



**UNIVERSITY OF TM
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BULLYING IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF KWAZULU-NATAL RESIDENCES**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Social Science in
Criminology and Forensic Studies
in the
Faculty of Applied Human Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

December 2024

DECLARATION

This is to confirm that this dissertation is my work
which

I have never previously submitted to any other
university for any other purpose. The references used
and cited have been acknowledged.

Signature of candidate: ... 

At.. Durban

On the 01 day of November 2024

Signature of Supervisor 

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the students residing in residences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who have experienced the pain and challenges of bullying. May this work serve as a step toward acknowledging your struggles, amplifying your voices, and creating a safer, more compassionate environment for future students. You are not alone, and your resilience is a beacon of strength for others who may still be walking this difficult path. Additionally, I dedicate this work to "Mntwana" Mbongeni Zulu, for always encouraging me and pushing me to excel in my studies. Your unwavering support has been a source of motivation and strength throughout this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- *I am truly grateful to God Almighty for His constant protection, guidance, and strength throughout this journey. His grace has given me the resilience to persevere through challenges and I am deeply thankful for that.*
- *I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Nomathemba Nomakhosi Sibisi, for her invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this study. Her insightful feedback, patience, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping this work. Dr. Sibisi, your wisdom and mentorship have not only helped me grow academically, but have also inspired me to push the boundaries of my understanding. I am deeply grateful for your unwavering belief in my abilities and your commitment to my success.*
- *To Dr. Kathlyn Cleland, the Registrar of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, thank you so much for granting me permission to conduct this research among students in UKZN residences. Your support and approval were crucial in making this study possible, and I sincerely appreciate the trust you placed in me to carry out this work.*
- *I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my mother, MaNgema, for her steadfast prayers and enduring support throughout my academic journey.*
- *I give thanks to the Ntshangase and Ngema families for always believing in me. I thank God for you.*
- *To my dear friends, Nosipho Mthembu and Nhlanzeko Sikhakhane, your support has been nothing short of remarkable. From the very beginning, you have always been available to assist me, regardless of the time or circumstance. Please know that you are deeply loved and appreciated.*
- *My sincere thanks also go to Linda for her invaluable contribution in editing my work.*

ABSTRACT

Bullying in university residences is a pervasive but often overlooked issue even though it disrupts the academic success and overall well-being of students. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal, bullying takes many forms and creates a hostile environment for students living in both on-campus and off-campus residences. This study investigated the nature, causes, and impacts of bullying in UKZN residences and it also explored intervention strategies that could help reduce incidences of bullying. Fifteen undergraduate students (n = 15), two Risk Management Services personnel (n = 2), and two Residence Liaison Officers (n = 2) with personal experiences of bullying were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. This approach was aligned with the study's qualitative research design, which aimed to explore participants' experiences in depth. These interviews provided crucial insights into the nature of the bullying problem in UKZN residences. The routine activity theory was employed to analyse why certain environments made students more vulnerable to bullying than others, while the social learning theory explained how bullying behaviours were acquired and reinforced within the residential settings under study.

The findings were that emotional, cyber, and physical bullying were the most prevalent forms of bullying that the students encountered. Factors that contributed to bullying included power imbalances, social hierarchy, substance abuse, and negative childhood experiences. These behaviours had severe consequences for the victims and significantly impacted their mental health, academic performance, and social lives. Many victims reported experiencing depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. They also struggled academically due to stress, lack of concentration, and absenteeism, while socially they experienced isolation and withdrawal from peer interactions. To address these issues, the study recommends implementing awareness campaigns and student-centred programs that foster positive relationships and reduce the occurrence of bullying in residences. Creating a safer and more inclusive living environment is essential for enhancing student well-being and academic success.

Key terms: Bullying, behaviour, higher education, students, university residence, victim

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	xiv
ANNEXURES	xv
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Background Information	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.4 Aim and Objectives.....	7
1.4.1 Aim.....	7
1.4.2 Objectives	7
1.6 Research Questions.....	8
1.7 Significance of the Study	8
1.8 Research Methods.....	9
1.9 Conceptualisation of Key Terms	10
1.9.1 Bullying	10
1.9.2 Higher Education	10
1.9.3 Students	11
1.9.4 Victim	11
1.9.5 University residence.....	11

1.10 Overview of the Dissertation.....	12
1.11 Conclusion.....	13
CHAPTER TWO	14
LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Bullying as a Phenomenon.....	15
2.3 International Perspectives of Bullying in University Residences	16
2.3.1 The United States (US).....	17
2.3.2 The United Kingdom (UK).....	18
2.3.3 Canada	18
2.3.4 Italy	19
2.3.5 Finland.....	19
2.4 African Perspectives on Bullying	20
2.4.1 Nigeria	20
2.4.2 Egypt	21
2.4.3 South Africa	22
2.5 The University Setting as a Context for Bullying	23
2.6 Types of Bullying that Occur in Residences	24
2.6.1 Verbal bullying.....	24
2.6.2 Physical bullying.....	26
2.6.3 Emotional bullying.....	27
2.6.4 Social bullying.....	29
2.6.5 Sexual bullying	30
2.6.6 Cyberbullying	34
2.7 Predominant Perpetrators of Bullying in University Residences	40
2.7.1 Fellow students	40
2.7.2 Resident assistants (RAs)	41

2.8 Gender Differences in Cases of Bullying.....	42
2.8.1 Male participation in bullying	43
2.8.2 Female participation in bullying	43
2.9 Understanding the Factors that Contribute to Bullying Behaviour	44
2.9.1 Individual factors	44
2.9.2 Social factors	48
2.9.3 Environmental factors	53
2.10 The Impacts of Bullying.....	54
2.10.1 Psychological impacts	55
2.10.2 Emotional impact	56
2.10.3 Physical impact	57
2.10.4 Social isolation.....	57
2.10.5 The impacts of bullying on academic achievement	58
2.10.6 Suicidal thoughts.....	59
2.11 Intervention Strategies to Curb Bullying in University Residences	60
2.11.1 Education and awareness	61
2.11.2 Reporting incidences of bullying	62
2.11.3 Supervision and surveillance	62
2.11.4 Anti-bullying campaigns.....	63
2.12 Conclusion.....	64
CHAPTER THREE	66
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	66
3.1. Introduction	66
3.2 The Social Learning Theory	67
3.2.1 Cognitive processes as posited by the social learning theory.....	68
3.2.2 The social learning theory in the context of bullying	70
3.2.3 Limitations of the social learning theory.....	71

3.3 The Routine Activity Theory.....	72
3.3.1 Understanding the routine activity theory	72
3.3.2 A motivated offender	73
3.3.3 A suitable target.....	74
3.3.4 Lack of guardianship	75
3.3.5 Limitations of the routine activity theory	76
3.5 Conclusion.....	77
CHAPTER FOUR.....	79
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	79
4.1 Introduction	79
4.2 Location of the Study.....	79
4.3 Research Approach	80
4.4 Research Paradigm	81
4.5 Research Design	82
4.6 Population Size and Research Sample	82
4.7 Sampling	85
4.7.1 Determining participants for the sample	85
4.7.2 Recruitment strategy	86
4.8 Data Collection and Analysis	86
4.8.1 Primary data collection.....	86
4.8.2 Secondary data collection.....	87
4.8.3 Thematic data analysis	88
Phase 1: Preparing and organising the data for analysis	88
Phase 2: Transcribing the data.....	88
Phase 3: Becoming familiar with the data.....	89
Phase 4: Recording the data in memos	89
Phase 5: Coding the data.....	89

Phase 6: Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes.....	90
Phase 7: Making the analytic process transparent	90
4.9 Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness	91
4.9.1 Credibility	91
4.9.2 Transferability	91
4.9.3 Dependability.....	92
4.9.4 Confirmability.....	92
4.10 Ethical Considerations	92
4.10.1 Informed consent.....	93
4.10.2 Anonymity	93
4.10.3 Confidentiality	94
4.10.4 Potential for harm.....	94
4.11 Communicating the results	94
4.12 Limitations of the Study.....	95
4.12.1 Generalisation	95
4.12.2 Participation.....	95
4.13 Conclusion.....	95
CHAPTER FIVE	97
DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS	97
5.1 Introduction	97
5.2 Understanding bullying in higher education institutions	98
5.3 Forms of bullying experienced by students residing in UKZN residences.....	102
5.3.1 Emotional bullying.....	103
5.3.2 Cyberbullying	107
5.3.3 Physical bullying.....	109
5.4 Common types of bullying in UKZN residences	111
5.4.1 Emotional bullying.....	111

5.4.2 Cyberbullying	114
5.4.3 Verbal bullying.....	116
5.5 Factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences	118
5.5.1 Social hierarchy and power imbalances	119
5.5.2 Childhood experiences	121
5.5.3 Substance abuse	123
5.6 The impact of bullying on student victims.....	125
5.6.1 Academic impact.....	125
5.6.2 Emotional impact	129
5.6.3 Social Impact	131
5.6.4 Perceived threats and the erosion of safety	133
5.7 Intervention strategies to mitigate bullying.....	136
5.7.1 Existing intervention programs and initiatives to address bullying.....	136
5.7.2 Recommendations by participants to assist bullied victims	140
5.7.3 Recommended intervention strategies to mitigate bullying	143
5.8 Conclusion.....	147
CHAPTER SIX	149
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	149
6.1 Introduction	149
6.2 Overview of the Study	149
6.3 Conclusions Related to the Findings of the Study.....	150
6.3.1 The types of bullying prevalent in UKZN residences.....	150
6.3.2 Factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences.....	152
6.3.3 Findings relating to the effect of bullying on students.....	154
6.3.4 Intervention strategies to reduce bullying	155
6.4 Overall findings of the study.....	157
6.5 Contribution of the Study's Findings to the Pool of Knowledge	158

6.6 Limitations of the Study.....	159
6.6.1 Geographic limitations	159
6.6.2 Access to participants	159
6.6.3 Temporal scope	160
6.7 Suggestions for Future Research	160
6.8 Summary and Concluding Remarks	161
REFERENCES	162
ANNEXURE A1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	187
ANNEXURE A2: INHLOLOKHONO.....	189
ANNEXURE B1: INFORMED CONSENT	191
ANNEXURE B2: IFOMU LOKUVUMA	195
ANNEXURE C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER.....	199
ANNEXURE D: GATEKEPPER’S LETTER	200
ANNEXURE E: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES.....	201
ANNEXURE F: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING	202
ANNEXURE G: TURNITIN REPORT	203

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
HCC	Howard College Campus
RA	Resident Assistant
RMS	Risk Management Services
RLO	Resident Liaison Officer
RAT	Routine Activity Theory
SLT	Social Learning Theory
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 3.3: Social learning cognitive processes

Figure 3.6: Convergence of three elements of RAT

Figure 4.2: Map of the Howard College campus

Figure 6.3.1: Types of bullying that occur in UKZN residences

Figure 6.3.2: Factors contributing to bullying in UKZN residences

Table 4.6: Summary of the study sample

Table 5.3: Forms of bullying experienced by students within UKZN residences

Table 5.4: Most prevalent forms of bullying

Table 5.5: Factors leading to bullying in UKZN residences

Table 5.6: Impact of bullying on students residing in UKZN residences

Table 5.7: Existing intervention programs

ANNEXURES

Annexure A1: Interview schedule (English version)

Annexure A2: Interview schedule (IsiZulu version)

Annexure B1: Informed consent form (English version)

Annexure B2: Informed consent form (IsiZulu version)

Annexure C: Ethical clearance letter

Annexure D: Gatekeeper's letter (UKZN)

Annexure E: Student support approval letter

Annexure F: Proof of language editing.

Annexure G: Turnitin Report

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Hidden behind South Africa's breath-taking landscapes and vibrant cultures, there lurks a silent epidemic that is robbing countless young lives of their innocence and potential. This epidemic is commonly referred to as bullying. This pervasive issue demands urgent attention and intervention in various institutions in the country, and in the residences of the country's universities in particular. While bullying is commonly associated with schools (Olweus, 2013), universities are not immune to its prevalence and harmful impacts. This form of interpersonal aggression extends beyond childhood and adolescent problems as it also infiltrates the very core of higher education institutions and affect both students and faculty members. According to Mabika (2022), the aftermath of bullying in any tertiary education setting has a significant impact and profoundly affects the mental health and academic performance of victims, leading to increased levels of fear, anxiety, depression, and even thoughts of suicide (Oliveira, Menezes, Irffi and Oliveira, 2018). Smith (2016: 525) describes bullying as “repetitive and aggressive behaviour in interpersonal relationships characterised by an unequal power dynamic”, while Volk, Dane and Marini (2014) view bullying as purposeful, with the bully typically having specific goals, such as gaining material possessions or social status. Bullying tends to be more severe than mere harassment as it often results in significant physical harm and, in some cases, permanent injuries and psychological harm. Moreover, bullying contributes to the creation of a hostile academic environment. Research conducted over the past thirteen years has revealed that bullying has enduring consequences for both the victim and the perpetrator and potentially jeopardises their educational achievements (Arseneault, Bowes and Shakoor, 2010). As it is a pervasive societal issue that compromises students' right to dignity and their educational well-being, addressing bullying necessitates continuous and renewed intervention efforts.

In South Africa, several studies have investigated bullying in the school setting, and they focused on both the primary and secondary education levels. In the Tshwane region, the incidence of bullying among high school students (i.e., Grades 8 to 12) was reported to be as high as 61% (Neser, Ovens, van der Merwe, Morodi and Ladikos, 2003). Similarly, Townsend,

Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard and King (2008) discovered that 52% of high school students had experienced bullying in Cape Town. These statistics associated with high schools are concerning, and it is plausible that bullying continues when secondary school learners move on to university. The transition from high school to university can be challenging and the stress of adapting to a new environment may exacerbate bullying tendencies and experiences.

1.2 The Background Information

Bullying is a concern at universities worldwide, and South African universities are not exempt from this issue. The roots of bullying can be traced back to the early history of higher education institutions (Volk et al., 2014). While the term ‘bullying’ is relatively recent, the behaviours and dynamics associated with bullying have existed for centuries, suggesting that bullying in university residences has been a concern for many years. Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes injury or discomfort to another person (Volk et al., 2014). These actions can take the form of persistent unwanted physical contact, repeated derogatory remarks, or even more subtle behaviors, such as spreading lies and gossip about the targeted individual.

Bullying in university residences is a global issue. One of the earliest studies on bullying in universities was conducted in the United States (US) in the 1960s (Rigby, 2007). The study found that many students were subjected to bullying in the forms of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, and deliberate exclusion from social activities and groups. Spring (2017) avers that, as education systems developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, bullying became more prevalent in schools and at universities, and British higher education institutions in particular gained notoriety for their culture of bullying during this period (Spring, 2017). According to Hazler, Miller, Carney and Green (2001), the term ‘bullying’ gained recognition in the 20th century; however, it was primarily used to describe physical aggression among the youth. For a long time, university residences were regarded as perfect places for students to study and live as, somehow, universities were separated from the violent behaviour that was becoming more prevalent in the communities where they were situated (Straus, 2008). According to Hazler et al. (2001), bullying at universities began to be recognised as a problem in the latter part of the 20th century. This resulted from the increased number of students entering universities at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, some universities had to be expanded to accommodate the increasing intake of students (Spelchen, 2020). As the population grew throughout the 20th

century, so did the number of violent behaviours that occurred at universities, and in university residences in particular (Spelchen, 2020).

In the United Kingdom (UK), surveys conducted over the years have shown that bullying and harassment have remained significant issues among university students. In a 2004 survey, 29% of university students reported experiencing bullying or harassment (Patchin and Hinduja, 2014). Subsequently, in 2016 another survey found that nearly 22% of university students reported being bullied on campus, with residences being a common location for such incidents (Goodboy, Martin and Goldman, 2016). These findings suggest that the safety of university residences is an ongoing concern. Similar studies have also been conducted in countries such as Canada and Australia, and these studies have highlighted the global nature of the issue.

While the prevalence and dynamics of bullying in university residences may vary across different cultural contexts, the general concerns and impacts have tended to remain consistent. Milem, Chang and Antonio (2005) assert that university residences often bring together students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities. This diversity enriches the living experiences for most, but it also leads to clashes, misunderstandings, and potential bullying (Milem, Chang and Antonio, 2005). For instance, students who need to become more fluent in the local language of the university residence may face communication challenges. Bullying in this context may involve discrimination, prejudice, and/or exclusion based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors.

Bullying in university environments comes in many forms, and no student is fully protected against it. Unfortunately, a common notion that prevails in society is that bullying tends to disappear as children mature. Unfortunately, it is incorrect as bullying is still prevalent on many university campuses and in residences. A study by Selkie, Kota, Chan and Moreno (2015) found that factors like drug and alcohol use, the need to fit in, and social media sites that are prevalent on many university campuses often exacerbate bullying. Nevertheless, many universities continue to ignore the issue. Tarshis (2010) asserts that students in higher education settings are pressured by their peers to use drugs and alcohol in various settings on campus, and refusal to do so often leads to bullying or harassment. In the university environment, it is generally accepted that students must be associated with the 'in-group' to be socially accepted (Tarshis, 2010). 'Out-groups', such as first-year students and non-drinkers, may lack the social support

needed during this transitional period because they do not fit in with the majority of their peers. Wolburg (2022) asserts that vulnerable university groups, such as non-drinkers, will succumb to peer pressure in the hope of being socially accepted and successfully transitioning to the university 'ethos'. The 'party culture' includes the use of drugs and alcohol and a student's desire to fit in then often leads to peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours.

Dussich and Maekoya (2007) also explored instances of bullying among students and argue that bullying is rife at tertiary education institutions throughout South Africa. Dussich and Maekoya (2007) further state that bullying at universities occurs in various spaces, including lecture rooms, residences, on online platforms, and in various social settings. Bullying at South African universities has manifested as verbal abuse, harassment, exclusion, intimidation, and cyberbullying, among others (Tarshis, 2010). It often harms the well-being and academic performance of victims and factors such as negative competition, social hierarchies, and cultural dynamics may contribute to exacerbated bullying in the university context.

High rates of violent behaviours are currently prevalent in South Africa and a dire reality; hence, the belief that university residences are violence-free zones is inaccurate. Bullying in university residences has been there for decades and will continue to trouble universities if it is not addressed. While specific data on the prevalence of bullying in South African university residences may be limited, reports and evidence suggest that bullying incidents occur more frequently than the general public may think. Singh and Rampersad (2010) define South Africa as a diverse country with a rich mix of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Therefore, cultural diversity in university residences may contribute to conflict that may escalate into bullying incidents. As stated by Barbarin and Richter (2013), South Africa has a history of apartheid, which has had social and psychological impacts on individuals and communities. While the impacts of apartheid may not have a direct link to university residence bullying, they can influence power dynamics, social relationships, and tensions within diverse living environments. For instance, apartheid created a historical legacy of racial inequality and social division (Tshishonga, 2019), and the long history of segregation and discrimination has left deep scars on South African societies. These historical divisions can influence how people interact with one another in various contexts, including in university residences.

In light of the growing consensus among scholars (see Barbarin and Richer, 2013) regarding the pressing need for further investigation into bullying in university residences, this study embarked on an exploration of bullying in the specific context of residences of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), with particular focus on the Howard College Campus. Delving into the existing body of research on bullying in the university setting, the study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon by focusing on its complexities and contributing factors to ultimately enrich the body of knowledge on this invasive issue.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Bullying is a pervasive form of harassment and poses a significant and far-reaching threat to the physical and emotional well-being of individuals in various environments, including educational institutions and professional workplaces (Lawrence, 2017). While this issue has historically been marginalised as an ‘invisible’ societal concern, it is now garnering substantial attention in the realm of higher education, particularly considering the distressing wave of student suicides associated with bullying (Washington, 2014). Despite the growing awareness of the prevalence of bullying among university students, there remains a pressing concern about the well-being and safety of students residing in university residences. Research by Sithole (2017) revealed that a substantial 45% of University of Zululand (UNIZULU) students had experienced various forms of bullying, but specifically cyberbullying. Also, a video trended recently on social media (Facebook and TikTok) which showed how a 22-year-old Durban University of Technology (DUT) student was allegedly attacked and stabbed by a fellow student at their residence on the main Steve Biko campus¹. University residences should be safe spaces for students, but violent attacks threaten this security, leading to emotional and academic setbacks for those living in fear. The fact that this attack was captured on a live stream raises additional concerns about cyberbullying, as widespread sharing of the video could intensify the victim’s humiliation and even result in victim-blaming, further deepening the psychological impact.

¹ <https://witness.co.za/news/kzn/2024/04/29/student-stabbed-during-live-study-session-on-facebook/>

Furthermore, findings from a recent investigation by Khosa (2022) highlight the troubling observation that bullying often occurs in concealed areas, such as restrooms, that are beyond the vigilance of campus authorities. As noted by Khosa (2022), bullying encompasses both physical and emotional abuse, and students experiencing such abuse are at an elevated risk for depression, persistent pessimism, and hopelessness, which can have detrimental impacts on their academic performance and social interactions.

Bullying has become a pervasive and critical issue in educational institutions worldwide and has impacted the physical and psychological well-being of students. It has created a hostile campus environment and has compromised the educational mission of universities that have not addressed the issue pertinently and decisively (Mishna, 2012). While there are studies on student harassment and victimisation in higher education institutions such as the one by Marshall (2016), little is known about bullying that occurs in university residences. The dearth of comprehensive research on bullying in university residences in South Africa, particularly in the distinctive context of UKZN, is striking. Earlier studies predominantly concentrated on the primary and secondary school settings, and this gap in the pool of knowledge underscores the urgency to acquire data that are specific to the university environment. It was against this background that the current study was conceptualised to address this gap by conducting an exploratory study on bullying in UKZN residences. The study sought to address various concerns expressed in the literature, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge concerning this issue.

