have a supporting partner and it also helped a lot. As much, he doesn't work for the municipality, he gets to engage if I share some of the horrible things that I feel are not alright and then he tries and guides me."*

RP 6: *"I focused more on the disciplines so that if I ever had to defend myself, if he tried to raise false allegations against me, I'd be effective to be able to make sure that he had that he wouldn't be able to do it easily."*

RP 6: *"being able to cope is about having a sound ... personal value system where you understand that regardless of how others treat you, you, your character must prevail. It means that you must never treat others with disrespect."*

RP 3: *"my only reason of coming here was a way of coming out of the cell and say this is an experience, this is a situation that is existing and nothing is being done."*

RP 13: *"I'm a survivor of cancer. I don't want to mask things hence I took this opportunity. At least I must vent it and say it somewhere ..."*

RP 3: *"I strongly made use of my religious belief as a Christian person I was praying a lot. I was going through to church a lot and every time when I'm there I would forget about what is happening in my workplace. So that helped."*

RP 13: *"I pray to my God that he must shield and fight for me, must help me to fight what I'm facing in the workplace."*

RP 1: *"I have forgiven the person because I realised that he also has a lot of issues of his own. I forgive him because it helped me grow and let go ... Nobody wants to carry that around… so I think for that forgiveness it's cathartic as well because it's positive on all levels."*

RP 6: *"I analysed the problem right. I understood that he was a threat to my well-being, he wasn't there to help me. It was clear that he was he was no longer an opportunity or a strength. If you know the SWOT analysis. The moment I identified him as a threat, I knew that I couldn't … I couldn't be vulnerable around him in any way ... I had to sanitise the relationship …"*

RP 13: *"One taking leave to go home and not actually engaging and confront the situation and trying and trying to unpack, it did not really work."*

RP 11: *"I filled in a formal grievance, which is a three-step process which is supposed to take no more than three weeks. It went on for three years and it was not recorded at each session there were different people attendings …"*

RP 16: *"I have phoned … what you call, what you call this the EAP and I … engaged with the counsellor. And I've had sessions with him and but there's only so much you can do because you already know what's going on."*

RP 3: *"I was being attended at Organisation A by a psychologist. I think attending that psychologist, it was very helpful."*

RP 19: *"I stood my ground and I proved to them, listen, certain things what they're saying is not to our acceptance and we couldn't swallow exactly everything what they told us. I said listen, we have a right to oppose whatever they saying and the way forward is to compromise and have transparency."*

RP 13: *"I also wrote and clarified certain issues that I think I don't want to be caught in between the two bulls fighting so that I get out of things that I'm not supposed to be part of them. It did help, you know sometimes if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will take care of your emotions and sanity..."*

RP 11: *"I can't say … that HR was effective in their job, absolutely not nor can I say that management was effective in their job, they weren't … EAP at least gave me an outlet but in the long term if those sessions that I had were put on file, they would have actually damaged my career ... because the person that I was speaking to was … not even the person that was drawing up the reports."*

RP 14: *"And like in most cases you'll find that instead of dealing with the bully, a person who is being bullied will be moved from one section to the next and … that is double uh jeopardy for me, you know? It's like I'm being punished for coming out that … I've been bullied."*

RP 17: *"So with this one I'm a bit tough. I'm actually helping the others that I knew that are going through it … but because I now recognise the signs of bullying because I went through it."*

RP 10: *"I said let me find a space where I can be able to work freely without any interference, and it was a space which was untouched within the Unit. So, it became a very good … coping mechanism because I've been working on it since 2018 up until now."*

RP 9: *"I only try to correct what I can."*

RP 1: *"people are always going through worse situations than us and we must always see it from that point of view ... Then you realise that yours is not so bad, you know, it's just a human thing. But yeah, it works."*

RP 19: *"the next day is a new day … we are not going to go backward here, we wanna go forward in our life. And we carry on that and I because of me having that nature of that type, I see it subsided."*

RP 2: *"I don't want to show them. I don't want it written all over my face that I was crumbling. I must try for these people not to see that I was dying."*

4.3.8. Prevention and Management of Workplace Bullying

RP 8: *"we also needed justice in terms of like feeling that our feelings were heard and what we were going through was valid and as the organisation, they understood what we were going through."*

RP 19: *"I said openness, fairness and transparency is a way forward where you don't hide information..."*

RP 13: *"look at the wellness of the workforce."*

RP 9: *"you must make sure that's how to prevent the politicians from interfering with our work structure..."*

RP 10: *"I think it should be a collective effort paper broadly between the employer and the employee, including the employer representatives and the employee representatives. The Head of Departments should be the accounting officers in terms of whatever bullying is happening in their Units."*

RP 9: *"if this person is being disciplined, he must be disciplined equally across the board."*

RP 17: *"we make examples of those people who continue to bully and we name and shame those people who continue to bully so that people know that it's not something that is… welcomed in the organisation."*

RP 6: *"Mutual respect as your competency that mitigates workplace bullying … if you could unpack mutual respect and dive right deep into what it means, then I would I would say that that should help in a big way …"*