The study critically challenged the common assumption that bullying is confined to primary and secondary schools. A 2012 study conducted by the University of South Africa found that, out of a sample of 3,371 learners, 1,158 (34.4%) had experienced bullying. Emotional bullying was the most prevalent, affecting 55.3% of learners, followed by physical bullying (38.4%), cyberbullying (16.9%), and verbal bullying (2.8%). The study also revealed that 29.3% of bullying incidents occurred at school after class, while 32.2% took place during class. Given these findings, the present study focused on university residences to provide a broader perspective on the bullying phenomenon beyond the school environment. Additionally, the research aimed to garner insights that would inform the development of evidence-based intervention strategies and policies, thus ultimately fostering a safer and more supportive environment for university students who live in both on-and-off-campus residences. By

shedding light on the multifaceted nature of bullying, this study envisaged making a meaningful contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding the role of educational institutions and to help them ensure secure and nurturing accommodation settings for their students.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

1.4.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate the nature, causes, and impacts of bullying in UKZN residences and to explore intervention strategies that could help reduce its occurrence.

1.4.2 Objectives

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. *To identify the types of bullying that occur in UKZN residences.*

This objective was formulated to systematically and comprehensively investigate and categorize the various forms and instances of bullying in the residential facilities under study.

2. *To explore the factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences.*

To achieve this objective, the study delved into the factors that caused students to become vulnerable targets of bullying behaviour in the residential facilities of UKZN. The investigation focused on identifying and understanding the social, environmental, psychological, and institutional factors that played a role in exacerbating bullying in the residences under study.

3. *To explore the impact that bullying in UKZN residences has on victims.*

To achieve this objective, the consequences and impacts of bullying on individuals who had been subjected to such behaviour within the residential facilities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal were analysed.

4. *To assess current intervention programs to determine if they are effective in reducing bullying incidences in UKZN residences.*

The purpose of this objective was to evaluate and examine the effectiveness of various intervention programs to determine if they mitigated and prevented bullying within the residential settings under study. A secondary purpose was to determine which advanced strategies, initiatives, and measures could additionally be implemented to address bullying more effectively in UKZN residences.

1.6 Research Questions

This investigation was driven by four main research questions:

1. What types of bullying occur in UKZN residences?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the bullying phenomenon in UKZN residences?
3. What are the effects of bullying on the victims?
4. What are some of the existing intervention programs at UKZN residence, and how new programs can be initiated to reduce bullying?

1.7 Significance of the Study

Bullying is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across all age groups and in various settings. While it is often associated with school-aged children and workplace environments, its prevalence in university residences remains a significant concern, and that is the reason this study aimed to shed light on this issue by exploring its implications for students and the university under study. This study is of paramount significance for various reasons. First, it addresses bullying in university residences, which is a topic that is often overshadowed by the notion that bullying is associated with school and workplace environments. Higher education institutions, including UKZN, remain relatively unexplored territories regarding bullying. By delving into this specific context, the study aimed to rectify the dearth of attention and understanding this issue had received in the past.

Understanding the dynamics of bullying in university residences is crucial for several reasons. Primarily, this scourge directly impacts the well-being and mental health of students. Bullying can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem among victims as it affects not only their academic performance, but their overall quality of life (Smith, 2016). By investigating the prevalence, forms, and consequences of bullying in the spaces under study, the findings have the potential to act as a catalyst for fostering a more supportive and nurturing living environment within university residences. Additionally, the study will contribute towards the promotion of a safe and inclusive campus culture. All educational institutions, including UKZN, should endeavour to provide a secure and welcoming environment for their students. Bullying undermines this goal as it creates a hostile atmosphere that hampers both academic and personal growth. Therefore, as it identified the root causes and manifestations of bullying,

the study can be used as a foundation for developing effective anti-bullying policies and interventions, thereby contributing to a safer and more inclusive campus culture.

Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of bullying in university residences can help educators and administrators develop strategies to address this issue and support affected students, thus enhancing their academic performance. In addition to immediate implications, the findings of this study can also inform and shape the university's policies and practices. Equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of bullying in residences, the university administration can develop targeted policies and interventions to prevent and address bullying effectively. These newly devised policies can be instrumental in creating a more conducive learning and living environment for all students as they will be free from the negative impacts of bullying.

Lastly, this study contributes to the broader knowledge of bullying in the higher education context. As the study focused on UKZN as a specific context, the findings will add valuable data to existing literature on bullying. Although the findings may not be generalised due to the relatively limited scope of the study, researchers, policymakers, and tertiary institutions across the globe can benefit from the insights that are shared to develop a better understanding of the issue and to devise more effective strategies for prevention and intervention. Therefore, the study's significance lies not only in the fact that it addressed a neglected issue that affects an immeasurable number of students, but it also has the potential to bring about positive change in the university environment as it advances our understanding of bullying in higher education settings.

1.8 Research Methods

The researcher aimed to explore and understand the various forms of bullying that are prevalent in UKZN residences and to determine their impacts on students. The researcher opted for an interpretive research paradigm due to its ability to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the nature, root causes, repercussions, and potential intervention strategies aimed at mitigating bullying incidents in university residences. The qualitative research approach was selected as it enabled the exploration and comprehension of the significance that individuals associate with social or human issues, in this instance bullying (Jackson, Drummond and Camara, 2007). The research design adopted an exploratory approach to address and understand the complexity of

the issue under study. Data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews with twenty participants. This sample was composed of fifteen students residing in UKZN residences who had been victims of bullying, three Risk Management Services (RMS) employees, and two Residence Liaison Officers (RLO). The selection of these participants followed a purposive sampling technique as the researcher aimed to include individuals with specific knowledge and/or experiences relevant to the research focus. Thematic analysis was used to code the data as it enabled the identification and examination of recurring themes or patterns within the qualitative data set. Using this comprehensive approach, the study sought to shed light on the multifaceted aspects of bullying in the targeted university's residences and to explore potential avenues for intervention or support programs aimed at reducing the occurrence of bullying in both on- and off-campus residences.

1.9 Conceptualisation of Key Terms

Conceptualisation is the procedure a researcher uses to establish and share understanding of the definitions of the concepts used in the investigation (Rao and Reddy, 2013). The objective of conceptualisation is to precisely define what the researcher intended and did not intend by referring to a particular concept. The process of conceptualisation allowed the researcher to formulate a nominal definition of each pertinent concept to clarify the foci of the study.

1.9.1 Bullying

Bullying is the persistent and purposeful abuse of authority within interpersonal connections, characterised by repetitive verbal, physical, and/or social actions to inflict physical, social, and/or psychological harm (Smith, 2016). It may encompass either an individual or a collective wielding their power, real or perceived, over one or more individuals who are powerless to prevent the abuse. Bullying can occur face-to-face or in the digital realm through different online platforms and devices, manifesting in either overt or covert forms.

1.9.2 Higher Education

Higher education refers to the tertiary level of learning that culminates in the conferral of academic degrees or diplomas. This educational phase, falling within the category of postsecondary, third-level, or tertiary education, represents an elective and concluding stage of formal education following the attainment of secondary school education, also referred to as a National Senior Certificate. According to Vukasovic and Sarrico (2010), higher education

refers to education at the post-secondary or tertiary level and typically occurs at colleges, universities, or other similar institutions of higher learning beyond the secondary school level. It is a level of education that provides more advanced and specialised knowledge and skills than what is typically offered in primary and secondary school education settings. Higher education institutions offer various academic and vocational programs, including undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs, vocational and technical training, professional certifications, and more.

1.9.3 Students

Students are individuals who are actively engaged in learning, typically enrolled in an educational institution such as a school, college, or university (UNESCO, 2018). Students pursue academic or practical knowledge, often under the guidance of teachers, professors, or mentors. Students engage in various learning activities like attending lectures, conducting research, completing assignments, and participating in discussions to gain knowledge, skills, and personal development to prepare for future careers or personal goals.

1.9.4 Victim

Berg and Schreck (2022) assert that victims are individuals or groups who have experienced harm, such as physical or psychological injuries, emotional distress, financial setbacks, or significant infringements on their fundamental rights, due to actions or negligence that amount to severe breaches of global human rights principles or significant violations of international laws governing humanitarian conduct. Therefore, the term ‘victim’ refers to an individual who undergoes adverse circumstances frequently linked to being subjected to a criminal act.

1.9.5 University residence

According to Parameswaran and Bowers (2014), a residence, often referred to as a ‘university dormitory’ or simply ‘dorm’, is a type of housing provided by educational institutions, typically colleges and universities, to accommodate students while they pursue a higher education qualification. These residences are located on or near the campus and offer a place for students to live, study, and socialise during their academic studies. Residences vary in terms of their design, the facilities they offer, and capacity. They can be traditional dormitories with shared rooms and common areas or apartment-style accommodations with individual bedrooms and shared living spaces.

1.10 Overview of the Dissertation

This thesis comprises six chapters that present the study content logically and consecutively as follows:

Chapter One: The first chapter serves as a crucial foundation for understanding the purpose of this research as it introduces the central research problem and provides essential background information to illuminate the importance of the study. It explains the rationale behind the study, emphasises its significance, and alludes to the potential impact of the findings. Additionally, it identifies gaps in existing literature that the research intended to address and outlines the specific objectives and research questions that guided the study. The chapter also discusses the broader significance of the research by referring to its value to academia, its practical applications, and societal matters. Furthermore, the chapter offers a concise overview of the research methodology by detailing the approaches and techniques that were used for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Two: This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing research studies and other literature relevant to the research topic. The discourse synthesises and summarises key findings and concepts from previous research studies with reference to bullying as a foundation from which bullying in the residences of UKZN could be explored.

Chapter Three: In this chapter, the theoretical framework that was utilised is discussed. The chapter establishes the conceptual foundation of the research by defining the core concepts, variables, and relationships that were central to the current study. This chapter elaborates on the applicability of the routine activity theory and the social learning theory to the study as these theories assisted in better comprehending bullying behaviour in university residences.

Chapter Four: This chapter elaborates on the methodology that was used in this study. The decision to employ a qualitative research approach is justified as it aligned with the research questions and objectives. The data collection methods are elucidated and it is explained that both primary (interview) and secondary (articles and Google Scholar) data sources were utilised. The criteria for participant selection are listed and the thematic data analysis method that was used is elucidated. The chapter also lists the ethical considerations that were adhered

to, namely informed consent, confidentiality, and participant risks and benefits. It is affirmed that the study maintained strong ethical standards throughout. The chapter is concluded by acknowledging the research limitations, such as a relatively small sample size.

Chapter Five: This chapter begins with a concise summary of the leading research findings. It provides a brief overview of what the study discovered, which were the critical results of the research. Following the summary of the findings, the chapter delves into a more detailed discussion of the results. The data are presented and analysed using thematic analysis and the significance of the findings and how they related to the research questions are explained.

Chapter Six: In this concluding chapter, a concise recap of the main points, objectives, and findings of the study is provided and the researcher offers suggestions and recommendations based on these research findings. A conclusion section effectively summarises the entire research project and highlights the significance of the study's findings, explores the research implications, and presents a broad perspective on how the study may contribute to the broader body of knowledge pertaining to bullying.

1.11 Conclusion

The chapter introduced the subject matter under investigation and elucidated the aim, objectives, and research questions that guided the study. The discourse shed light on the intent and significance of the study while crucial concepts that were extensively used throughout the research were elucidated. In essence, the chapter presented an overview of the thesis by means of a concise preview of the content that is covered in the ensuing chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature and focuses on bullying, with particular emphasis on this phenomenon among university students. Bullying is the repeated and intentional abuse of power in a relationship (intimate or platonic) where verbal, physical, and/or social conduct is intended to cause physical, social, and/or psychological harm (Smith, Del Barrio and Tokunaga, 2012). Therefore, bullying is the exercise of power by an individual or group over one or more vulnerable people who feel they cannot do anything about it. Arseneault (2018) avers that the prevalence and negative impacts of bullying in educational settings have been known for some time. This is a complex social phenomenon that can have profound impacts on the physical, emotional, and psychological health of the victims. Although bullying is recognised as a social evil by universities, researchers have only recently begun to pay serious attention to this issue in tertiary settings (Allen, 2010). As one of the hitherto few researchers who intended to address this issue, the researcher engaged in a literature review on bullying in university settings, specifically in residences. Scholarly articles, books, and previous dissertations that investigated bullying were perused.

Not long ago, bullying among young people was often considered a normal part of growing up. The idea that children can be mean to one another is still widely accepted in society and seen as a common experience for both boys and girls. It is rare to find someone who does not remember, know about, or experienced bullying during their childhood or teenage years. However, bullying traits and behaviours are not confined to young people but are observed in various settings, including the workplace, politics, the media, sports, and even within families (Dupper, 2013). Bullying is recognised as a pervasive problem that affects people of all strata and ages (Arseneault, 2018). While much attention has been focused on bullying that occurs in primary and high schools, there is a growing awareness of the prevalence of bullying in university residences and its impact on student victims. Allen (2010) asserts that university residences are intended to provide a safe and supportive living environment where personal growth and academic achievement are supported. However, bullying can undermine these goals as it creates a hostile and stressful environment and ultimately affects the well-being and educational experiences of student victims. This literature review examines the types of

bullying in university residences, the factors that contribute to this phenomenon, its impact on student victims, and possible interventions and programs to prevent and address this problem.

2.2 Bullying as a Phenomenon

Bullying has no unified definition as it varies according to views and the specific circumstances in which it occurs. Although definitions contain different descriptions of bullying, they agree that bullying is a persistent and recurring pattern of direct or indirect aggressive behaviours that are intended to attack a specific individual (Verma, Adebayo, Wagner, Reynolds, Umbach, Rilosevic and Davis, 2024). Bullying may take the form of verbal or physical actions, or both, but its systematic and targeted nature is always the same. Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne (2009) state that there is substantial evidence of adverse impacts on victims' wellbeing. However, for the purpose of this study, Smith's (2016) definition was deemed most pertinent as it refers to the situation in which a student is repeatedly exposed to negative behaviour by one or more students.

According to Tight (2023), negative bullying behaviours may include persistent physical acts such as hitting, pushing, kicking, obstructing, and hiding objects as well as verbal acts such as defamation, ridicule, threats, coercion, derogatory remarks, and spreading rumours. Other negative behaviours include social exclusion tactics such as pulling faces or deliberately avoiding communication (Monks et al., 2009). Bullying is usually a persistent act that leaves the victim feeling discouraged and depressed. This persistence can intensify the negative impact on the victim, as they may constantly face harassment, aggression, or exclusion, and singly or collectively these create an environment of fear and anxiety. As a result of ongoing mistreatment, the victim may feel discouraged, helpless, and depressed.

The ability to effectively deal with challenging situations and to be prepared for stressful experiences is crucial when trying to cope with stress (Allen and Leary, 2010), and coping includes the capacity to resolve various types of problematic situations. However, bullying is closely tied to exerting control over the life of the individual being bullied as well as the overall situation, thus being subjected to bullying is always a personal ordeal. Feinberg and Robey (2009) assert that bullying can occur anywhere, whether among students or employees, and it is essential to note that teachers or other members of the working community can also become targets or bullies. Parzefal and Salin (2010) describe bullying as a phenomenon that can occur

in both vertical and horizontal contexts. Bullying is considered vertical when a person bullies someone who is subordinate to them (Parzefal and Salin, 2010). For instance, if a student is bullied or mistreated by a lecturer or an administrative staff member, their trust in the university, faculty, or the modules they are studying can be severely damaged and compromised. Conversely, Sinkkonen, Puhakka and Merilainen (2014) state that horizontal bullying occurs among peers, such as students who are at the same level. In such cases, one person may feel hurt or bullied while the other may believe their actions are justified and not intended to hurt the other person. Interpretation of experiences depends on factors such as the identity of the participant, timing, location, frequency, and motivation (Twale and DeLuca, 2008). For horizontal bullying, the interpretation of the experience is often similar. However, interpretations differ when there is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim, and it is common for people in higher positions not to recognise their behaviour as bullying.

A study on a university that was conducted by Salmivalli (2010) offers definitions of bullying that emphasise the role of group dynamics. According to the latter author, bullying relates to social relationships within groups and beyond interactions between the bully and victim. This includes how other group members perceive and interact with both parties. According to this definition, a person who witnesses an incident of bullying, but does not intervene to admonish the bully, in effect supports and participates in the bullying behaviour (Salmivalli, 2010). Moreover, bullying can be viewed as an expression of aggressive behaviour rooted in the social dynamics of a group. Therefore, studying bullying essentially involves examining it as a form of aggression. Reactive aggression occurs when an individual responds to a perceived threat, provocation, or hostility, and any one of these may be triggered by harassment or the persistent negative behaviour of others. As the stimulus originates externally, this type of bullying can be situational and lacks a consistent pattern. In contrast, active aggression involves intentional actions aimed at achieving personal gain. It is a deliberate and calculated form of bullying where the perpetrator anticipates some form of benefit (Arsenio and Lemerise, 2001).

2.3 International Perspectives of Bullying in University Residences

Bullying is not limited to specific regions or environments but is a pervasive global issue that extends to college and university environments. Although the prevalence and manifestations of bullying vary by country and institution, the negative impact of bullying on students is widely recognised. Bullying in the university environment includes a variety of behaviours, such as

verbal abuse, physical aggression, social exclusion, and cyberbullying. These forms of abuse observed in university residences are similar to bullying in other settings, such as schools and workplaces. However, regardless of the situation, bullying involves repeated harmful attacks on individuals by peers, creating power imbalances (Volk, Dane and Marini, 2014). Various factors, including cultural norms, social dynamics within university communities, and the overall structure of national higher education systems influence the prevalence and characteristics of bullying in university residences. Cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to both the occurrence and tolerance of bullying in these environments. Additionally, Volk et al. (2014) highlight how social dynamics, such as social strata and cliques, can further impact the nature of bullying and harmful student interactions.

2.3.1 The United States (US)

The issue of bullying in university settings in the US has garnered significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and educational managers alike. The prevalence of bullying in tertiary settings has become a growing concern as it negatively affects many students. Extensive research has been conducted in the US to shed light on the prevalence and impact of bullying in university environments. For instance, findings by Howard, Potter, Guedj and Moynihan (2019) revealed that 25% of university student respondents reported that they had been victims of bullying, which highlights the significant impact of this issue on the student population at universities. The finding also raises important concerns about the campus environment and the need for university managers to implement stronger anti-bullying policies and support systems. The widespread nature of bullying in this context may also have broader implications for students' well-being, academic performance, and overall campus safety.

A comprehensive survey by the American College Health Association (2019) involving over 27 000 university students revealed that 22% of the respondents had experiencing bullying at some point during their college journey. This finding demonstrates that the problem of bullying is not unique to South Africa. Moreover, various studies conducted in the US provide valuable insights into the prevalence of bullying in higher education institutions globally. Myers and Cowie (2015a) indicates that bullying is common across universities regardless of their location, and the authors argue that universities worldwide face the challenge of addressing bullying and ensuring a safe and supportive environment for their students.

2.3.2 The United Kingdom (UK)

Recent research in the UK has shed light on troubling incidences of bullying in higher education settings. A significant study by the National Federation of Students (2020) revealed that 33% of university students had fallen victim to bullying at university. This statistic underscores the serious nature of bullying in university settings, indicating that it affects a substantial portion of the student population. Also highlighting this issue, the National Students Union (2020) found that 18% of students experienced bullying or harassment specifically within university accommodation settings. This finding is particularly disconcerting because university residences are intended to be safe and supportive environments for students.

A National Union of Students (2017) study delved deeper into life in university residences, and discovered that 47% of students had witnessed or personally experienced bullying during their stay. This figure points to the pervasive nature of bullying in these settings, while the survey also highlighted the detrimental impacts of bullying on the well-being and academic performance of students. Together, the survey findings expose a significant problem, which is that bullying is not only prevalent at UK universities, but is especially widespread in student residences where it can severely impact the student experience.

2.3.3 Canada

Research has also highlighted the significant problem of bullying at Canadian universities. According to Shea, Sheehan, Clark and Notar (2014), bullying is widespread in Canadian college settings, and their findings were similar to those of studies in other countries. A national survey revealed that 29% of Canadian college students had experienced or were experiencing bullying, which underscores the need for urgent action to curb this issue. Additionally, Canadian studies argue that bullying is not limited to classrooms or campuses, but extends into dormitories where it affects the well-being and academic performance of many students. A study by Stewart and Kendrik (2019) on bullying in Canadian college dormitories found that 23.2% of respondents had experienced bullying or harassment in their living communities, further highlighting the pervasiveness of this issue.

A study by Fatima, Haleama and Dalia (2022) surveyed 839 undergraduate students across various colleges in Canada, and revealed that 26.3% had been exposed to or engaged in

bullying. Their research found that traditional forms of bullying, such as face-to-face verbal and physical harassment, were the most common, with cyberbullying being less frequently reported. It is notable that more females reported being bullied compared to males, with peer students often identified as the aggressors. The studies collectively demonstrate that bullying at Canadian universities is a serious issue that affects a significant portion of the student population, both in their academic settings and their living environments.

2.3.4 Italy

Research that was conducted in Italy also showed a link between domestic violence and bullying (Baldry, 2003). The latter author states that Italian children aged 8 to 15 years are often exposed to domestic violence, arguing that it negatively affects their behaviour. In fact, it is suggested that such experiences are associated with school bullying (Baldry, 2003). This point highlights the significant link between domestic violence and bullying in Italy, mainly regarding behavioural patterns and underlying dynamics. Domestic violence and bullying occur in many different contexts in this country, but they have some commonalities such as a power imbalance, domination, and abusive tactics. The latter author concludes that children who grow up in violent families or communities are often impacted by that environment and are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour than their peers.

2.3.5 Finland

The first study on bullying at universities in Finland was part of an extensive health survey involving 5 086 students (3 222 females and 1 864 males) (Oksanen, Laimi, Bjorklund, Loyttyneimi and Kunttu, 2017). The survey revealed that 37% of the participants had experiencing bullying while attending university. This figure aligned with the findings of other researchers who also acknowledged that bullying was a pervasive problem in educational institutions in Finland (Oksanen et al., 2017). The survey also indicated that 20% of male university students had experienced bullying. Upon reflection, this finding challenges the notion that bullying is solely a concern in primary and secondary schools as it emphasises that it extends into the higher education sphere. About a quarter of the participants in another survey reported being bullied at university, and 5-6% reported being bullied quite often or very often. Furthermore, the survey revealed that 1.7% of the respondents admitted to being bullies and that they had directed their bullying behaviour at other students (Kauppi and Porhola, 2009).

The selection of the UK, Canada, Finland, the US, and Italy for inclusion in a study on bullying in South African university residences is likely based on several key factors. These countries have been extensively studied in the field of bullying research, providing a rich body of literature. Finland, for instance, is globally recognized for its proactive anti-bullying policies, such as the KiVa program (Oksanen et al., 2017) which has been widely implemented in schools and could offer insights into effective intervention strategies at the university level. Canada and the US have diverse university populations and strong institutional policies addressing bullying and harassment, making them useful for understanding how policies influence student experiences. The UK is relevant due to its emphasis on student well-being and its structured university residence systems, which may offer valuable perspectives on institutional responses to bullying. Italy has also contributed significantly to bullying research, particularly in exploring the psychological and social impacts of bullying in educational environments. By selecting these specific countries, the study incorporates perspectives from nations with strong academic contributions, diverse student demographics, and well-documented policies on bullying prevention.

2.4 African Perspectives on Bullying

Bullying is a widespread societal problem that infiltrates educational institutions worldwide where it causes physical, emotional, and psychological harm to victims. Although bullying has received significant attention in schools, its prevalence at higher education institutions, especially in university residences, warrants comprehensive examination. In the African context, the issue of bullying in university residences is a matter of great concern, as several countries on this continent have reported unacceptable rates of such incidents. While bullying in university residences is a global issue, its specific forms, root causes, and responses to these challenges can vary significantly across different regions. Therefore, this section explores the African perspective on bullying in university residences and focuses on Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa.

2.4.1 Nigeria

Bullying is an intricate and widespread problem that has a global impact on educational institutions. Even Nigerian universities, which serve as centres of higher learning, are not immune to the challenges posed by bullying. While bullying in university settings occurs in various forms and at various rates of complexity, it remains a significant concern within the

Nigerian higher education landscape. Nigeria, well-known for its vibrant higher education system, has grappled with bullying and harassment, often linking these phenomena to cultism and other misconduct within its academic institutions (Okanlawon, 2017). The higher education sector in Nigeria, characterised by its diversity and large student population, has faced issues related to bullying, intimidation, and harassment that have raised concerns domestically and internationally. Scholars and experts have observed that these problems are exacerbated by secretive cult groups that operate at some universities. These groups, known for their clandestine nature, initiation rituals, and hierarchical structure, are associated with violence, intimidation, and various forms of misconduct (Okanlawon, 2017). Their behaviour creates an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among the rest of the student body and hampers the free exchange of ideas and the pursuit of academic excellence.

Nwosu, Ngozi and Eberechi (2018) state that, in Nigeria, nearly all university students regularly utilize the internet, with 86% accessing social networking sites and 96% owning cell phones. Research in this country has also revealed that undergraduates use the Internet for various communication purposes. For example, Omotayo (2006) found that 97.1% of Nigerian undergraduates use the Internet for email communication, while Nwosu et al. (2018) indicate that Nigerian undergraduates primarily purchase Internet bundles for social networking, with approximately 49.1% using Internet data for web browsing. Noting that the accessibility and use of online communication continue to grow, Brody and Vangelisti (2016) observe that the prevalence of harmful online behaviours may also rise. In other words, the ease of accessing the Internet and the widespread use of online platforms create opportunities for various harmful activities such as cyber bullying and harassment, which are rife in Nigerian university settings (Okanlowon, 2017).

2.4.2 Egypt

Egypt is a country with a rich history in academia, but it is not immune to concerns related to bullying in its university settings (El-Sayed, El-Rahman and Sayed, 2020). Egypt has a long and storied tradition of higher education and is home to various prestigious universities that have contributed significantly to the development of knowledge and culture globally. However, even in this scholarly environment, reports of bullying and harassment have emerged, pointing to a challenge that transcends the prestige of these institutions. These reports have raised

questions about how bullying affects students in their pursuit of education and personal growth and how universities are equipped to address such issues effectively (El-Sayed et al., 2020).

Abdel-Whahed and Eldessouki (2022) conducted a study on bullying among Egyptian medical students, revealing that 97.2% of participants had encountered instances of bullying, whether as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses. Of these, 83.3% disclosed that they had been victims of bullying, while 57.7% acknowledged engaging in bullying behaviours themselves. Notably, 54.8% of the students reported experiencing both victimisation and perpetration. Verbal bullying emerged as the most prevalent type, with 53.7% admitting to acting as aggressors and 72.9% acknowledging being victims of verbal bullying. The study underscored the pervasive nature of bullying among the surveyed students, with the majority experiencing it in various roles. The findings highlight the prominence of verbal bullying and the influence of factors such as anxiety, depression, and family violence on these experiences.

2.4.3 South Africa

In South Africa, bullying in university residences is a severe problem that requires attention and intervention. Kaminer and Eagle (2010) note that South Africa recognises that the negative impact of bullying on student well-being, mental health, and academic performance violates human rights and undermines the principles of inclusion, respect, and equality in higher education institutions. A study conducted by Conce, Baldwin-Ragaven, Christofides, Libhaber, Rispel, White and Kramer (2021) focused on student safety perceptions at two universities in South Africa and found bullying to be a prevalent problem. South Africa recognises that bullying comes in many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, and cyberbullying. These acts cause significant psychological distress, promote social isolation, and create a hostile environment for students residing in university residences.

To better understand the context of bullying in South Africa, it is crucial to consider the traumatic and violent history of the country. During colonisation and the repressive apartheid era, many South Africans experienced profound trauma (Meskell, 2006). Even in the postapartheid era, the country has struggled with extreme trauma and violence, including xenophobic attacks, socioeconomic challenges, and violent protests due to poor service delivery (Meskell, 2006). Moreover, many South Africans are persistently exposed to traumatic events on a daily basis due to a high crime rate (Kaminer and Eagle, 2010). This has a

cumulative impact on individuals and communities, leading to mental health challenges, substance abuse, and cycles of violence. The impacts of trauma can be intergenerational, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and further hindering the healing process.

Against this backdrop, South Africa faces alarming rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and has one of the highest rates of this crime in the world (Dlamini, 2021). Women and children are particularly vulnerable as many are exposed to domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and murder. These acts of violence have severe consequences for victims and contribute to an atmosphere of fear and trauma in the country. To put this in context, research by Lim and Hoot (2015) has shown that bullying is part of the cycle of violence that prevails in this country.

This study included African countries to provide a broader continental perspective on the issue of bullying in university residences. Bullying in these settings is a complex phenomenon influenced by cultural, social, and institutional factors, which vary across different regions of Africa. Nigeria, one of the most populous African nations with a diverse higher education system, and Egypt, with its long-established universities, provide valuable insights into how bullying manifests in different educational and cultural contexts. Similarly, South Africa, known for its highly ranked and multicultural universities, offers a unique perspective on the interplay between diversity and bullying in higher education institutions.

2.5 The University Setting as a Context for Bullying

Students enter universities when they have passed an entrance examination, and they persevere if they aim to develop professional knowledge in their chosen academic field. The university environment should ideally be a place of learning, personal growth, and mutual respect. However, when bullying prevails, it undermines these principles and creates an unsafe and hostile environment for those who are affected by it. When entering a university, students expect quality education, support, and fair and respectful treatment (Sinkkonen, Puhaka and Meriläinen, 2014), but various factors encourage bullying and the mistreatment of some by others. Kauppi and Porhola (2009) state that no single factor can be identified as the cause of bullying, but they argue that specific cues can lead to inappropriate behaviour. For example, administrative arrangements and decision-making processes at a university may differ among departments, resulting in unfair decisions that impact students. Bullying at university can also escalate when resources become scarce and competition for resources increases. With fewer

resources available, the quality of teaching suffers and departments begin to prioritise more profitable modules, and the resulting organisational changes may affect student planning and revision (Sinkkonen et al., 2014)). Therefore, it may be difficult for students to reach out to busy staff members for advice, and staff may miss the questions and concerns of students. Salin (2003) states that departments with an academic culture that value the freedom and autonomy of professors, lecturers, and researchers can also increase bullying as the diversity of working practices in these departments makes it difficult to intervene when educational problems or student abuse occur. Moreover, interaction among students can be undermined when the overall environment encourages unfair treatment (Salin, 2003; Twale and DeLuca, 2008).

2.6 Types of Bullying that Occur in Residences

University residence halls, often referred to as dormitories, serve as vibrant and shared spaces for students from diverse backgrounds for personal growth, academic development, and community building. However, the unfortunate prevalence of bullying in these community settings can disrupt harmony, impede individual progress, and negatively impact the overall university experience. To address this critical issue, it is important to look at the different types of bullying in university residences and to understand the underlying dynamics that encourage such behaviours. Finkelhor (2018) points out that bullying is deliberate and repetitive aggression or harassment aimed at exercising power or control over others, arguing that it manifests in various forms in university settings. Furthermore, Finkelhor (2018) avers that traditional forms of bullying, such as verbal, physical, and social aggression, continue to plague these environments. The current study focused on verbal, physical, emotional, social, sexual, and cyberbullying to gain in-depth insight into the types of bullying that occur at higher education institutions.

2.6.1 Verbal bullying

Verbal bullying, which is a pervasive and insidious form of harassment, can inflict deep emotional scars that linger long after the words were spoken. According to Kallman, Vanderbilt and Han (2021), verbal bullying involves the use of words, language, and verbal interactions to harm, intimidate, or manipulate others, and is recognised as a form of aggression and harassment. This type of bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours intended to demean, humiliate, and/or exert power over an individual. Verbal bullying can occur in various environments, including schools, workplaces, and social settings, as well as in colleges and

universities. Dore (2015) notes that 77% of bullying incidents are verbal, making it the most prevalent and dehumanising form of bullying.

In research conducted across 23 universities in the UK, Smith (2016) found that direct verbal aggression was the most frequent form of bullying and occurred at similar rates between both sexes. This finding underscores a widespread and harmful pattern of behaviour within the university context. As defined by Cowie and Myers (2015a), direct verbal aggression involves using spoken or written words to intimidate, belittle, or to verbally and emotionally harm others. The similar rates of direct verbal aggression reported between the two sexes suggest that this form of bullying is not confined to a particular gender and can be experienced by all students. Further emphasising the prevalence of verbal bullying, Wang, Iannotti and Nansel (2009) found that, in the US, verbal bullying was the most common type among adolescents, accounting for 53.6% of cases. This was compared to other forms of bullying, such as physical (20.8%), social (51.4%), and electronic (13.6%) bullying.

2.6.1.1 Insult and name-calling

Matsuda (2018) states that insults and name-calling involve the use of derogatory language, offensive remarks, or labelling to diminish, humiliate, or degrade individuals. These actions create a hostile and unpleasant environment for those targeted. Insulting behaviour is characterised by the deliberate use of offensive, disrespectful, or hurtful language toward others. A study conducted among university students residing in on-campus residences found that insulting behaviour had been experienced by a significant portion of the participants (Rickwood, George, Parker and Mikhailovich, 2011). This behaviour manifested in various forms, including name-calling, derogatory remarks, and personal attacks. The participants reported that these insults had often targeted their appearance, intelligence, cultural background, or other aspects that could be exploited to demean and hurt them emotionally. Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) argue that insults can be directed at someone either directly or indirectly and can occur both in person and through digital communication platforms. Namecalling involves assigning a negative or demeaning label to someone without their consent, and it is often based on their appearance, characteristics, background, or perceived differences. This form of verbal bullying is especially harmful as it can impact an individual's identity, self-esteem, and sense of self-worth.

2.6.1.2 Humiliation

The nature and severity of humiliation in university residences can vary, but it generally involves actions or behaviours intended to degrade, shame, or demean members of the residence community. Such behaviours often include public ridicule, mockery, or demeaning remarks or actions (Feldman, 2023). Humiliation can take place in various settings, including social gatherings, communal living areas like shared residences, or even on online platforms. When a student is subjected to this behaviour, it can severely impact their emotional well-being and social interactions. For instance, the student may feel deeply embarrassed, especially if the insults are public or shared among peers, which can further damage their social standing and reputation.

Combs, Campbell, Jackson and Smith (2010) describe one form of humiliation as public mockery or ridicule. This can happen during social events, in communal living spaces, or even in educational settings, often with the deliberate intention to degrade and shame the target. Public ridicule can include sarcasm, teasing, imitating, or making derogatory jokes at someone else's expense. Embarrassment may also arise from slanderous remarks or gestures aimed at disparaging the personality or appearance of an individual. Examples include name-calling, body-shaming, spreading rumours, or making offensive gestures. Such actions can seriously damage a person's self-confidence and social standing within the residence community and diminish their sense of identity.

2.6.2 Physical bullying

Physical bullying in higher education institutions is an underexplored issue although it significantly impacts the well-being and academic performance of students. Physical bullying is a form of aggression in which force or the threat of force is used to exert power and control over others (Blank, Hoetger and Hazen, 2012). It includes a wide range of actions that involve physical contact and cause the victim pain, injury, and/or discomfort. Within the residence halls of a university, physical bullying can take many different forms. Examples of direct physical assault include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, scratching, and biting. However, VandeNest (2016) alludes that it might likewise include more secretive types of actual animosity, like stumbling, pushing, or effectively hindering someone's way. Moreover, it is important to note that physical tormenting extends beyond direct physical contact and can encompass various actions that inflict harm or distress. This can include behaviours such as

taking or damaging personal belongings, vandalizing property, or engaging in lewd behaviour or assault.

Pontzer (2010) conducted a comprehensive study on bullying among university students and uncovered several important findings. The study revealed that approximately 10% of university students had experienced physical bullying during their time at university. This figure is notable because, while it is lower than the prevalence rates for verbal and cyberbullying, it underscores that physical bullying remains a significant concern within higher education settings. The study found that these incidents frequently occurred in social settings such as in dormitories and at campus parties and recreational areas where supervision was limited (Pontzer, 2010).

Arseneault (2018) believes that power imbalance occurs when the bully wants to rule over the victim. The perpetrator may deem physical violence as a powerful form of controlling others, of frightening them, or to improve their own social standing in the university residence. Blank, Hoetger and Hazen (2012) assert that, based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or physical appearance, bullies will target people they think are weaker, more vulnerable, or different. In university residences, physical bullying can occur in various settings and circumstances. Conflicts or disagreements may develop into physical altercations in shared living spaces such as residences, common rooms, or corridors. Physical bullying can also occur at parties, off campus, or at social gatherings, especially when alcohol or other substances are involved (Blank et al., 2012). These substances lower inhibitions and make aggressive behaviour more likely.

2.6.3 Emotional bullying

In the realm of university life, Kleffner (2020) stated that emotional bullying emerges as a subtle yet deeply damaging phenomenon that profoundly affects the mental health and academic performance of students. Unlike physical bullying that involves overt acts of aggression, emotional bullying is characterised by subtle, insidious behaviours such as exclusion, gossip, and manipulation (Kleffner, 2020). This form of bullying can be particularly harmful as it often goes unnoticed by authorities and leaves victims to suffer in silence. Emotional bullying, also referred to as psychological or relational bullying, encompasses verbal and non-verbal actions aimed at causing emotional and social harm to the victim

(Magner, 2019). Emotional bullying at universities manifests in various forms, including social exclusion, gossiping, spreading rumours, and manipulative behaviours.

2.6.3.1 Exclusion

Williams (2007) defines exclusion as the deliberate act of isolating or excluding individuals from social activities, events, or gatherings. This can involve deliberately leaving someone out of group activities such as parties, conversations, or shared living spaces, thereby undermining their sense of belonging and causing feelings of loneliness. In the context of university residences, exclusion refers to intentionally isolating, ignoring, or excluding individuals or groups from social interactions, activities, and relationships within the residential community. Exclusion is particularly common among university students, especially those living in university residences. A study by Myers and Cowie (2015b) in Greece found that social exclusion, a form of emotional bullying, was the most prevalent type. Social exclusion is considered highly harmful and has long-term consequences because the targets do not just feel bullied by one person, but they feel bullied by the entire peer group (Salmivalli, 2010). Additionally, research conducted in Finland found that social exclusion from student groups was the most common form of peer bullying (Porhola, Cvancara, Kaal, Tampere, and Torres, 2015). For example, a group of residents might plan a party and deliberately exclude one student from the invitation list, making them feel isolated and alone. Furthermore, Porhola et al. (2015) used a sample of 296 Americans and 292 Japanese undergraduates and discovered that social exclusion was the most frequently reported form of peer bullying.

2.6.3.2 Spreading rumours and gossip

Gossiping and spreading rumours are common tactics used by bullies and are often used to damage a person's reputation. Within the close-knit community of a university residence, these behaviours can be particularly harmful as gossip tends to spread quickly. The act of spreading unverified information, commonly referred to as 'fake news', also contributes to this cycle of harm (Haeupler, 2015). When individuals or groups residing in a residence engage in sharing false or inaccurate information about others, it constitutes emotional bullying. According to Fitzpatrick and Bussey (2011), such rumours can cause significant harm to the targeted individuals, leading to reputational damage, loss of social standing, and difficulties in forming new friendships. Furthermore, gossip can cause considerable emotional distress and anxiety for victims and weaken their social relationships. Kieffer (2013) found that gossip created a hostile

environment where victims felt constantly scrutinised and judged. Moreover, the fear of being the subject of malicious gossip induced paranoia and anxiety in victims and severely affected their mental health and their ability to trust others. Additionally, Feinberg, Willer and Schultz (2014) note that the spread of false information can result in social and academic ostracism which further isolates the victim and intensifies their emotional distress.

2.6.3.3 Manipulative behaviour

Manipulative behaviour is a form of emotional bullying that includes actions like giving someone the silent treatment or using guilt to control their actions. These tactics undermine a person's self-esteem and sense of agency. For example, the silent treatment is a form of psychological manipulation that can make the victim feel invisible and unworthy of attention. Motta (2023) argues that the silent treatment often leads to feelings of helplessness and selfdoubt which decrease the victim's sense of self-worth and increase anxiety. On the other hand, using guilt as a manipulative tactic involves making the victim feel responsible for the bully's negative emotions or actions, thereby controlling the victim's behaviour through emotional blackmail (Fast, 2015). Llongo (2013) suggests that such tactics erode the victim's selfconfidence and autonomy, making them more susceptible to further bullying and manipulation.

In another study, Chapell et al. (2004) found that emotional bullying, which includes both verbal and non-verbal aggression, is prevalent among university students in the US where it has significant adverse impacts on their psychological well-being. Similarly, Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020), who conducted their study on European universities, argue that emotional bullying often targets vulnerable groups such as international students and those from minority backgrounds, and they highlight that fact that cultural and contextual variations in bullying behaviours occur. Collectively, these findings suggest that emotional bullying at university level is a pervasive issue that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries and that occurs in both physical and digital contexts.

2.6.4 Social bullying

Social bullying, which is a subtle yet pervasive form of aggression, undermines the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals in various social settings. Social bullying is best explained by Stuart-Cassel, Terzian and Brandshow (2013) as a form of aggression and

harassment that targets an individual's social status, relationships, and sense of belonging. This notion is supported by Crothers et al. (2019), who argue that social bullying consists of behaviours that threaten friendships or connections through isolation or alienation and that allow bullies to exploit relationships to harm their victims. According to Hanani (2021), social bullies often seek to control others; hence, they act maliciously and struggle with social skills and relationships. Bullies perceive a power imbalance between them and their victims and they lack empathy and social intelligence. They often bully others to boost their self-esteem, leading to repeated discomfort, provocation, and retaliation for their victims (Cho and Lee, 2018). Based on their findings, Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) argue that undergraduates who experience social bullying are more likely to face intruding thoughts, absenteeism, distress, apathy, and desensitisation, and many then drop out of formal education during or after high school.