RP 14: *"there needs to be maybe … a periodic psychometric assessments and detect if those that can detect if the person needs extra help in terms of handling stressful situations with regards to them being under pressure, how do they respond."*

RP 11: *"And also, there's people that are appointed in these positions, there is no EQ test you know kind of psychometric test that you should give people, the tool that they could use to assist,… seeing that this person has a tendency to be aggressive. This person has a tendency to be overly controlling ... so they not ready to hold those kind of positions."*

RP 4: *"there needs to be an assessment of managers and how they treat their staff, whether their staff is happy with them and co-workers ..."*

RP 6: *"leadership needs to be advised of the problem and I'm not sure if it has reached a point where it's filtered into their agenda. you have a one hour with them where you saying this is my study, this is what I found these are my recommendations going forward."*

RP 8: *"it's nice to educate people and to let them know this is what it is, this is the signs you look at and this is the behaviour that you see coming out of it. People need to be reminded that it is a reality… It happens, it takes place and it you shouldn't just turn a blind eye, because it's somebody's it's your colleague, it's a person who's being hurt …"*

RP 11: *"They should be able to go through a training programme where the behaviour of their Managers become consistent ... because a lot of people are now reliant on their own skills, their own um experiences."*

RP 7: *"I think the managers or the leaders of the municipality, people who are leading municipalities or higher post, they need to know and understand Labour Relations Act. They need to understand Basic Conditions of Employment Act, they need to understand the Constitution of South Africa which is enshrined and so that they can be able to perform their duties, so that they can be able to know how to treat people. They also need to know the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 is simple, saying that the employer has an obligation to care for its employees."*

RP 12: *"Even do little things like a little skit, like a play or play video on in the locker rooms and change rooms, on the internal municipal communication platform so people can see how serious we are on workplace bullying."*

RP 11: *"So the shop stewards ... This is a very, very highly skilled area ... They also need to be trained on how to handle this ... to know how to root this out ..."*

RP 11: *"They either need to be re-trained or undergo some sort of training where they understand that human resources is also a very, very valuable aspect of a company."*

RP 18: *"ensure that there's transparency in the organisation and everyone is treated equally in spite of race, gender and level."*

RP 16: *"It would be nice to be, ... put in a situation where we have to, we have made to talk to each other, you know, to address this and open up then and find out the reasons behind the behaviour."*

RP 16: *"I should be comfortable enough to say you, are now stepping into my personal space, please and I don't feel comfortable. Please uh keep your distance."*

RP 20: *"So we must be able to build those teams, trusting each other, you know, knowing that that we all working for the same goal, ... and having the emotional intelligence."*

RP 14: *"there needs to be focus on teams on how to be productive, how to be healthy, how to look out for each other you know."*

RP 3: *"the first thing would be the organisation having a policy or some guideline or whatsoever they call it that is talking directly how are we supposedly to manage bullyism in the workplace and then make sure … that policy is being implemented at all levels …"*

RP 8: *"what it is and what are the examples and in the event that you experience such, how do you report it ... and if you report it, what are the timelines, who gets, who does what …"*

RP 6: *"systemic policy means Municipal Manager circular, HR strategy, policy as it's understood in the organisation, standard operating procedure, job descriptions...collective agreements with SALGA…bylaw change…"*

RP 5: *"the municipality should set up a Department or a platform for people to lodge complaints of bullying … it'll be investigated and then decided whether it is sufficient enough to be considered workplace bullying."*

RP 13: *"The structures to deal with these types of cases, including the management of top officials when issues of bullying are raised or flag, must really be managed to get to the bottom of it."*

RP 2: *"They must not take sides between both parties. They must be the middleman but they must represent the employer."*

RP 11: *"the way HR functions ... they need to make sure that they have procedures and how to handle this. If somebody is saying I am bullied, take it seriously. Record it at … each stage. Make sure that your fifteen-day policy happens within fifteen days, not three months, not three years within that timeframe. And then there should be consequences for those uh people that are not doing that."*

RP 1: *"there's a reason why that person is doing what they're doing to so if they're getting counselling, obviously, maybe they will stop them because they will realise that their behaviour is having a negative impact and this is what they're doing."*

RP 9: *"if we can have like the professional … psychologist who can give a counselling to all the staff."*

RP 2: *"EAP needs to be visible within our Department, they must be like customer service."*

RP 7: *"People must perform the duties that are aligned to their job description... If you do, if you ask me to do something extra, please can we negotiate … my benefits for the extra duties?"*

RP 6: *"re-establish your contract with your employer because that's how you legitimise your work. Your job description is a little brother or sister to the contract. You make sure that you know your job description and then that way you can defend yourself."*

RP 6: *"I just had to be assertive. I said I'm doing my work, I'm not offending anyone, I'm respecting my colleagues. What's the problem? There has to there has to be a clear understanding, I am not doing anything wrong and if you claim that I'm doing something wrong, you must come with proof because if there's no proof, then it's you are the one who's at fault."*

RP 3: *"Individuals can organise themselves into smaller groups, specifically with the aid of addressing these issues and helping other individuals who have got similar experiences ... but they would also look at interventions of how to curb it completely, ... it's focus dealing with bullyism in the workplace but be consistent."*