2.6.5 Sexual bullying

Sexual bullying in educational institutions is an insidious form of harassment that profoundly impacts the well-being and academic success of students, and this invasive phenomenon demands comprehensive research and targeted interventions. According to a study by Myers and Cowie (2015a), sexual bullying refers to unwelcome sexual behaviour, harassment, or aggression directed toward an individual based on their gender or sexuality. This type of bullying includes a variety of actions that aim to sexually assert power, control, or dominance over the victim and to create a hostile, intimidating, or degrading environment. The academic success and well-being of a student are seriously impacted by sexual bullying, which can take place in person or online. Harassment is one aspect of sexual bullying at universities. Klein and Martin (2021:782) defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe, persistent, or pervasive and interferes with the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from educational programs or activities". Examples of sexual bullying include, but are not limited to, unwanted remarks, gestures, jokes, explicit images, or sexual propositions.

Fisher, Cullen and Turner (2000) conducted a study on the sexual victimisation of college women and found that sexual harassment was common on campuses, with many students subjected to unwanted sexual advances, verbal harassment, or exposure to sexually explicit material. In a similar vein, a study that was conducted by Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein

and Stapleton (2011) brought to light the high rates of sexual harassment that are experienced by male and female students in the university setting. Sexual coercion and pressure are additional manifestations of sexual bullying. Engaging in sexual activities against the will or without explicit and voluntary consent of an individual is a form of intimidation and manipulation. A study by Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher and Martin (2009) demonstrated the prevalence of sexual coercion among college students, finding that approximately one in five female students experienced sexual coercion during their time at college.

2.6.5.1 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined variously, but the definition proffered by Nangia (2024:102)) is extensive. It defines sexual harassment as “improper behaviour that has a sexual dimension or unwanted sexual attention”. This definition includes behaviour that is verbal, physical, and visual and it implies both direct and indirect inappropriate behaviours. Snyman-van Deventer and de Bruin (2002) state that sexual harassment in South African law is seen as an *animus iniuriandi* (the consciousness of wrongfulness), which is an infringement of personality and a form of unfair discrimination against an individual. In 1986, the Supreme Court of the US described two categories of sexual harassment: *quid pro quo* and hostile environment (Smith and Williams, 2002). *Quid pro quo* harassment occurs when a person in a position of power, such as an educator, makes decisions affecting a student's grades contingent upon the student complying with their sexual demands (Smith and Williams, 2002). Smith and Williams (2002) further state that this type of harassment directly links the academic performance of a victim or professional advancement to submission to sexual advances. Hostile environment harassment, conversely, is characterised by behaviour that renders an environment aggressive, frightening, or unpleasant, thereby unreasonably interfering with the work of a student. This includes undesirable sexual advances, the demand for sexual favours, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature by another student or a third party aimed at a victim. The key aspect of hostile environment harassment is that it creates an atmosphere that significantly impairs the ability of the victim to function in that educational or professional setting.

Kabaya (2016) states that university campuses must provide and maintain a safe environment for students and workers. However, sexual violence is pervasive and rife at institutions of higher learning, which is a global phenomenon. After analysing findings from a national survey of undergraduate college students at American college campuses, Hill and Silva (2005)

concluded that sexual harassment is widespread among college students as more than a third of the students had encountered sexual harassment during their first year of study. They noted that sexual harassment was pervasive all over the campus, including in student housing and classrooms. According to Freyd (2016), the nature and extent of sexual harassment of graduate students on US campuses were almost identical to those found nearly 30 years before when a third of female graduates experienced sexual harassment.

According to Rosenthal and Banks (2018), a national student survey of over 30 000 students across 39 universities in Australia revealed that, in 2016, 51% of all university students experienced sexual harassment at least once, and 6.9% were sexually assaulted on at least one occasion in 2015 or 2016. Women were 2 to 3 times more likely to be targeted for both sexual assault and harassment, with men overwhelmingly being the perpetrators. Most victims knew the perpetrator, who was often a fellow student. Postgraduate students were almost twice as likely as undergraduates to have been sexually harassed by a lecturer or tutor. The rates of sexual harassment were significantly higher among bisexual students (44%) and those identifying as gay, lesbian, or homosexual (38%), compared to heterosexual students (23%). Trans- and gender-diverse students faced higher rates of harassment (45%) than their cisgender peers, and domestic students were slightly more likely (27%) than international students (22%) to be sexually harassed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as students with disabilities, were also more likely to experience harassment than their local peers. Undergraduate students faced higher rates of harassment (28%) compared to postgraduates (19%). Despite these troubling statistics, the vast majority of students who had been sexually assaulted or harassed did not make a formal report or complaint to their university, often due to a lack of knowledge on how or where to report the incident.

In South African universities, incidents of harassment and unwanted advances have been reported, highlighting significant issues related to bullying. These incidents often involved various forms of gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and coercion. One notable incident at the University of Stellenbosch occurred in 2022 when a male student was suspended following accusations of sexual harassment. The student had allegedly made unwanted advances toward several female students (Stellenbosch University student suspended over sexual harassment allegations, 2022). Additionally, *IOL News* (2022) reported an incidence of sexual bullying where a lecturer at the University of Pretoria was accused of

making unwanted advances towards students. The lecturer allegedly used his position of power to harass female students. Radebe (2022) also reported that North-West University could be liable for harassment charges due to its alleged failure to address the sexual harassment of 14 students. Research by Kabaya (2016) that was conducted at the UKZN revealed that sexual harassment was prevalent on campus. Kabaya (2016) found that female students constantly faced sexual harassment by men who believed that they had the power as men to sexually conquer whomever they pleased. Some men also faced sexual harassment from both other men and women. Gay and lesbian students were also vulnerable due to their sexual orientation. The study concluded that men were the main perpetrators whilst the victims were both men and women.

Based on another South African study, Jagath (2023) argues that academia can be regarded as an integral part of society, yet it suffers from the scourge of sexual harassment and genderbased violence. He states that women have become increasingly anxious and that stories of harassment abound. Jagath (2023) vehemently believes that South African institutions are hostile to women and that policy alone is insufficient to protect them. He argues that there needs to be deliberate and practical endeavours for this institutional culture to change. Jagath (2023) refers to 13 sexual violence cases at the University of Cape Town in the first four months of 2016 in his thesis. Sobuwa (2018) also explored sexual harassment on campuses refers to the suicide of Khensani Maseko in 2018, which occurred after she had allegedly been raped on campus and after she had posted on “No one deserves to be raped” social media. Mokati (2019) is quite vocal in her condemnation of South African men, stating that the rape of university students robs them of their the opportunity to access further education and to progress in life. Wanyane (2012) postulates that, at African universities such as in Lesotho, Tanzania and South Africa, the practice of ‘sugar daddies’ is rife. This involves students having sexual relationships with older men who have power and money in exchange for cell phones, cash, and cars. In the context of sexual bullying, this dynamic can create a coercive environment where students may feel pressured to engage in these relationships due to their economic or social needs. The power imbalance inherent in these relationships contributes to the bullying aspect, as the older individuals leverage their status and resources to control or exploit younger students. This form of bullying not only affects victims' personal and academic lives, but also contributes to a broader issue of abuse and exploitation within the educational system.

2.6.6 Cyberbullying

In the digital age, the pervasive reach of cyberbullying within university residences has emerged as a pressing concern that impacts the well-being and academic success of students. More recently, cyberbullying has emerged as a phenomenon at both school and university levels. Like traditional face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying involves the deliberate intent to hurt a person or persons through the electronic transmission of messages and images which target the victim(s) repeatedly over time (Kyriacou and Zuin, 2016). According to scholars such as Joshua, Nehemiah and Ernest (2015), cyberbullying is the deliberate and persistent harm done through various technological platforms and applications. It involves the use of the Internet to harm and harass other people through obscene images, text messages, and other means. According to Aune (2009), cyberbullying has grown because students spend much time on their smartphones and the Internet. This observation highlights the potential influence of technology and online platforms on the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents. As smartphones and the internet have become increasingly accessible and integrated into students' daily lives, they now have more opportunities to engage in online interactions. These digital platforms provide avenues for communication and socialisation, but they also create spaces where cyberbullying can occur. Students can be targeted and victimised even in the safety of their university residences, leading to feelings of constant vulnerability and distress.

There is a large overlap between face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying, both for bullies and victims. Cyberbullying potentially reaches a much larger audience (through, for example, social networking sites) and postings can be viewed repeatedly, with extremely disturbing consequences for the targets, including insomnia, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, selfharm and, in rare cases, suicide (Sourander, Klomek, Ikonen, Lindroos, Luntamo, Koskelainen, Ristkari and Helenius, 2010). The anonymity of the cyberbully is a powerful component. Kyriacou and Zuin (2016) argue that this anonymity results in the desensitisation of prosocial values and empathy towards another person and ultimately in a process of moral disengagement as cyberbullies do not meet their targets face-to-face. Thus, there is little likelihood that the cyberbully will experience social disapproval or intervention on the part of bystanders.

Zalaquett and Chatters (2014) investigated cyberbullying among 608 US university students (149 males and 459 females), and found that 14% reported being cyberbullied 1 to 3 times, 2.6% had been bullied 4 to 6 times; and 2% had been bullied 7 to 10 times. Additionally, 28% reported having a friend who had been cyberbullied. In a survey of cyberbullying among a sample of 254 Turkish university students (73 males and 173 females) (Akbulut and Eristi, 2011), 8 did not reveal their gender. The most frequent instances of bullying were blocking in instant messaging programmes (42%), inviting people to social applications that included gossip or inappropriate chats (34.7%), sending messages imposing religious or political views (25.6%), cursing people (25.8%), excluding people from online groups (25%), and hiding identity (21.6%). In the latter study, the researchers found no effect associated with age, programme of study, or extent of Internet use. Conversely, in a survey of cyberbullying among 1 733 Canadian university students (26% male and 74% female) (Faucher, Jackson and Cassidy, 2014), strong gender differences emerged. The overall prevalence of cyberbullying in the 12 months preceding the study was 24.1%, and these acts included being bullied by another student they knew, another person they did not know, and a faculty member. Despite the variation in prevalence rates, all the studies on bullying highlight that bullying and cyberbullying are very real problems and that there appears to be no centralised policy to understand or tackle these issues.

Another study on bullying conducted by Aune (2009) found that 72% of young people actively engaged in social media and that a significant percentage of them (93%) used the Internet. This level of technology dependence suggests the widespread problem of young people becoming dependent on the Internet. According to Lowisz (2014), 25% of people between the ages of 18 and 44 always have their smartphones with them. Due to the increased use of smartphones, cyberbullying and other forms of cybercrime against students have increased. Aune (2009) also states that victims of cyberbullying are unlikely to report their experiences because they are afraid or believe that the problem can be solved internally without outside help. These findings shed light on the complex dynamics that can discourage victims from speaking out and seeking support when faced with cyberbullying incidents. Fear is a significant factor that inhibits victims from reporting cyberbullying as they may fear retaliation or further escalation of the bullying if they disclose their experiences. Donegan (2012) proposes that female undergraduates are bound to be genuinely wounded by cyberbullying as they are, by and large, viewed as 'close-to-home' creatures. This observation is based on the perception that females

are often stereotypically viewed as more emotionally sensitive and that cyberbullying tends to target personal aspects of their lives.

2.6.6.1 Cyberstalking

Li (2010) defines cyberstalking as the act of stalking, harassing, or threatening another person through the Internet, e-mail, or other electronic means of communication. This definition captures the essence of cyberstalking by highlighting the use of digital technology to perpetrate intrusive and unwanted behaviours that cause harm and distress to the victim. “Cyberstalking entails sending harassing e-mails, text messages, or social media posts with the sole purpose of torturing the target, making derogatory posts, or creating websites” (Willard, 2007:10). Cyberbullying often includes repeated attempts to contact the victim, monitoring their online activities, and sending threatening or intimidating messages. According to Kunttu and Huttunen (2009), cyberstalkers frequently target users who are present on social networking sites, online forums, and chat rooms to gather personal information about them. The anonymity and ease of access provided by the Internet and electronic communication platforms can exacerbate the impact of cyberstalking, as perpetrators can engage in these behaviours from a distance and with reduced risk of detection.

Cyberstalking can occur when a cyberbully posts messages and images online that are intended to upset, disgust, or provoke the victim, which can then be viewed by millions of online users (Whitty and Joinson, 2009; Li, 2010). According to Urbanski and Permuth (2009), the messages sent by the perpetrator can instil fear in the victim for his or her life and safety. This makes cyberstalking particularly alarming, as it not only causes emotional harm but also threatens personal security. Mobbley and Slaney (2019) suggest that online bullies can download apps that notify them anonymously whenever their victims go online, making it easier to stalk them. As a result, the victim's online activities, including status updates, posts, information, and pictures, are intensely scrutinised. This form of online harassment makes victims feel threatened and fearful and puts their lives in jeopardy as cyberstalkers can easily target their victims without ever leaving their homes (Jaishankar and Sankary, 2005).

2.6.6.2 Sexting

Sexting, which is a form of sexual bullying, is the act of sending sexually explicit messages, images, or videos (Klettke, Hallford and Mellor, 2014). This behaviour has become a matter of growing concern as it has escalated among young people and poses significant implications for public health worldwide. Klettke et al. (2014) assert that sexting involves sending sexually suggestive messages or images, including nude or partially nude photos, via social networking sites or mobile phones. Benotsch, Snipes, Martin and Bull (2013) examined the prevalence of sexting among young people, and found that approximately 25% of young people received sexually explicit content, while 14% sent sexually suggestive photos. A study that was conducted on university students in the US also explored the prevalence of sexting among the population. The findings revealed that 61% of undergraduate students had engaged in sexting behaviours, indicating significant sexting among university students (Ajuwon, Ojikutu, Ojomo, Futusi and Oluabunwo, 2014).

Research has indicated that sexting tends to be more prevalent among university students than adolescents, which can be attributed to several factors. First, university students typically have greater access to smartphones, personal computers, and social media platforms that facilitate the exchange of explicit content (Ajuwon et al., 2014). The widespread use of technology among university students thus increases opportunities for sexting. Secondly, university students are in a developmental stage characterised by increased autonomy, exploration, and experimentation (Ajuwon et al., 2014). Most have more freedom and independence compared to adolescents, and this exposes them to the higher likelihood of engaging in sexting behaviour. University students are also more likely to be in romantic or sexual relationships, which may further contribute to the prevalence of sexting among this age group. In contrast, adolescents may be subject to more parental monitoring, school regulations, and social norms that discourage or limit opportunities for sexting. They may also be less experienced in relationships and have fewer opportunities or incentives to engage in sexting than their college counterparts.

Involvement in sexting behaviours by young individuals has been associated with various adverse outcomes, including risky sexual behaviours and decreased mental well-being. Temple, Ling and Paul (2014) explored the association between sexting and psychosocial health among university students, and found that sexting was linked to high levels of stress, depression, and anxiety. The authors concluded that engaging in sexting behaviours could negatively impact

mental well-being. Sexting is also associated with factors such as gender, Internet usage, and living arrangements with parents and is more prevalent among students who participate in health-risk behaviours like smoking, drinking, and sexual activities than students who avoid such behaviours.

In South Africa, access to smartphones and social media platforms is widespread among young people, particularly university students, and access to technology creates opportunities for sexting. For example, *TimesLive* (KwaZulu-Natal teacher suspended over WhatsApp sexting scandal, 2019) reported that a teacher in KwaZulu-Natal had been suspended for allegedly exchanging explicit material with students via the WhatsApp messaging service. In the university context, university residences are communal living environments where students interact closely with their peers. Residents can easily share private messages or explicit content which can result in privacy breaches. If the content is shared without permission or ends up in the wrong hands, this could result in embarrassment and/or the harassment of an individual (Ling and Paul, 2014). Additionally, a rapid increase of explicit content in residences has the potential to exacerbate interpersonal tensions and foster a hostile atmosphere. Ready access to technology and the proximity of residents can create opportunities for sexting within these settings. Factors such as peer influence, social dynamics, and a desire for acceptance and exploration can contribute to sexting behaviours among residents (Ling & Paul, 2014).

2.6.6.3 Impersonation

Impersonation is a deceptive act in which an individual assumes someone else's identity, either online or offline, to deceive or mislead others (Payne, 2014). This behaviour involves adopting the characteristics, traits, or roles of another person to gain unauthorised access, manipulate others, or commit fraud. In the digital sphere, impersonation occurs on social media platforms, e-mail services, and messaging applications. Payne (2014) avers that those individuals with nefarious intentions create fake accounts or use the identity of a persons to interact with others, and this leads to various adverse outcomes such as cyberbullying, harassment, identity theft, and spreading false information. According to Willard (2007) and Li (2010), impersonation in the online realm can have severe consequences for targeted victims, including damage to their reputation, emotional distress, and potential legal ramifications. On the other hand, offline impersonation takes place in real-life situations, such as the workplace, at social events, or in personal relationships (Willard, 2007; Li, 2010). Examples of offline impersonation include

assuming the name of someone else or a person's job title or credentials to deceive others or gain personal advantages. This behaviour can undermine trust, create professional or personal conflicts, and potentially harm the impersonated individual.

Impersonation in university residences refers to the act of pretending to be someone else in a residential community. This behaviour can range from harmless pranks to acts of malicious intent. One form of impersonation is when an individual pretends to be a different resident, either for fun or with more deceptive motives (Bocji, 2004). This may involve assuming their identity to gain access to restricted areas or resources within the residence. For example, someone may pretend to be another resident to gain entry into a communal space or borrow their belongings without permission. Li (2010) argues that impersonation can also occur on the online platforms the residential community uses, such as social media groups or messaging applications (or apps). In these digital spaces, individuals may create fake profiles or use the identity of another resident to deceive or manipulate others. This can lead to negative consequences such as privacy invasion, harassment, or the manipulation of relationships within the community. Moreover, the implications of impersonation in university residences can be significant, as it can erode trust and create tension among residents if they feel that their identities or personal information are not adequately protected. Impersonation can also disrupt the sense of community and belonging within the residence, as it undermines the authenticity of resident interactions and relationships.

2.6.6.4 Harassment

Harassment is a type of cyberbullying in which hateful and threatening messages are frequently sent to the victim (Willard, 2006; Willard; 2007; Urbanski and Permuth, 2009; and Li, 2010). This behaviour aims to intimidate, degrade, and/or instil fear in the recipient, causing significant emotional distress and psychological harm. The intention behind this form of harassment is to create an atmosphere of fear, humiliation, and power imbalance that makes the victim feeling helpless and vulnerable. Willard (2007) states that these hateful or threatening messages can be spread via e-mails, text messages, and social media. According to Agaston, Kowalski and Limber (2012), cyberbullying can also begin by harassing someone unknown by logging into a chat room. The most common forms of harassment are cold phone calls, particularly from a private number, and abusive text messages. Bullying on social networks was found to be the second most common form of harassment by Willard (2006).

In the university context, Beran and Li (2005) assert that harassment can manifest when one or more students send or post abusive and distressing messages targeting another student. Another prevalent form of cyber harassment occurs when a student shares defamatory content about a peer on social media that aims to tarnish the reputation of the victim and incite others to dislike them (Saha, Ahlawat, Akram, Jangbahadur, Dhaigude, Sharma and Kumar, 2024). This type of harassment often involves the cyberbully frequently posting status updates and tagging others to further humiliate the victim. For these actions to be classified as harassment, they must be repeated over time (Willard, 2007).

2.7 Predominant Perpetrators of Bullying in University Residences

2.7.1 Fellow students

Sinkkonen, Puhakka and Meriläinen (2014) argue that the predominant perpetrators of bullying in university residences are often peers who reside in the same residential community as their victim/s. This finding aligns with the traditional understanding of bullying as a behaviour that is primarily enacted by peers rather than authority figures. In the context of university residences, the proximity and frequent interactions among residents create fertile ground for interpersonal conflicts and power imbalances to manifest as bullying behaviours. Furthermore, Sinkkonen et al. (2014) indicate that the prevalence of bullying in university residences is not evenly distributed across all demographic groups. While bullying can occur among individuals of any gender, race, or socioeconomic background, certain groups may be more vulnerable or more likely to engage in bullying behaviour than others. For example, studies have stated that male students are more commonly identified as perpetrators of bullying compared to their female counterparts (Lund & Ross, 2017). Additionally, factors such as social status, popularity, and group dynamics within the residence can influence an individual's propensity to bully others.

The issue of bullying that extends from the secondary school to the university environment is highlighted in two significant studies. Lappalainen, Meriläinen, Puhakka and Sinkkonen (2011) conducted a large-scale survey involving 2 805 Finnish university students, and discovered that approximately 5% had experienced bullying by either fellow students or staff members. Notably, about half of both the perpetrators and the victims reported a history of involvement

in bullying incidents before their university education, with this pattern being particularly pronounced among male students. Additionally, Curwen, McNichol and Sharpe (2011) explored this phenomenon by surveying 159 female and 37 male undergraduates who admitted to having bullied a fellow student at least once during their time at university. These findings underscore the fact that bullying behaviours persist from school into higher education, suggesting a continuum that affects both the experiences and behaviours of students as they transition to university life. Also, a study that was conducted in Argentina also reported high rates of bullying and victimisation, with 25.2% of the respondents indicating that they had been bullied by other students at least occasionally. This high rate could be attributed to various social dynamics within schools. For example, senior students may bully freshmen as a misguided rite of passage, exploiting their inexperience and vulnerability (Chapell, Hasselman, Kitchin, Lomon, MacIver and Sarullo, 2006). This form of hazing can perpetuate a cycle of bullying, as those who are victimised early in their school careers might later become perpetrators themselves.

2.7.2 Resident assistants (RAs)

Resident assistants are integral to maintaining the order and well-being of students residing at university residences. RAs are often selected based on their leadership qualities and ability to foster a supportive community. However, there are instances where RAs may misuse their authority and engage in bullying behaviours that significantly impact the residential experience of students. RAs possess considerable authority within residences, which includes enforcing university policies, mediating conflicts, and providing support to residents. However, this authority can be misused in various ways. For instance, some RAs might apply rules selectively or excessively to target specific students. This selective enforcement can create a hostile environment for those students, making them feel singled out and unfairly treated. Favouritism is another form of bullying that can occur when RAs show preferential treatment to certain residents. This behaviour can lead to the exclusion and marginalisation of other students, fostering an environment of inequality and resentment. Favouritism can manifest in giving certain residents better access to resources, leniency in rule enforcement, or greater social support, thereby undermining the sense of community and fairness (Fischer and Buehler, 2017).

In some cases, RAs may resort to public humiliation as a means of exerting control or displaying authority. This can involve criticizing or reprimanding residents in front of their peers, spreading rumours, or making derogatory comments about some. Such actions not only degrade the targeted individuals but also create a culture of fear and insecurity within the residence (Miller et al., 2019). The public nature of these actions amplifies their negative impact, as the embarrassment and loss of dignity are witnessed by others, and this intensifies the distress of the victim. RAs are typically viewed as role models and sources of support for residents, but when they engage in bullying, the betrayal of trust can be particularly damaging. Students may feel isolated and helpless and unsure of whom to turn to for support, and this abuse of trust can lead to long-term psychological impacts, including anxiety, depression, and a diminished sense of safety and belonging in the residential community (Smith and Freyd, 2014).

2.8 Gender Differences in Cases of Bullying

Bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon that is not confined to a single act, period, or gender. Gender differences in bullying constitute a significant area of study, revealing distinct patterns and impacts experienced by individuals based on their gender. Hong and Espelage (2012) underscore the importance of understanding these gender-specific dynamics. Their findings reveal that while bullying is a universal issue affecting both boys and girls, the forms it takes and the impacts it has can differ greatly. For instance, boys may be more likely to engage in and experience physical bullying, while girls might be more prone to relational or social bullying. These differences are not just behavioural but also psychological, as the impact of bullying can manifest differently depending on the gender of the victim. Moreover, gender differences in bullying can also be influenced by societal norms and expectations. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes often shape the way bullying is expressed and perceived. For example, boys may feel pressured to conform to aggressive behaviours due to societal expectations of masculinity, while girls may experience bullying related to appearance or social status, which are often emphasised in expectations of femininity.

2.8.1 Male participation in bullying

Males are significantly more likely to engage in direct forms of bullying than girls, such as physical aggression and overt verbal abuse. This tendency aligns with traditional gender norms and social expectations that often encourage boys to assert dominance through physicality and confrontational behaviour. From an early age, boys are socialised to value traits like toughness, competitiveness, and dominance. These societal expectations influence their behaviour, making them more prone to engage in bullying as a way to assert these traits. Boys may feel pressured to demonstrate physical strength and resilience, and this often leads them to resort to more aggressive forms of bullying. Olweus (1994) argues that boys are more likely to be perpetrators of bullying than girls, with younger boys being victimised more frequently. In a study conducted by Mishna (2012), girls reported being victims of bullying more often, while most boys reported being the perpetrators. Cassidy (2013) notes that men are reluctant to report bullying because they worry about being labelled as ‘rats’, which can result in persistent bullying. Dilimac (2012) supports the notion that bullies are likely to be male pupils. Because men are often too proud to acknowledge that they are being bullied, it is challenging to recognize them as victims.

2.8.2 Female participation in bullying

Relational aggression among females often involves tactics such as exclusion, gossip, rumourspreading, and manipulation of social relationships. These behaviours are subtler than physical bullying but can be equally, if not more, harmful. Research has indicated that girls are more likely than boys to engage in this type of indirect aggression, which can be difficult for educators and parents to detect and address effectively (Salmivalli and Peets, 2009). One reason for the prevalence of relational aggression among females is socialisation. Girls are often socialised to value relationships and social connections more highly than boys, which can lead to the use of relational aggression as a way to navigate social hierarchies and conflicts. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) argue that girls who engage in relational aggression often do so to gain social dominance or to retaliate against perceived slights within their social circles.

The assertion that female students are more prone to fall victim to bullying compared to male students is supported by Kowalski (2014), who highlights the high vulnerability of female students. Furthermore, Andar (2014) points out that females are more often targeted in online environments where they face degrading threats and/or sexually explicit content. This

underscores the unique challenges that female students face in the digital sphere where online bullying can be pervasive and deeply hurtful. However, it is essential to recognise that females are not the only victims in these scenarios. Poland (2016) provides a critical perspective by indicating that females can also engage in bullying behaviours online. This includes actions such as sending harassing texts, excluding individuals from group chats, and impersonating others to cause embarrassment or offense. These behaviours illustrate that females can be perpetrators as well, which complicates the narrative around gender and bullying.

2.9 Understanding the Factors that Contribute to Bullying Behaviour

According to local and international research, numerous factors perpetuate bullying in university settings. According to Terry (2010), bullying at higher education institutions is an escalating and complex social and cultural phenomenon that a variety of factors, such as social expectations and influences from the family and environment, may influence. People from various backgrounds come together during the transition from high school to university, which can result in a challenging social environment. First, students may feel pressured to perform better than their peers because of the competitive nature of academia (Smith, 2016). In addition to high expectations and limited resources, this academic pressure can increase stress levels, making some students appear as vulnerable targets for bullying. Brewer and Kerslake (2015) argue that students, in an attempt to alleviate their insecurities or gain a competitive advantage, may resort to demeaning comments that disparage their classmates, making them vulnerable targets for bullying. Secondly, social hierarchies and cliques are prevalent in university settings (Smith, 2016). Bullying can be a way for these groups to maintain their social status or assert their dominance, and they may be exclusive. Within these cliques, students who do not follow specific rules or who are seen as different in some way may be bullied. Additionally, bullying at universities is exacerbated by the anonymity offered by social media and online platforms. After everything that has been said, the individual, social, and environmental factors that contribute to ongoing bullying in university residences will be the focus of the next section.

2.9.1 Individual factors

In the context of bullying in university residences, Smith (2016) argues that individual factors often put certain students in a vulnerable position. Victims of bullying are frequently singled out due to specific personal attributes or the past experiences they had, and these qualities and/or experiences render them susceptible to becoming targets of bullying behaviour. Brewer

and Kerslake (2015) elaborate on how factors such as personality traits, self-esteem levels, social skills, and coping mechanisms inadvertently contribute to this vulnerability. For example, students grappling with low self-esteem may unknowingly draw negative attention, as bullies perceive them as easy targets for asserting dominance or addressing their own insecurities. Additionally, victims of bullying may face mistreatment because bullies attempt to boost their self-worth. In such cases, bullies exploit the vulnerabilities of their targets by employing intimidation and coercion to enhance their social status or exert control over their peers. Moreover, personal experiences, especially those involving past victimisation or exposure to violence, can heighten an individual's susceptibility to becoming a target of bullying. Smith (2016) suggests that individuals who have endured harm in the past may inadvertently display signs of vulnerability, thus becoming more prone to further victimisation in university residences.

2.9.1.1 Personality traits

According to Diener and Lucas (2019), personality traits reflect the distinctive thoughts, feelings, and behavioural patterns of an individual. This suggests that people with certain personality traits may be more likely to be bullied than others. For instance, high levels of bullying have been linked to traits like aggression and lack of empathy (Diener and Lucas, 2019). Espelage and Swearer (2013) propose that specific personality traits can predispose individuals to engage in bullying behaviours, thereby increasing the vulnerability of potential victims. Individuals characterised by high levels of aggressiveness, hostility, or a tendency towards anger may demonstrate behaviours that intimidate or harm others. These individuals may resort to aggression as a means to assert dominance, exert control, or retaliate against perceived threats. Moreover, the research conducted by Hymel, Bowker, and Woody (2008) reinforces this perspective, suggesting that individuals with low empathy may struggle to understand the impact of their actions on others and may lack remorse or empathy toward their victims. This empathy deficit can foster a disregard for the well-being of others, heightening the likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviours. Numerous studies on bullying support these findings. For example, Jolliffe and Farrington (2011) found that individuals with higher levels of aggressiveness and lower levels of empathy than others were more inclined to engage in bullying behaviours. These insights indicate that certain personality traits, particularly aggressiveness and a lack of empathy, play a significant role in perpetuating bullying dynamics. Consequently, individuals exhibiting these traits are not only more likely to become

perpetrators, but many are also susceptible to becoming victims of bullying behaviour themselves.

2.9.1.2 Self-esteem

Individuals with low self-esteem are likely to be targeted as victims of bullying for several reasons. Gini and Espelage (2014) assert that bullies often target individuals they perceive as vulnerable or who are unlikely to retaliate. Low self-esteem can manifest in behaviours or body language that bullies interpret as signs of weakness, making individuals with low self-esteem more susceptible to being targeted. Several studies have examined the relationship between self-esteem and bullying, shedding light on the connection between these factors. Darjan, Negru and Llie (2020) aver that individuals with low self-esteem may struggle to assert or defend themselves against bullying behaviour. They may lack the confidence to stand up to bullies or may fear further humiliation or rejection if they confront the bully.

Moreover, a study conducted by Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra and Runions (2014) examined the longitudinal relationship between self-esteem and bullying behaviour among adolescents. The findings revealed that low self-esteem predicted later engagement in bullying perpetration. Students with low self-esteem were highly likely to resort to bullying to improve their social status or feel more in control. A meta-analysis by Gini and Espelage (2014) found that individuals with low self-esteem were more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of bullying. Low self-esteem can create vulnerability which increases the risk of engaging in bullying behaviours and being targeted by others. Additionally, Juvonen and Gross (2008) emphasise the reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and bullying. Individuals with low self-esteem may engage in bullying to gain a temporary sense of power and superiority over others, but this behaviour can further undermine their self-esteem over time.

2.9.1.3 Social skills

Social skills can play a role in bullying in university residences. For instance, difficulties in social interactions and inadequate social skills can contribute to the perpetration of bullying and/or bullying experience. Several studies have explored the relationship between social skills and bullying, shedding light on how poor social skills can lead to bullying behaviours (Myers and Cowie, 2015a). Research suggests that individuals lacking proficient social skills, including communication, problem-solving, and emotional regulation, are at heightened risk of

becoming targets of bullying, and their struggles in these areas often leave them highly vulnerable to being singled out and mistreated by their peers (DeLara, 2016). A study by Gini, Pozzoli and Hymel (2008) found that socially unskilled students were more likely to be involved in bullying others than those who had sound social skills. This underscores the correlation between inadequate coping mechanisms and susceptibility to bullying. Poor social skills often result in social rejection and isolation, creating a fertile ground for bullying behaviours to emerge. Students grappling with social interactions often face challenges in fostering meaningful connections, consequently finding themselves excluded from social circles. This exclusion can render them susceptible to bullying, as the ensuing rejection and isolation they experience may breed feelings of frustration and a yearning for control, thus heightening their vulnerability to being targeted (DeLara, 2016).

2.9.1.4 Coping mechanisms

Coping mechanisms in university residences can inadvertently make other students vulnerable targets of bullying due to the dynamics of social interactions and the impact of individual coping strategies on group dynamics (Maher, Zins & Elias, 2017). Recent research has shed light on this issue, emphasizing the role of coping mechanisms in shaping peer interactions and bullying dynamics within university settings. According to a study by Brook and Willoughby (2016), individuals with maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as avoidance or aggression, may inadvertently contribute to hostile social environments in university residences. For instance, students who habitually avoid addressing conflict or stressors may inadvertently allow tensions to escalate, leading to interpersonal conflicts or social ostracism from the residence community.

Moreover, Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne (2009) suggest that students who resort to aggressive coping mechanisms, such as verbal or physical aggression, may inadvertently create an atmosphere of intimidation and fear in the residence. Their aggressive behaviours can disrupt the sense of safety and inclusivity among their peers, consequently making some students feel vulnerable to bullying or harassment. Furthermore, Sotomayor, Tarhan, Vieta, McCartney and Mas (2022) highlight the impact of coping mechanisms on social hierarchies in university residences. Students who employ bullying as a coping mechanism to assert power or control may perpetuate social dominance dynamics, thus marginalizing their peers and creating an environment that is conducive to bullying behaviours.

2.9.2 Social factors

Social factors play a crucial role in influencing bullying in university residences. These factors include the intricate web of relationships, interactions, and social dynamics among students in these settings. Xiao and Wong (2013) highlight that social norms and group dynamics are key contributors to the prevalence of bullying in such environments. Students may conform to certain social expectations or succumb to peer pressure, leading them to either participate in bullying behaviour or passively accept it as a norm, and this can result in certain students becoming targets of bullying. Group dynamics, such as cliques or exclusive social circles, often contribute to the marginalisation and exclusion of specific individuals, making them more vulnerable to bullying. This section examines social factors such as peer pressure, social hierarchy and power imbalances, childhood experiences, and parenting styles, all of which contribute to bullying in university residences.

2.9.2.1 Peer pressure

Peer pressure is the influence of peers where individuals can act negatively. However, according to Hu, Chen and Davison (2019), peer pressure occurs when a peer group or individual encourages others to change their attitude, values, or behaviours to conform to those of the influencing group or individual, and this pressure and group dynamics can influence bullying behaviours (Hu et al., 2019). Bullying can be a way for students to maintain their social status or gain acceptance within certain social groups. People who want to fit in or follow the rules or ‘code’ of the group may engage in or support bullying. Peer pressure has often been overlooked as a serious issue among university students, particularly because adults do not tend to deem this matter relevant. However, as many more students have started entering universities, peer pressure could become more prominent than ever.

Hu et al. (2019) assert that peer pressure or influence occurs when peers' opinions, behaviours, or attitudes influence those on the side lines. In the context of university residences, peer pressure looms large as it shapes the behaviours and choices of their inhabitants. Within this crucible of social dynamics, the allure of conformity can transform an individual into a susceptible target for bullying behaviours. The relentless pressure to conform to certain norms and standards set by peers can create an environment where bullying thrives unchecked. Those who resist or deviate from these norms risk being excluded and/or mocked, or even becoming targets of aggression. In the quest for acceptance and belonging, individuals may find

themselves getting involved with bullies, either as passive bystanders or reluctant participants. This vicious cycle of peer pressure can easily make someone a target for bullying, perpetuating a cycle of harm that is often difficult or even impossible to eradicate.

Loke, Mak and Wu (2016) indicate that the influence of peer pressure on bullying is most decisive during the middle school years. Their research that was conducted in 2016 found that more than 3.2 million school-aged children were bullied yearly, leading to over 160 000 children dropping out of Hong Kong school. On the other hand, Hogan, Parker and Wiener (2010) aver that it is peers who provide students with strong social support during adolescence as they seek to become more independent. In university residences, it seems easy to give in to peer pressure and engage in bullying simply because of the desire to fit in. For example, imagine a group of popular students in a university residence who frequently engage in meanspirited teasing and exclusionary behaviours toward others. They are the dominant social group and known for their exclusivity. These popular students exert peer pressure on others to adopt their behaviours and attitudes, especially those who want to be part of their group. Consequently, a student who yearns to fit in and be accepted by this influential group may feel compelled to participate in bullying to prove their loyalty and secure their place within the group's social hierarchy (Hogan et al., 2010).

2.9.2.2 Social hierarchy and power imbalances

Andrews, Cillessen and Craig (2023) assert that power imbalances and social hierarchy can foster bullying. Students who believe they are famous or socially superior may use their position to control other people. To assert dominance over the social structure of the residence may involve verbal, social, or physical aggression (Andrews et al., 2023). When certain students believe they hold a position of social prominence or superiority, they may feel entitled to manipulate the social dynamics within a residence or similar environment. This can involve engaging in acts of aggression that are both overt and subtle to assert dominance and maintain their perceived status.

Progressive systems frequently arise in any gathering, including university residences, where elements like societal position, actual appearance, or notoriety are at play. It is possible for students who hold positions of influence or who believe they are socially superior to use their position to exert dominance and control over their peers. This can involve various forms of

manipulation, including exerting influence over decision-making processes, shaping social dynamics, or even engaging in acts of aggression (Juvenon and Gross, 2008). By leveraging their perceived social superiority, these individuals may attempt to assert dominance over their peers in their quest to shape the social environment according to their preferences or self-interests (Davis and Davis, 2007). This can create an uneven power dynamic where the influence of these individuals is disproportionately amplified, which potentially leads to exclusion, marginalisation, or mistreatment of others living in the residence.

Greenlee, Winter and Marcovici (2020) support the notion that students bully others to maintain their status as many adolescents aim to find their place in the social hierarchy and avoid being at the bottom (Greenlee et al., 2020). Olweus (2011) identifies three primary and interrelated reasons why students bully others: (1) they have vital needs for power and negative dominance, (2) they find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students, and (3) they are often rewarded in some way for their behaviour with material or psychological rewards. This shows that bullies believe that targeting students residing in residences can elevate their social status or they will gain recognition from their peers, which is a form of social validation and, even if it is temporary, it is a source of satisfaction for such students.

Extensive research and investigations have been conducted to explore the underlying reasons and motivations behind bullying. Several authors, including Scaglione and Scaglione (2006) and Davis and Davis (2007), have concluded that seeking power and dominance in a particular environment is typically the primary motive for bullying. Bullies specifically target individuals they perceive as weaker, and they derive a sense of reward when their victims react. When victims display sadness or anger, the bullies' actions are reinforced as they often lack empathy towards their victims and instead find encouragement in insulting them (Scaglione and Scaglione; Davis and Davis, 2007). Furthermore, bullies derive satisfaction from increasing their power. Dogruer (2015) vividly illustrates this with a memorable example: "If messing with electricity was not so dangerous, bullies would probably put their fingers into sockets to get even more power". This analogy highlights the inherent desire of bullies for more control and dominance.

Davis and Davis (2007) further state that students who have a strong sense of social superiority might use physical violence and intimidation, such as threats, coercion, and physical assaults,

to show that they are in control. Juvonen and Gross (2008) state that physical bullying is a method individuals use to consolidate their authority within the social hierarchy in their attempt to control and intimidate their peers. The social dynamics within university residences can be significantly influenced by those who believe they are socially superior and it is their actions and behaviours that set the tone for student interactions. When these people bully others, it can lead to a culture of fear where some may feel compelled to conform to avoid being bullied. The power imbalance that social hierarchies cause can make bullying more common and strengthen the dominant position of those who engage in it.

2.9.2.3 Childhood experiences

Roberts (2009) researched adult behaviours to explain the motivations behind bullying and argues that these behaviours are shaped by the experiences individuals had during their childhood. According to Roberts (2009), bullies may have endured prolonged neglect during their formative years, with parents, teachers and siblings showing little interest in their wellbeing. They may have lacked praise, encouragement, and humour in their lives. Instead of being taught more appropriate ways to handle their aggression, they were subjected to humiliation, sarcasm, criticism, and negativity throughout their childhood. At times, bullies may have felt insecure and rejected, which could contribute to their aggressive behaviour and taking it out on others (Hamburg and Hamburg, 2004).

Additional reasons for bullying may include experiencing harsh and inconsistent punishment, witnessing extreme emotional or violent outbursts, and being exposed to exaggerated reactions, even for minor infractions. Considering these various arguments, it seems that bullying behaviours in adulthood can be traced back to the experiences individuals had during their childhood. Neglect, lack of positive reinforcement, exposure to negativity, and witnessing aggressive behaviours can contribute to feelings of insecurity and rejection, leading individuals to engage in bullying to assert control to cope with their unresolved issues. Benner (2016) asserts that the emotional wounds inflicted by childhood bullying may endure a lifetime, often resurfacing in later years to manifest in new challenges.

The college or university phase of life is a poignant period when past traumatic memories can unexpectedly re-emerge. For many students, this marks their initial foray into meeting new people, forming friendships, and living independently, potentially in environments where past

bullying experiences occurred. Upon entering college or university, students encounter a myriad of unfamiliar situations that may exacerbate some lingering emotional distress. This upheaval can precipitate various difficulties, including mental health issues like depression, as well as maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, excessive alcohol consumption, and eating disorders. Contrary to popular belief, individuals inclined towards bullying behaviour are not inherently predisposed to bullying but often develop such traits in response to their upbringing by authority figures such as parents, particularly in environments where physical discipline was prevalent (Nelson, 2001).

Not only do childhood bullying experiences impact students today, but bullying is prevalent across various stages of life, including the time spent at a college or university. Hughes (2001) identifies several factors that contribute to bullying in higher education settings. One significant factor is the diminished authority structure. This means that transitioning to college often marks the first time students experience autonomy without constant parental oversight. Unlike high school where teachers may closely monitor classroom dynamics, college faculty staff members tend to adopt a more hands-off approach, which is encouraged by research advocating student autonomy. Additionally, the prevalence of residential campuses that are common in higher education settings means that students regularly encounter potential bullies or victims, especially in shared living spaces like residences. Roommate conflicts can escalate into bullying situations, particularly when students are unable to easily escape the situation. As observed by Hughes (2001), bullying frequently occurs within the same corridor or department, suggesting that peers in close academic or residential proximity to others are often responsible. Moreover, common areas such as building entrances, exits, and libraries serve as hotspots for bullying, which is also facilitated by technological advancements that enable cyberbullying even during educational gatherings.

2.9.2.4 Parenting style

According to Shore (2006), parenting style plays a crucial role in the development of both bullies and victims. Shore (2006) further suggests that bullying behaviour is often observed in children whose parents themselves engage in bullying, stating that bullying parents often rear bullying kids. Parents are influential role models for their children, and their children unconsciously imitate the way they handle conflict and problems. If one parent consistently emerges as the 'winner' while the other consistently 'loses' during arguments or even physical

fight, children tend to identify with one of these models and may adopt either a bully or victim role (Haber, 2007). Insufficient affection, excessive freedom, and limited quality time spent with children can contribute to problems and increase their likelihood of exhibiting aggression and engaging in violence (Olweus, 2005). In such circumstances, children lack clear guidance on appropriate behaviour. According to Davis and Davis (2007), parents of bullies often demonstrate a pattern of neglect towards their children. They may be unaware of what is happening in their children's lives and struggle to exert consistent and appropriate discipline.

The influence exerted by the family on the social development and behaviour of a child is immensely significant. The environment in which a child is nurtured forms the foundation of their future identity. The prevalence and intensity of bullying correlate with the level of adult supervision provided to children; hence, instances of bullying tend to persist or escalate when there are insufficient or inconsistent consequences. The upbringing of the child within the family setting significantly shapes their future disposition and parents bear a pivotal responsibility in matters concerning child-rearing. Children who witness bullying behaviours among family members, including parents and siblings, or who experience victimisation themselves, are prone to adopting bullying tendencies (Dehns, 2013). Moreover, exposure to negative messages or physical discipline at home can lead to the development of adverse self-perceptions and anticipations in children that potentially prompt pre-emptive acts of aggression, and engaging in bullying behaviour provides such children with a sense of empowerment and significance.

2.9.3 Environmental factors

The dynamics of interpersonal relationships among residents are significantly influenced by the physical and organisational environment of the university residence (Billing, 2014). The physical environment can either facilitate or hinder positive social connections. Spaces that promote communal interaction, such as common areas or shared facilities, can encourage residents to engage with one another while they foster a sense of community. On the other hand, a lack of inviting spaces or inadequate amenities may limit opportunities for social interaction, thus potentially isolating residents and impacting their relationships negatively. Additionally, the organisational environment within a university residence, including its policies, supervision style, and support services, plays a crucial role in preventing and addressing bullying incidents.

Blimling (2014) notes that when these components are not adequately established, bullying can occur unintentionally.

Overcrowding in university residences is also one of the factors that contribute to bullying. Naji, Ibriz and Mourdi (2020) allude that overcrowding can make people feel stressed and frustrated, which can exacerbate conflicts and make people harass others. In addition to overcrowded university residences, bullying behaviours can continue in the absence of adequate supervision and inadequate policies. According to Blimling (2014), it becomes easier for bullying to go unnoticed or unaddressed when there is a lack of oversight and residence security and cameras. The perpetrators and the victims of bullying may feel powerless and unsupported if no clear policies or procedures are in place to deal with the situation. Because bullies believe there are no consequences for their actions, this lack of accountability and intervention can give bullies even more reason to bully others.

Moreover, the vicious cycle of bullying may be exacerbated by the inaccessibility of support services in university residences. Sherer, Yiping, Amanda and Nickerson (2010) allude that victims frequently require emotional support, counselling, or mediation to deal with the psychological impacts of bullying. However, victims may have difficulty obtaining the assistance they require if these services are unavailable or difficult to access and, as a result, they might feel alone and trapped in an abusive environment. Likewise, without successful mediation, people who harass others may not get the direction and help to resolve the fundamental issues that drive their behaviour (Sherer et al., 2010). In addition, the social environment of university residences is a significant factor in the persistence of bullying behaviours. Aggression and bullying have become more commonplace and are likely to continue in a tolerant culture. Residents may internalize the belief that bullying is acceptable or even expected when they witness others engaging in it with impunity.

2.10 The Impacts of Bullying

Bullying is aggressive or intimidating behaviour to harm, control, or demean another person (Lim and Hoot, 2015). Unfortunately, bullying is common in university residences where students from various backgrounds and experiences live and learn together. It is impossible to overstate the impact that bullying has on its victims. It can prompt extreme misery, nervousness, sadness, and decreased mental health. Lim and Hoot (2015) assert that the victims of bullying

frequently experience a decline in self-confidence and self-esteem, which can impact their academic performance, social interactions, and quality of life for a long time. Furthermore, bullying harms the entire university community and not just the bullied individual. It creates a toxic and unhealthy environment that hinders students' personal development, academic success, and the development of positive relationships. An objective of the current study was to focus on the psychological, emotional, and physical impacts of bullying as well as its impact on social isolation, suicidal ideation, and academic performance.

2.10.1 Psychological impacts

Bullying has profound and long-lasting impacts on individuals. According to Nadasan (2004), students who are bullied often experience heightened anxiety, which can manifest in various physical and emotional issues such as appetite loss, backache, headaches, nail-biting, stomach problems, and feelings of depression, suicidality, fear, anxiety, and hopelessness. Furthermore, Zych, Farrington and Ttofi (2019) highlight that bullying is a significant precursor to severe aggressive behaviour, which can ultimately lead to criminality. This finding suggests a strong link between bullying and subsequent criminal behaviour. Arsenault (2018) supports this connection, showing that many individuals who engaged in bullying are likely to have criminal records by age 30. Myers and Cowie (2015b) add that children who bully are highly likely to become adult criminals. These individuals are often involved in gangs, face difficulties in finding employment, experience mental health issues, struggle with alcohol and substance abuse, and have higher divorce rates. According to Branden (2011), bullying victims experience profound unhappiness, fear, and a decline in self-esteem. Mamorobela (2021) emphasises that bullying has adverse impacts on the bullied and bystanders. Bystanders may accept bullying and other negative behaviours as usual if they observe it consistently and no action is taken against the bullies.

Nadasan (2004) argues that there is a significant link between experiencing depression and being bullied. Bullying can cause considerable psychological distress, manifesting in feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and low self-esteem. The repetitive and persistent nature of bullying can erode an individual's mental resilience, making them more susceptible to developing depression. Victims often report feeling vulnerable and attempt to conceal what they perceive as their failure. As Mamorobela (2021) notes, bullied victims frequently engage in passive-aggressive, self-punitive, and self-destructive behaviours such as cutting or attempting

suicide. Moreover, Mamorobela (2021) observes that some victims may become fixated on seeking revenge against their oppressors or those with less power than themselves. This pursuit of revenge can serve as a way for victims to regain a sense of control and power, especially if they have felt helpless and powerless during the bullying experience. It may also act as a coping mechanism to restore their self-esteem and create a sense of justice.

2.10.2 Emotional impact

Transitioning to university can be a daunting experience due to new social dynamics, academic demands, and novel personal responsibilities. For students who are bullied, these challenges intensify, resulting in significant emotional distress. DeLara (2016) highlights that bullied victims often suffer from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, with these impacts lingering long after the bullying has ended. However, the consequences impact their academic and social functionality. A prevalent emotional consequence of bullying is the onset of anxiety disorders. Rigby (2020) explains that the persistent fear of being targeted can lead to chronic anxiety that may present as panic attacks, social withdrawal, and avoidance behaviours. This constant state of fear impedes students' ability to focus on their studies, participate in social activities, and fully engage in university life, thus fostering a cycle of anxiety and social isolation.

Depression is another frequent outcome of bullying in university settings. Olweus (2021) avers that bullied victims are likely to experience symptoms of depression, such as prolonged sadness, loss of interest in activities, and hopelessness. These symptoms can hinder cognitive functioning and make it hard for students to keep up academically. Additionally, depression can sap motivation and energy and further isolate students from their peers and support systems. Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2018) argue that low self-esteem is a critical issue for bullied students who often internalise negative comments and derogatory remarks, leading to a diminished sense of self-worth. This internalisation fosters self-doubt, self-criticism, and a pervasive feeling of inadequacy that can all be particularly harmful during university studies, which is a time for significant personal and academic growth. A low self-esteem can undermine a student's confidence and result in poor academic performance and reduced participation in extracurricular activities, thereby limiting opportunities for personal and social development. Juvonen and Graham (2014) assert that the emotional impact of bullying extends to interpersonal relationships, as victims often struggle with trust issues, making it hard to form and maintain meaningful connections. This mistrust can lead to social isolation and a lack of

supportive relationships. The latter is crucial for emotional resilience and well-being as, without a strong support network, victims may feel alone and unsupported, which worsens their emotional distress. According to Lereya, Copeland, Zammit and Wolke (2015), the emotional toll of bullying can also have long-term impacts. Studies have shown that the impact of bullying can persist into adulthood and impact victims' mental health and quality of life long after the events (Lereya et al., 2015). Long-term impacts include ongoing struggles with anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships and achieving career success. These enduring consequences emphasise the need to address bullying early and provide adequate support to victims.

2.10.3 Physical impact

Myers and Cowie (2015b) assert that, at the time of the wrongdoing, or after finding that an incident has happened, casualties will probably encounter various actual responses. This means that when individuals are subjected to bullying, whether in the immediate aftermath of the incident or upon discovering that they have been victimised, they may experience various physical reactions such as an increase in the body's level of adrenalin, an increase in heart rate, hyperventilation, shaking, numbness, the sensation of being frozen or experiencing events in slow motion, dry mouth, and an enhanced sense of smell. Additionally, Dogruer and Yaratan (2014) allude that some physical reactions may occur right away, while others may occur after the danger has passed. An example of a physical reaction that takes place right away includes, but is not limited to, dizziness. Feeling of dizzy can be due to changes in blood pressure. Another physical reaction that may occur after the bullying incident is sleep disturbance. Dogruer and Yaratan (2014) assert that bullying can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restful sleep. This can result in ongoing sleep disturbances and feelings of tiredness. Johnston (2017) assert that physical reactions to bullying can be so strong that they recur years later, particularly when the victim is reminded of the events.

2.10.4 Social isolation

Bullying significantly impacts social isolation, which can have profound and long-lasting impacts on individuals. Eshbaung (2008:35) define social isolation as “a state where individuals have limited or no social interactions or meaningful connections”. It is a subjective experience characterised by a lack of social contact, engagement, or support from family, friends, or

broader social networks. According to Baldasare, Bauman, Goldman and Robie (2012), exposure to harassment can cause victims to feel avoided, dismissed, and disengaged from their friends and social settings. This isolation can happen in various settings, like schools, workplaces, or online platforms, and it can hurt the social interactions of an individual.

The repeated attacks, harassment, and/or intimidation that bullied victims experience can indeed lead to social isolation. Goodstein (2013) notes that bullying can erode the social connection between a person and his or her support systems as they may withdraw from social interactions due to fear, shame, or a lack of trust in others. Goodstein (2013) further states that persistent negative experiences and the perception of being targeted could make individuals feel socially excluded and disconnected, which exacerbates their isolation. Furthermore, the fear of further victimisation may cause individuals to avoid social situations or interactions, leading to social withdrawal and isolation. The emotional impact of bullying can make it challenging for victims to build or maintain healthy social relationships, perpetuating their social isolation. In university residences, victims of bullying may experience fear and anxiety about interacting with their peers. They may actively avoid common areas, social events, or shared spaces where bullying might occur, leading to social isolation. Bullying often involves actions that aim to harm the social standing or reputation of a person. When bullies target individuals living in a university residence, their reputations may be tarnished or negatively affected. This can result in social exclusion or rejection by other residents, leading to isolation.

2.10.5 The impacts of bullying on academic achievement

It is undeniable that bullying hurts the academic performance of university students. The inability of a student to focus, concentrate, and effectively engage in their studies is hampered by the hostile and intimidating environment that the experience of being bullied can create. According to Porhola, Almonkari and Kuntuu (2019), bullied victims frequently experience elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and fear, which can significantly impact their cognitive functioning and academic performance. In addition to emotional distress, constant worry about bullying can make it difficult to attend classes regularly, complete assignments, and study effectively. Porhola et al. (2019) highlight the potential academic consequences of bullying in their research. They suggest that students who experience bullying may face academic challenges that negatively impact their grades and hinder their ability to reach their full

academic potential. Hence, the psychological distress caused by bullying can create difficulties in concentration, motivation, and overall academic performance.

Young-Jones, Fursa, Byrket and Sly (2015) investigated how bullying affected the ability of selected students to succeed academically. The study found that bullied students were afraid to come to campus because they felt unsafe, which made them unable to focus on their studies and succeed academically. Similarly, Young-Jones et al. (2015) found that such students lacked inspiration to get along with others on campus and did not partake in student activities. Field (2007) emphasises that student victims of bullying frequently avoid participating in extracurricular activities because they lack motivation and the ability to enjoy themselves. The misery they experience consumes their lives and they continually expect the following oppressive episode and plan for ways to avoid it. This means that bullied students may refrain from participating in campus activities and engage in social interactions. Their negative experiences may lead to withdrawal from extracurricular activities, clubs, or campus events as they fear further bullying and social exclusion. This withdrawal limits their opportunities for personal growth and social connections and deprives them of enriching experiences that contribute to a holistic educational journey.

2.10.6 Suicidal thoughts

Bullying in student residences can have a devastating effect on the mental health of students and make them more likely to think about suicide (Cassidy, Faucher and Jackson, 2017). Constant exposure to abuse can lead to a feeling of helplessness, the perception that no other options are available, and a belief that the situation will not improve. As a means of escaping the ongoing suffering and desiring emotional release, such students may consider suicide. Cassidy et al. (2017) argue that bullying has the potential to encourage self-harm or even suicide attempts in extreme cases. Some bullied students may turn to self-destructive behaviours as a coping strategy because of their intense emotional anguish and the feeling that they are ensnared in a rut and are hopeless. According to Miller (2016), a Rutgers University student killed himself in 2012 after his roommate had sent a video of him engaging in homosexual behaviour to his peers. This is one of many examples of the extreme anguish that bullying can cause if ignored.

Bullying can have devastating impact on a victim's mental health and can lead to long-term emotional distress. Cassell (2011) highlights that the cumulative impact of bullying, whether due to humiliation, intimidation, or social exclusion, can severely harm the victim's mental well-being over time. This notion is supported by Lund and Ross (2017), who found that adolescents who experienced verbal bullying were 8.4 times more likely to report suicidal ideation than those subjected to cyberbullying. This finding underscores the grim reality that bullying, regardless of its form, can drive a victim to contemplate or even commit suicide. The danger lies not only in physical bullying but in the emotional and psychological wounds inflicted by verbal and cyberbullying as well.

2.11 Intervention Strategies to Curb Bullying in University Residences

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2014), there are a variety of strategies that can be utilised by university authorities, parents, and students to aid in the prevention of bullying in higher education settings and to intervene when it has occurred. The recommendations offered by Hinduja and Patchin (2014) for preventative measures at universities include expanding awareness of and comprehension of bullying issues; giving lectures to students, parents, and members of the community about how to stop and respond to bullying; and issuing warnings to bullies and their caregivers about the negative impacts of bullying (Feinberg and Robey, 2010; Patchin and Hinduja, 2014). To effectively prevent bullying in university residences, it is crucial to implement comprehensive strategies that encompass awareness, education, and intervention. According to the recommendations by Hinduja and Patchin (2014), raising awareness about bullying issues among students, staff, parents, and community members is essential. Educational campaigns, workshops, and presentations can increase understanding of what constitutes bullying, its impact, and the importance of prevention. Li (2010) emphasises the need for collaboration among schools, families, students, and society to stop bullying. The first step toward prevention is educating people about what bullying is and helping them recognise the signs and symptoms of being bullied and being a bully. Additionally, presenting lectures, training sessions, and workshops that equip students, parents, and community members with knowledge and strategies to recognize, prevent, and respond to bullying incidents can significantly aid in preventing bullying in a university setting (Feinberg and Robey, 2010). This approach should include the promotion of healthy communication, conflict resolution skills, empathy, and bystander intervention techniques.

2.11.1 Education and awareness

Raising awareness about bullying is a crucial first step in addressing the issue at educational institutions. This can be accomplished by educating students, faculty members and staff on the nature and consequences of bullying through workshops, seminars, and training sessions. These sessions should emphasise the various forms of bullying, the psychological and physical impacts on victims, and the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive environment (Espelage and Swearer, 2013). Educational campaigns can further this goal through the use of posters, flyers, and social media to spread information about bullying and promote a culture of respect and empathy. According to Olweus and Limber (2010), implementing educational programs that raise awareness about bullying and its impacts is essential for reducing the high rates of bullying among university students, particularly those living in residences. Smith (2016) supports this notion by noting that education and awareness programs have significantly increased students' understanding of bullying, its manifestations, and its impacts. These programs provide students with the knowledge to recognise signs of bullying, report it, and access support services. Li (2007) also emphasises that educating students about bullying is the most effective preventive measure.

In addition to educational efforts, support systems play a critical role in raising awareness and mitigating the impact of bullying. Universities should offer counselling services and support groups for victims to help them cope with the emotional and psychological impacts of their experiences (Rigby, 2003). Peer support programs can also be effective in empowering students to prevent bullying and support their peers. Training students as peer counsellors or mentors can create a network of allies who can intervene in bullying situations and provide support to victims (Salmivalli, 2010). Research has indicated that raising awareness about bullying and implementing comprehensive intervention strategies can significantly reduce its prevalence in educational institutions. For instance, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) found that anti-bullying programs with awareness-raising components were effective in reducing bullying behaviours. Similarly, Bradshaw (2013) emphasises the importance of a whole-school approach, which includes raising awareness, enforcing policies, and providing support to prevent bullying.

2.11.2 Reporting incidences of bullying

According to Shannon (2013), university residence managers should foster an environment that encourages individuals to report bullying. This can be achieved by implementing anonymous reporting channels, designating trusted employees as points of contact, and offering various reporting options, such as suggestion boxes or online platforms. The researcher is confident that disclosing instances of bullying will aid in holding those responsible for such acts accountable. Moreover, appropriate disciplinary actions need to be taken against bullies as holding them accountable will contribute to a culture of respect and send a clear message that such behaviour will not be tolerated. University management should urgently comprehend the consequences of bullying and collaborate with interested parties, like parents and the government, to end this immoral behaviour through encouraging the reporting of incidents (Hinduja and Patchini, 2014). Harassment in educational settings creates a ripple effect that begins with an individual student and spreads to a group of students, and this eventually impacts the entire educational system.

2.11.3 Supervision and surveillance

According to Shannon (2013), increased supervision and surveillance in student residences can assist in preventing bullying. Ensuring that common areas like hallways, dining halls, and recreation areas are well-watched and that staff members are trained to spot and deal with bullying is important. According to Choi, Earl, Lee and Cho (2019), surveillance systems like strategically placed security cameras can deter potential bullies. For instance, if the perpetrators are aware that their behaviour is being recorded and monitored, it may cause them to reconsider engaging in bullying behaviours because they will be aware of the potential repercussions. The knowledge that there could be tangible evidence of their actions can make potential bullies think twice about the consequences of the disciplinary actions that may follow. After all, the presence of surveillance systems can also aid in investigations and gathering evidence when incidents of bullying occur. The recorded footage can provide valuable information that will help to identify the perpetrators, to understand the dynamics of the incident, and to ensure a fair and thorough investigation.

2.11.4 Anti-bullying campaigns

Anti-bullying policies play a crucial role in bullying prevention. These policies should reflect the values that an organisation upholds and seeks to protect through specific actions (Faucher, Cassidy and Jackson, 2015). They help balance the tension between individual rights and collective interests by providing clear definitions, actions, and resources for support. These policies also indicate the university's stance on bullying and harassment, convey the authorities' intolerance for such behaviours, and foster a bullying-free culture (Vaill, Campbell and Whiteford, 2021). Policy measures should specify best practices at national and stakeholder levels and be formulated with input from both administrators and student representatives (Vartia and Leka, 2011). Involving students in the policy-making process will ensure that the policies are acceptable, feasible, and address their needs. Furthermore, an effective means of preventing bullying is for professionals to assist students in creating awareness and understanding the injustices involved, thereby promoting tolerance of all individuals. This requires recognising everyone's right to dignity and equitable education (Polanin and Vera, 2013).

Some policies communicate zero tolerance, which is also a policy orientation. Zero-tolerance policies prescribe punishments for behavioural offenses (Tay, 2023). However, zero tolerance relates more pertinently to visible or overt acts than to the covert and subtle behaviours of, for instance, cyberbullying (Borgwald and Theixos, 2013). Under a zero-tolerance policy, punishments can include the suspension and expulsion of bullies or notification of the police (Daniel and Bondy, 2008). The assumption is that authorities will address all forms of bullying when they are aware of them, which will enhance deterrence because students know they will not escape punishment.

Vaill et al. (2021) found that approximately 95% of universities did not inform the community of details about a specific offense, the consequences imposed, and when punishment was administered. This lack of transparency can erode trust in the university's policies and reduce their overall effectiveness. Bradshaw (2013) argues that zero-tolerance policies do not help in preventing bullying because harsh measures make people unwilling to report bullying. Reports about the relative effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies by Bradshaw (2013) also indicate counterproductive outcomes. Nonetheless, zero-tolerance policies have become the single most common anti-bullying measure usually offered in bullying literature.

Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper (2003) argue that how victims perceive their ordeals and react to them depends on institutional factors and the support they receive when they experience bullying. When people perceive that they will not receive support from the authorities, they are less likely to report bullying events (Cowie and Myers, 2015a). A lack of support also makes victims fear reprisals because they do not foresee any security, so they do not report bullying (Twale and De Luca, 2008), and this makes the appointment of an independent contact person or persons indispensable in bullying prevention efforts. The need to ensure fairness and pay attention to the intense emotions of those involved in bullying justifies the position of having an independent contact person to whom bullying can be reported.

Shannon (2013) recommends that university residences implement clear and comprehensive anti-bullying policies and procedures. These should explicitly define bullying behaviour, outline penalties for those who engage in it, and detail the resources available to those affected. It is crucial that these guidelines are widely disseminated and consistently enforced, as they provide a framework for preventing and addressing bullying, set behavioural expectations, and foster a safe and inclusive living environment. Smith (2016) emphasises that explicit policies and procedures are vital for mitigating bullying in residences. The policy should outline procedures for reporting bullying incidents, including initiating investigations promptly, gathering evidence, and ensuring a fair and thorough process. It should also specify appropriate disciplinary measures for those found guilty of bullying. Establishing accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms, such as dedicated reporting channels, online forms, and anonymous reporting options, is critical. Additionally, the policy must protect individuals who report bullying from retaliation.

2.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that bullying in higher education settings, and particularly in residences, often receives insufficient attention. However, a few scholars have highlighted the fact that university students, particularly those residing in campus accommodation settings, experience various forms of bullying, including subtle forms that are not easily visible. The impact of bullying on victims is significant, with some cases leading to severe consequences such as persistent health issues and even suicide. The persistence of bullying at this educational level emphasises the need for ongoing research and targeted interventions. A comprehensive

understanding of the types of bullying, the factors that contribute to this scourge, and its profound impacts on students' well-being and academic experiences is essential for developing effective prevention strategies. If they put measures in place to effectively address this pervasive issue, universities will take a giant step towards achieving their mission of providing safe and supportive environments for students where personal and academic growth is fostered.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

The theoretical framework is a carefully organised set of concepts and a theoretical foundation derived from one or more theories and is designed to support a scholarly investigation such as this one. According to Nilsen (2020), a theoretical framework consists of related ideas that guide research, and it is intended to predict and explain research outcomes. In simple terms, a theoretical framework serves as the foundation for conducting research. The theoretical framework is utilised to explain relevant theories connected to the study and it highlights the theory or theories that form the basis from which the study's findings are derived. Ravitch and Carl (2019) state that the theoretical framework is the starting point for critiquing a paper and is a crucial part of the research plan. It is therefore a solid base upon which a study is constructed, and it reflects the study's hypothesis. It can be compared to a roadmap or the Global Positioning System (GPS) that guides the direction the research takes. Therefore, a well developed theoretical framework informs the research design and helps the researcher to interpret the results within the context of established theories. It ensures that the study remains anchored in theoretical underpinnings and provides a structured approach to examining and understanding the research problem (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Theories that are entrenched in Criminology discipline and the social sciences, specifically the social learning theory (SLT) and the routine activities theory (RAT), were utilised in this study to enrich the comprehensive understanding of bullying in UKZN residences. The social learning theory posits that behaviours, including deviant ones, are learned through social interactions and by observing others. This theory was relevant in understanding how bullying behaviours might be adopted or reinforced among students in a residential setting. In contrast, the routine activity theory focuses on the situational conditions that make bullying likely and it emphasises the convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardianship. By applying these two frameworks, the researcher was able to examine how the social environment and situational factors that converged in the university residences under study contributed to the prevalence of bullying. The discourse also highlights the synergy and conflict between these two theories when bullying behaviour is explained.

3.2 The Social Learning Theory

As noted by Allan (2017), the social learning theory was developed in the 1960s by Albert Bandura, a Canadian American psychologist. This theory is frequently highlighted as a crucial element of sustainable resource management and a tool to encourage any desired behavioural change (Muro and Jeffrey, 2008). This theory is predicated on the notion that knowledge is gained from social interactions among people, which means that people learn comparable behaviours through imitating the actions of others. According to Press (2009), people adopt and mimic the conduct of others after witnessing it, especially if their observational experiences are rewarding or entail rewards for the observed behaviour. The social learning theory is now arguably the most popular theory of learning and development in the social sciences. Press (2009) argues that the social learning theory has many of the same fundamental ideas as the conventional learning theory because it argues that learning relies on attention, memory, and motivation.

The social learning theory is often described as a bridge between the behaviourist and cognitive learning theories because it incorporates elements from both these perspectives. On the one hand, behaviourist theories emphasise the role of external factors, like rewards and punishment, in shaping behaviour (Muro and Jeffery, 2008). In this sense, the social learning theory shares the idea with behaviourism that the environment and social interactions influence how people learn and behave. On the other hand, cognitive theories focus on internal mental processes, such as memory, thinking, and problem-solving (Wang and Chiew, 2010). The social learning theory incorporates cognitive elements by highlighting how individuals actively process and make sense of the information they observe and internalise in their social environment. In this regard, because of the notion that direct reinforcement cannot fully explain all forms of learning, Bandura and Walters (1976) proposed and inserted a social component in the social learning theory, contending that people might pick up new knowledge and actions by observing others (Rotter, 2021).

The components of the social learning theory suggest three general guidelines for sharing knowledge with others. The first is *observation*. Nabavi (2012) asserts that observation is a fundamental component of the social learning theory. According to Bandura and Walters (1976), observation refers to perceiving and taking in information from a social environment, mainly through observing the actions and behaviours of other people. This suggests that people

learn by observing the actions and behaviours of others in their social environment. This can include watching family members, peers, teachers, or media figures. Observation is a crucial mechanism that allows individuals to learn from their social environments and it serves as the foundation for modelling and imitating behaviours. Second is *imitation*. McLeod (2011) defines imitation as the process by which individuals observe and replicate the behaviours, attitudes, or emotional reactions of others in their social environment. Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones (1976) argue that people are likely to pay close attention to and imitate the behaviours of those they respect or relate to. According to the social learning theory, these people are referred to as role models. Imitation allows people to acquire a wide range of behaviours and information by observing and modelling the actions and experiences of others. The social learning theory underscores the idea that people are not isolated learners but are deeply influenced by the people and culture around them. Third is *modelling*. Allan (2017) states that modelling refers to the process of learning by observing and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses of others. Modelling is therefore a core concept in the social learning theory as it emphasises the importance of learning through observation and by imitating others. In essence, modelling highlights the role of models as sources of information and inspiration in acquiring new behaviours, skills, and attitudes.

3.2.1 Cognitive processes as posited by the social learning theory

Rosenthal and Zimmerman (2014) state that the cognitive modelling processes as expounded by the social learning theory are integral components that influence how individuals learn from observing others and by imitating their behaviour. Bandura (1977) asserts that there are four prerequisites for the modelling process: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Bandura (1977) further argues that individuals do not passively imitate observed behaviours; rather, they engage in these cognitive processes and then determine whether they will imitate a behaviour. Thus, an individual can successfully become a role model for someone else by considering this cognitive process.



Figure 3.3: Cognitive processes of the social learning theory Source: (Nabavi, 2012)

Attention refers to the ability of an individual to focus and concentrate on any observed behaviour (Alawadly, 2022). Furthermore, Tomasselo (2014) asserts that attention involves selectively attending to relevant stimuli, filtering out distractions, and actively engaging in the observation process. Therefore, attention is crucial because if an individual ignores the behaviour of the model, the learning process is hindered and the behaviour may not be effectively acquired. Feldman (1981) explains that retention involves cognitive processes to store and remember the observed behaviour. Retention includes encoding the information into memory, organising it, and creating mental representations of that behaviour (Feldman, 1981). Retention allows individuals to retain the information over time and retrieve it when needed. Hence, memory plays a significant role in social learning, as individuals rely on their memory to recall and reproduce the observed behaviour accurately.

Reproduction refers to the ability of an individual to imitate or reproduce the behaviour that has been observed (McLeod, 2011). According to Carroll and Bandura (1987), reproduction involves translating the mental representations of the behaviour into action. Reproduction also entails mimicking the behaviour and reproducing its specific details, such as timing, sequencing, and coordination. Therefore, this cognitive process relies on the individual's motor

skills, cognitive abilities, and the capacity to match their behaviour with the observed behaviour.

Motivation plays a critical role in determining whether an individual will choose to imitate a behaviour or not. Alawadly (2022) asserts that motivation encompasses the individual's desire, incentives, and the perceived consequences of imitating the observed behaviour. Motivation influences the decision-making process, as individuals are likely to imitate behaviours that they perceive as rewarding, beneficial, or in line with their goals (Tomasselo, 2014). Conversely, individuals may be less motivated to imitate a behaviour if the perceived outcomes are negative or undesirable.

Overall, these cognitive processes interact to shape the learning and imitation processes. Attention is necessary for the initial observation, while retention allows storing and retrieving the observed behaviour. Reproduction involves transforming mental representations into action, and motivation is a driving force that influences the ability to imitate behaviour.

3.2.2 The social learning theory in the context of bullying

The social learning theory offers valuable insights into understanding the prevalence of bullying in university residences. According to this theory, individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and the influence of social models (McLeod, 2011). In the context of bullying, the theory suggests that students may engage in bullying by observing and imitating the behaviour of others, particularly those they perceive as influential or powerful.

One aspect of the social learning theory that is relevant to bullying is observational learning. Barboza, Schiamberg, Oehmke, Korzeniewski, Post and Heraux (2009) aver that students who reside in university residences are constantly exposed to social interactions and the behaviours of their peers. Barboza et al. (2009) further argue that students may observe and pay attention to bullying behaviours that are demonstrated by their fellow residents, either in person or through various forms of media, such as social media platforms. Attention to these behaviours can be heightened when the models are seen as popular, influential, or dominant within the residence community.

Akers and Jennings (2015) posit that students who observe bullying behaviours must retain the information in memory for it to impact their behaviour. The retention of bullying behaviours may occur when students identify with the model, find the behaviour memorable or salient, or perceive it as effective for achieving specific goals or outcomes. Additionally, if students have witnessed multiple instances of bullying, the accumulated exposure can further reinforce the retention of these behaviours. Furthermore, Barboza et al. (2009) state that reproduction, which imitates observed behaviours, is significant when considering bullying in university residences. This is true because students who have noticed and retained bullying behaviours may be more likely to reproduce them than those who have not. Students may imitate the aggression, verbal abuse, or exclusionary tactics they have observed, believing that such behaviour can enhance their social status or help them establish dominance within the residence community (Cowie and Myers, 2015a). In a nutshell, the presence of role models, who may either be peers or influential individuals within the residence, can facilitate the reproduction of bullying behaviours.

Motivation also plays a vital role in the prevalence of bullying in university residences. Motivation as posited by the social learning theory refers to the perceived benefits or rewards associated with imitating a particular behaviour (Akers, 2017). Students may be motivated to engage in bullying if they believe it will lead to social acceptance, fear-based compliance from others, or engender an enhanced sense of power or control. Similarly, those who have observed bullying may be motivated to join in out of fear or becoming targets themselves due to social pressure to conform to the dominant social norms within the residence.

3.2.3 Limitations of the social learning theory

The social learning theory as proposed by Albert Bandura focuses on how individuals learn and adopt behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. While it can help explain some aspects of bullying in university residences, it also has limitations. For instance, this theory may oversimplify the complex nature of bullying behaviour. According to Guerra and Huesmann (2004), the social learning theory primarily emphasises the role of observational learning and reinforcement in shaping behaviour. However, the scholar who employs this theory may also need to fully capture the underlying psychological and social factors that drive bullying. Bullying frequently encompasses complex power dynamics, social hierarchies, and interpersonal conflicts that extend beyond simple imitation and reinforcement (Volk, Dane and

Marini, 2014), but this theory does not consider unique individual traits such as personality and temperament as factors that contribute to bullying behaviour. The social learning theory disregards the notion that not everyone who witnesses aggressive behaviour will become a bully as personal attributes play a substantial role. Furthermore, it does not explain why specific individuals become bullies while others do not, even when exposed to similar social learning experiences. Lastly, the theory primarily looks at how behaviour is learned and reinforced, but it does not explain why some individuals continue to engage in bullying behaviours over an extended period even when there may be no immediate rewards or reinforcements. The current study therefore considered the fact that bullying is a complex, ongoing process that transcends learned behaviour, and therefore the theoretical framework was enriched by also incorporating the tenets of the routine activity theory into the study.

The social learning theory remains highly relevant to this study as it provides a foundational understanding of how bullying behaviours are acquired and sustained within university residences. Despite its limitations, the theory offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of observational learning, reinforcement, and social modelling, which are critical in explaining how students may adopt aggressive behaviours from their environment.

3.3 The Routine Activity Theory

3.3.1 Understanding the routine activity theory

The routine activity theory (RAT) is a criminological theory that examines the relationship between everyday activities and the occurrence of crime (Cohen and Felson, 2010). According to Cohen and Felson (2010), the theory posits that the potential for criminal incidents arises when certain variables converge during regular daily routines. By understanding these patterns, individuals can learn more about crime, commission, reduction, and prevention. Guell, Panter, Jones and Ogilvie (2012) state that routine behaviours are activities that people consistently engage in throughout the day, such as going to work or school, leisure activities, commuting, and other regular tasks. Felson (2017) notes that criminal incidents are likely to occur when routine activities bring potential offenders into contact with suitable targets or victims. The theory posits that three elements must be present for a crime to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of capable guardianship. As summarised by Wikstrom and Treiber (2015), crime occurs when a motivated offender selects a suitable target in the absence of

guardianship, and these elements are interconnected and work together to create opportunities for crime.

The diagram below illustrates how the three components converge to set the stage for the commission of a crime.

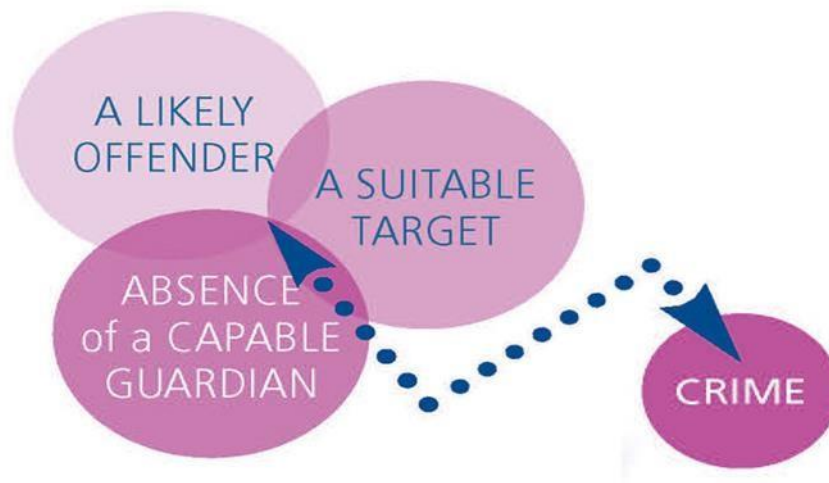


Figure 3.6: Convergence of the three elements of the routine activity theory Source: (Wikstrom and Treiber, 2015)

3.3.2 A motivated offender

In the context of the Criminology discipline, a motivated offender refers to an individual with the inclination and intent to engage in deviant or criminal activities (Miro, 2014). According to the routine activities theory as posited by Cohen and Felson (1979), a motivated offender is an individual with the desire and willingness to commit a criminal act. This theory suggests that three elements must converge for a crime to occur: a suitable target, the lack of guardianship, and a motivated offender. Motivated offenders can be individuals driven by various factors such as financial gain, personal gratification, revenge, or a desire to exert power and control over others (Miro, 2014). For instance, for some individuals, the desire to exert power and control over others drives their deviant behaviour. This manifests in various ways, such as domestic violence, harassment, or organised crime which occurs when individuals seek dominance and control over a criminal enterprise. As suggested by Fox and Farrington (2016), a history of criminal behaviour can significantly predict future criminal acts as habitual

offenders may have developed a pattern of criminal behaviour that becomes increasingly difficult to break.

In university residences, the idea of motivated offenders in bullying situations is closely tied to the psychological factors that drive aggression and power dynamics. Research has shown that individuals who engage in bullying behaviour often exhibit traits such as aggression, hostility, and a desire for dominance (Bjorkqvist, Osterman and Hjelt-Back, 1994; Olweus and Hart, 1993). These offenders may harbour personal insecurities or negative attitudes towards certain groups or individuals, leading them to seek validation or exert their sense of superiority through acts of bullying. For instance, Espelage and Swearer (2003) argue that bullies often perceive their victims as different or inferior and they derive satisfaction from asserting power over them. This aligns with the routine activity theory's notion that motivated offenders seek out suitable targets. In the university residence context, motivated offenders might target individuals whom they perceive as weak, different, or socially isolated, as these individuals are deemed vulnerable to their bullying tactics (Agatston, Limber and Kowalski, 2012).

Furthermore, the environment in university residences is characterised by human proximity and shared living spaces, and this fact can exacerbate bullies' motivation to seek out victims. The presence of peers and an audience may amplify the sense of power and validation that bullies derive from their actions (Pellegrini and Long, 2002). Additionally, Pellegrini and Long (2022) note that social hierarchies within residence communities can motivate offenders, as they may seek to maintain or enhance their status by victimising others. For that reason, motivated offenders in university residences may exhibit traits such as aggression, prejudice, and personal insecurities, which ultimately drive them to engage in bullying behaviour. They may derive satisfaction, power, and validation from targeting individuals whom they perceive as weak or different.

3.3.3 A suitable target

As noted by Hollis, Felson and Welsh (2013), a suitable target or targets in the crime sphere can often be objects of high value that are visible and easily accessible. This can include items like expensive electronics, jewellery, or even vehicles. Criminals are drawn to these targets because they promise quick and substantial rewards if stolen and sold. Hollis, Felson and Welsh (2013) allude that many crimes are committed opportunistically, meaning that offenders choose

to commit them when the opportunity arises rather than engaging in extensive planning. This highlights the importance of situational factors in determining suitable targets. In the case of bullying that occurs in university residences, a motivated offender might identify a vulnerable target or an opportune situation. Just as a thief might spot an open window or an unlocked door to make a house an easy target for burglary, a bully identifies a student who appears isolated or emotionally vulnerable, which are traits that make them potential targets for verbal, physical, or psychological bullying. Bones (2013) affirms that criminals often look for vulnerable or isolated victims. This means they look for ideal targets in situations that minimise the risk of getting caught. This can involve the absence of security measures, lack of witnesses, or perceived limited physical resistance, and criminals and bullies actively seek out situations where these factors are present and will shield them.

Bones (2013) further states that suitable targets often have predictable routines and behaviours. Students in a university residence, for example, tend to adhere to daily routines that create opportunities for bullies. These routines may involve class schedules, study habits, or social interactions. Bullies may exploit the particular vulnerabilities of their targets, such as personality traits (introversion), social isolation, or differences in culture, appearance, or background (Twale and De Luca, 2008). As bullying often involves a power dynamic, the bully seeks to control or dominate the target, and suitable targets are those that are not powerful or who are unlikely to resist the bully's behaviour. According to Yang and Salmivalli (2015), bullies choose targets based on their perception of an opportunity to cause harm or emotional distress. This can involve spreading rumours, cyberbullying, or engaging in physical intimidation.

3.3.4 Lack of guardianship

Guardianship is the physical or symbolic presence of an individual that will consciously or unconsciously protect another (Reynes, 2017). Guardianship can be vested in a group or individuals who acts/act either intentionally or unintentionally to deter a potential criminal event. The routine activity theory states that the presence of a capable guardian serves as a vital component in the crime event model, as it is one who can directly or indirectly disrupts the interaction between a motivated offender and a suitable target (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Therefore, lack of guardianship signifies a gap in protective measures that allows a person with criminal intent to exploit opportunities and to flourish. The absence of guardianship creates

opportunities for motivated offenders to commit crimes, and these opportunities manifest in various ways. For instance, when residence assistants and residence security staff are not present or actively involved in monitoring the social dynamics within a residence environment, it can create opportunities for motivated offenders to engage in bullying behaviour. This might include verbal harassment, exclusion, cyberbullying, or physical intimidation. Without a vigilant and supportive presence, victims of bullying may feel vulnerable and are unlikely to report these incidents.

The communal nature of university residences adds another layer to the application of the routine activity theory in understanding bullying. Shared living spaces, standard rooms, kitchens, and study areas provide ample opportunities for bullying incidents. Bullies will take advantage of these spaces, which are often unoccupied with the immediate presence of responsible figures, and they use these opportunities to engage in behaviours that harm others psychologically and even physically. Ireland (2021) argues that the absence of guardians or surveillance allows bullies to act with impunity and that they are emboldened by the lack of intervention possibilities. Moreover, the routines that students adhere to inadvertently expose certain students to bullying. For example, a student who consistently returns to their residence at the same time each day may become a predictable target if there is no one present to deter or prevent bullying during that period. The lack of guardianship is especially pertinent regarding social interactions within university residences. Nicholas (2012) found that students who were socially isolated or had limited connections lacked the protection that a group or supportive friends would offer. This isolation made them vulnerable to bullying, as there was no one to intervene or provide support. Also, the diversity of cultural backgrounds among students in university residences can lead to unique challenges when it comes to bullying. When individuals with varying cultural backgrounds live together, differences in culture, appearance, and background can sometimes be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding renders individuals from diverse backgrounds potential targets for bullying.

3.3.5 Limitations of the routine activity theory

The routine activity theory (RAT) is a criminological theory that primarily focuses on explaining the occurrence of crimes and victimisation in various settings by utilising the convergence of three elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of capable guardianship (Wikstrom and Treiber, 2015). While this theory can be applied to understand

bullying in university residences to some extent, it has limitations in fully explaining the dynamics of bullying. This theory primarily focuses on the physical aspects of crime and victimisation, such as property crimes. It also does not adequately address the social and psychological aspects of bullying, including the role of social hierarchies, peer pressure, and the power imbalance between bullies and victims that is prevalent in university residences.

Also, it was developed before the widespread use of the Internet and digital technologies. In university residences, bullying often extends to the online realm through cyberbullying, which the theory does not account for. Moreover, Cho, Wooldredge and Sun Park (2016) assert that cyberbullying can occur regardless of the physical presence of a victim, offender, or capable guardianship, thus limiting the application of this theory in such cases. Furthermore, bullying in university residences can lead to severe emotional and psychological distress for victims, and the theory does not account for the long-term consequences or the role of mental health support systems in reducing victimisation.

Despite all the limitations, the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) remains relevant to this study as it provides a foundational framework for understanding the situational aspects of bullying in university residences. The convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship is evident in many bullying incidents within these settings. For example, university residences often lack adequate supervision, creating an environment where bullying can thrive. The theory's emphasis on guardianship can be expanded to consider the role of university policies, resident advisors, and peer intervention in mitigating bullying.

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter delved into the convergence of two fundamental theoretical frameworks in the Criminology and Social Sciences disciplines, namely the social learning theory (SLT) and the routine activities theory (RAT), to shed light on the intricate dynamics of bullying that occur in university residences. These theories were selected because they offer invaluable insights into the root causes of and factors that facilitate bullying behaviour. In the current study, a holistic understanding of the bullying phenomenon emerged through their synthesis. This study was conceptualised on the assumption that bullying in university residences cannot be explained by employing only the principles of one theory or those of the other; rather, the study acknowledged and utilised the intricate interplay between them. Therefore, the acquisition and reinforcement of bullying behaviours, as posited by SLT,

intersected with the opportunities and vulnerabilities presented by the routine activities of students who resided in the residence environment, as underscored by RAT. The synthesis of the two theories highlighted the multifaceted nature of bullying and the importance of considering both social and environmental factors in addressing and preventing such behaviours within the university setting under study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The success of any research endeavour relies heavily on a well-planned and detailed methodology. A clearly defined research methodology serves as a blueprint that guides the researcher through the entire process as it outlines the procedures and techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). This approach ensures that the research is conducted systematically, coherently, and rigorously. In the present study, which focused on bullying in UKZN residences, the researcher developed a rigorous scientific approach to effectively address the problem. This approach was successful in yielding extensive and meaningful data for thorough analysis and evaluation, and it ultimately contributed new knowledge to the Criminology discipline.

4.2 Location of the Study

The research was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, KZN. According to Samuel and Mariaye (2014), UKZN is a premier institution of higher education in Africa. It is a residential institution and is well known as a teaching and research-based university in picturesque KwaZulu-Natal province. It has a long and proud history of academic excellence. This university comprises five campuses, namely the Howard College, Westville, Nelson Mandela School of Medicine, Edgewood, and Pietermaritzburg campuses. However, this study was conducted only on the Howard College campus which, according to Ogunsanya (2022), was established in 1931 through the generous contribution of Mr. T. B. Davis in honour of his son, Howard Davis, who died during the Battle of the Somme in World War I. The Howard College campus is perched on the Berea in the suburb of Glenwood in Durban King George V Avenue and offers breath-taking vistas of the Durban harbour and the Indian Ocean (Msweli, 2020).

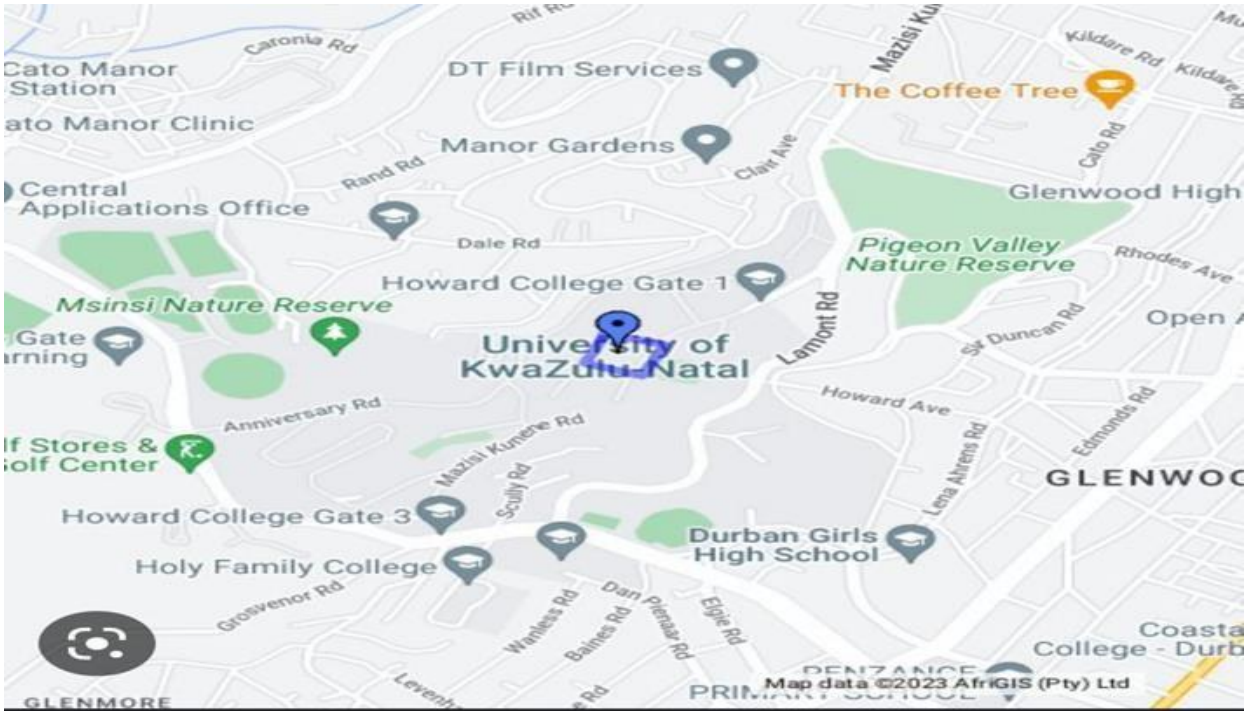


Figure 4.2: Location of the Howard College campus Source: (Felson, 2017)

The Howard College campus (HCC) thrives within an ecologically sustainable conservancy and its lavish gardens are evidence of the commitment to preserve local plant and animal life (Makhaola, 2015). Currently, a wide range of degree programs are offered at this campus in the areas of science (including Geography and Environmental Studies), Engineering, Law, Management Studies, Humanities (including Music), and Social Sciences (including Social Work). The campus also offers programs in Nursing and Architecture. Howard College campus attracts many people from different cultures, backgrounds, and races which might contribute to increasing numbers of bullying cases as it offers a wide range of degree programs for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

4.3 Research Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach to explore the bullying phenomenon in university residences. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) assert that qualitative research focuses on understanding individuals' or groups' varying experiences and viewpoints in connection to a specific social or human issue. This approach was used to gather comprehensive, descriptive data from a selected sample to examine the characteristics that contribute to bullying. The sample was, among others, drawn from students residing in Howard College campus residences.

The qualitative research approach was well suited for studying the complex dynamics of bullying. The qualitative research approach enabled the exploration of the ideas, emotions, and viewpoints of people involved in or impacted by bullying incidences. The interviews that were conducted enabled the researcher to obtain extensive, detailed data that offered in-depth insights into the underlying causes, patterns, and impacts of bullying in the university residences under study. The qualitative research approach also helped in understanding the interactions between diverse phenomena (Hennink et al., 2020) to understand how different factors affected the persistent prevalence of bullying in the university residences.

Qualitative data were collected to uncover and understand the relationships between the emerging factors and to shed light on the complex web of influences that shaped the prevalence of bullying in this specific setting. Furthermore, by gaining a deep understanding of the experiences and perspectives of those involved in the study, findings emerged that will guide the development of targeted communication, branding, and measures to curb bullying among members of the university community. It is envisaged that the insights that were gleaned from this qualitative research will inform the design and implementation of effective strategies to combat bullying and create a safer and more inclusive residence environment for students at this tertiary institution.

4.4 Research Paradigm

The methodology that was employed aligned with the interpretive research paradigm, which assisted the researcher in focusing on understanding the social construction of reality and to acknowledge the complexity and constant change of societal dynamics (Khaldi, 2017). According to Alharasheh and Pius (2020), paradigms provide researchers with particular information-gathering, perception, and comprehension processes. In this case, the interpretive paradigm was applied to gain insight into the phenomenon of bullying in HCC residences. Interpretivism, frequently associated with qualitative approaches, is a crucial aspect of the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism recognises that reality is socially constructed and emphasises the importance of understanding specific issues within their social and cultural contexts. As asserted by Alharasheh and Pius (2020), the main goal of interpretivism is to recognise that truth is socially produced and to better understand the issue at hand. In contrast to a rigid approach that seeks definitive answers, interpretive researchers aim to uncover the truth as perceived by the individuals involved in the research. Researchers who adopt a research

paradigm do not impose their assumptions or preconceived notions on the findings; instead, they seek to understand the perspectives of their subjects. This approach compels the researcher to consider multiple viewpoints and leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue under investigation, which was the case in the current study. Morehouse (2012) argues that this approach allows the researcher to consider and accept various perspectives that contribute to a greater understanding of the complex nature of the phenomenon under study, and this was indeed the case in the current investigation.

4.5 Research Design

Bloomfield and Fisher (2019:28) define a research design as a strategy "...that can be used to address research questions". In this study, the most appropriate research design was the exploratory research strategy. Exploratory research is described by Swedberg (2020) as a type of research that aims to address an issue that requires better understanding; this means the study is conducted to gain insights and explore the current research issue in depth. By adopting an exploratory research design, the researcher acknowledged the need for a thorough investigation to gather detailed information about the bullying phenomenon in Howard College campus residences. This design allowed her to explore various aspects of bullying, including its nature, causes, impacts, and to determine potential intervention programs.

The exploratory research design helped uncover new perspectives and shed light on underexplored areas of bullying in university residences. The exploratory research design also allowed for flexibility and open-ended inquiry, thus enabling the researcher to adapt the research process based on emerging themes and findings. This design was particularly beneficial in the investigation of the complex and multifaceted issue of bullying as a comprehensive understanding was essential. Therefore, the choice of an exploratory research design enabled the researcher to explore and understand the phenomenon of bullying and to propose effective intervention programs and strategies to address this scourge.

4.6 Population Size and Research Sample

In qualitative research, the goal is generally to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. This is achieved by thoroughly exploring the experiences, perspectives, and behaviours of individuals involved in or affected by the phenomenon. As Swedberg (2020) suggests, qualitative research typically has smaller sample sizes than

quantitative ones. In this study, a sample size of twenty participants was deemed appropriate. While this sample may seem minor compared to those of quantitative studies, it is essential to note that qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth. This means that the smaller sample size allowed the researchers to dedicate time and attention to each participant, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives on bullying in Howard College campus residences.

The initial sample size of 20 participants was based on established guidelines in qualitative research literature. Lakens (2022) argues that a sample size of around 20 participants is sufficient to achieve data saturation. Data saturation is when new data no longer provide significant insights or add to the emerging themes and understanding of the research questions. By reaching data saturation, the researcher ensures that a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon has been achieved. Conversely, as explained by Taherdoost (2016), the study population refers to a specific segment of the target population from which the actual sample is drawn. In this case, the study population consisted of individuals who were directly involved in or affected by bullying in Howard College campus residences. The population comprised students’ victims of bullying, Risk Management Services, and the Residence Liaison Officers.

By selecting a sample size of 20 participants, the researcher aimed to gather diverse perspectives and experiences related to bullying in the residences under study. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon while maintaining a manageable sample size that facilitated in-depth engagement with each participant. The data collected from these participants contributed to a nuanced understanding of the nature, causes, and impacts of bullying on the victims of this phenomenon.

Table 4.6: Summary of the study sample

Participants	Number of Participants
Students	15
Resident Liaison Officers (RLOs)	2
Risk Management Services staff (RMS)	2
Total:	19

Source: Researcher

The table above depicts the study sample that consisted of 15 students who had either been the victims of bullying or who had sufficient information about the topic, 2 Resident Liaison Officers (RLOs) that the Residence Assistants reported to whenever they experienced an issue at any of the residences, and 2 Risk Management Services (RMS) staff responsible for the security and safety of UKZN staff, students, contractors, and visitors. Three RMS staff had originally been approached, but one withdrew from the study and only 2 were interviewed.

The inclusion of students as participants was essential as they were directly affected by the issue of bullying within the residence community. It was envisaged that their perspectives and experiences would provide valuable insights into the prevalence, nature, and impact of bullying. Students from various academic disciplines, backgrounds, and years of study were recruited to ensure a representative sample that would allow the capturing of diverse perspectives. Eligible participants were registrants for the 2024 academic year. Specifically, the study included undergraduate students of both genders who had encountered or were currently experiencing bullying. These students had to reside in UKZN Howard College whether in on-campus or off-campus residences, had to be 18 years or older, and had to be enrolled in undergraduate studies.

Resident Liaison Officers (RLOs) play a significant role in student residences. They are responsible for ensuring the well-being and safety of students, addressing their concerns, and maintaining a conducive living environment. Their participation in the study was vital as they had direct contact with residents and were likely to have knowledge based on their observations related to bullying incidents. They were also deemed well qualified to provide insights into the dynamics of bullying among the residence communities and would have knowledge of the strategies and measures in place to address and prevent it.

Staff of the RMS section oversee and uphold university policies, conduct investigations, apprehend those suspected of committing crimes, keep the campus orderly, and safeguard its property. Exploring their role in upholding policies related to student conduct and safety was essential for understanding the dynamics and frequency of bullying incidents. Collaborating with RMS employees allowed the researcher to access comprehensive data on reported cases, investigative processes, and outcomes related to bullying incidents. This collaboration not only enhanced the study's credibility, but also promoted a cooperative approach to addressing and

mitigating bullying behaviours within the university community. Involvement of the RMS staff also contributed to the development of effective strategies and policies aimed at creating a safer and more supportive living environment for all students residing in UKZN residences. It was envisaged that, collectively, the students, RLOs, and RMS participants would provide a holistic view of bullying in the residences and that this multi-perspective approach would ensure that the findings encompassed the experiences and insights of different stakeholders involved or affected by bullying. This sample composition strengthened the validity and richness of the data that were collected and enabled the development of more informed and targeted interventions to address bullying within the specific context of the Howard College campus.

4.7 Sampling

4.7.1 Determining participants for the sample

A key research component is sampling, which is choosing a selected group of the intended audience to participate in a study (Taherdoost, 2016). Sampling is a required and helpful strategy as it is usually unrealistic or impossible to involve all people of interest in research projects. Sampling enables researchers to collect information from a smaller group that is representative of the larger population, allowing them to generalize and draw valid conclusions.

A non-probability sampling approach was used to choose the study sample for this research. According to Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz (2013), non-probability sampling is a method in which participants are picked based on particular criteria rather than randomly. Purposive sampling was a non-probability sampling technique that was used. Sharma (2017) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling strategy when researchers purposefully choose participants based on their perceived judgments and predetermined criteria. In this instance, the researcher deliberately selected participants with knowledge or experiences of bullying in the university residences under study as they would possess the viewpoints required to successfully address the research questions and objectives. This strategy guaranteed that the sample included people with pertinent knowledge and experience, thus allowing the researcher to study the bullying phenomenon in great detail. The purposive sampling technique was used in light of the study's qualitative nature and the objective of developing a thorough understanding of a particular campus crime. This allowed the researcher to maximise the richness and depth of the data that were generated as participants were selected based on their suitability and relevance to the research topic.

4.7.2 Recruitment strategy

The sensitive and stigmatising nature of sharing experiences connected to bullying justified the use of the purposive sampling technique. The researcher carefully identified and selected participants using purposive sampling. Their comfort, privacy, and willingness to share their experiences and ideas were considered at all times. The researcher used digital technology by joining the residence WhatsApp groups to find student participants. The study's title, the driving force behind it, and the goal of the investigation were shared on WhatsApp. This open dialogue fostered trust and enlightened potential participants about the study's goals and their rights as participants. The message also included the contact email address for students interested in participating in the study.

The researcher also emailed the invitation to the RMS staff and the RLOs to inform them of the study and invite them to participate. This strategy enabled direct one-on-one communication with these important stakeholders. Using WhatsApp and email sped up the recruitment process and enabled effective communication with potential participants. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to behave professionally and discreetly throughout the recruiting process.

4.8 Data Collection and Analysis

According to Bilborrow (2016), data collecting is a crucial component of research and entails methodically compiling and analysing data on pertinent factors to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and assess results. It is a rigorous and well-planned process for producing accurate and legitimate results. Both primary and secondary data-gathering techniques were used in this study.

4.8.1 Primary data collection

According to Bilborrow (2016), primary data collection entails gathering new, original information with specific focus on the study at hand. Bilborrow (2016) further avers that primary data collection entails face-to-face communication with participants and information gathering from first-hand sources. Interviews, particularly semi-structured individual interviews, were the primary technique of data gathering for this research. According to Mann (2016), an interview involves a formal or semi-formal dialogue or exchange between two or

more people, usually carried out to collect information, gain perspectives, or obtain viewpoints on a specific subject. This method is frequently employed in research, journalism, or employment evaluation contexts. Thus, the researcher believed that conducting interviews would provide the opportunity to establish a relationship with each participant and obtain a more profound knowledge of their opinions and experiences. The interviews were conducted in safe and comfortable spaces that suited the participants, for instance RLO, RMS, and student residences. The researcher utilised a cell phone to record every participant's conversation during the interview and it was saved to the Universal Serial Bus (USB).

One-on-one conversations between the researcher and each participant generated in-depth data of the experiences and opinions of the participants (Mann, 2016). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted. To prevent participants from getting bored and losing interest in the study, each interview lasted between 15 to 30 minutes.

4.8.2 Secondary data collection

According to Johnson and Sylvia (2018), secondary data gathering entails using already existing data that were gathered for different purposes in the past. These sources include academic literature, reports, statistics, and other pertinent materials. Secondary data sources included publications on earlier research on bullying at higher education institutions, campus safety reports, institutional policies, and other pertinent literature sources. The collection of secondary data enabled the researcher to establish context, background knowledge, and a sound basis for understanding of the problem of bullying in university residences.

The researcher accessed Google Scholar, books, articles, journals, and newspaper articles to collect pertinent data needed to respond to the research questions. Using primary and secondary data collection techniques, the researcher compiled various facts and viewpoints about bullying in campus residences. While the secondary data collection methods offered a broad context and supported the findings with pre-existing information and evidence, the primary data collection methods enabled in-depth analysis of the participants' experiences.

4.8.3 Thematic data analysis

Thematic data analysis is a broad term encompassing various approaches to identify patterns within qualitative data, even when these approaches differ significantly (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Through thematic analysis, the researcher can systematically examine the data to gain a clear understanding of the complex qualitative information gathered from in-depth interview transcripts. This method offers insights into participants' subjective experiences and perspectives, allowing a structured examination of their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about being victims of bullying. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) outline seven key phases for qualitative analysis, which they consider well-suited to thematic analysis. These phases enable researchers to generate comprehensive descriptive statements that capture an overall understanding of the data in response to the research questions. The phases include the following:

Phase 1: Preparing and organising the data for analysis

In this phase, the researcher took several preparatory steps to organize the data for thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2014) guidance on qualitative fieldwork, the researcher began by consolidating a substantial amount of data, including extensive observational notes and various documents gathered during fieldwork. This involved gathering all audio or video recordings in a single location and converting handwritten and paper-based documents into digital formats, such as Word or PDF files. To ensure efficient data management, the researcher also established a structured naming system for each file and created a master data catalogue, which recorded essential details for each data source, including storage location, creator, and date of collection. These organizational steps enabled the researcher to systematically prepare the data corpus, laying a strong foundation for thematic analysis.

Phase 2: Transcribing the data

In this phase, the researcher focused on transcribing the collected audio and video data to prepare it for analysis. Recognizing the importance of detailed transcription in qualitative research, as outlined by Kowal and O'Connell (2014), the researcher chose to create verbatim transcripts to capture every participant utterance accurately. This approach was well-suited to thematic analysis, as it provided a comprehensive record of each conversation. While transcription can be a challenging task, the researcher opted to complete it personally rather than outsourcing, viewing it as an opportunity to engage deeply with the data. This hands-on

process allowed the researcher to gain a nuanced understanding of both the content and delivery of participants' statements, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis.

Phase 3: Becoming familiar with the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of the researcher immersing themselves in the collected data to gain a thorough understanding of its depth and scope. After structuring and transcribing the data, the researcher proceeded with analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), in this phase, the researcher transcribed the data, translated participants' responses from IsiZulu to English word-for-word in a case whereby participants had responded in IsiZulu. The transcriptions were reviewed multiple times to identify recurring meanings and patterns, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the data. Key initial thoughts and observations were documented throughout data collection and analysis. Additionally, the researcher remained committed to accuracy, integrity, and objectivity throughout the entire process.

Phase 4: Recording the data in memos

As the researcher examined the data, she created memos to capture her initial thoughts and emerging interpretations. These memos served as a form of self-dialogue about the data, reflecting Holton's (2007:268) assertion that they represent "a conversation with ourselves about our data." Their purpose was twofold: to document evolving insights and to identify potential biases that could influence the interpretation of the data. Additionally, the memos marked segments of the data where analytically significant statements or experiences arose.

Phase 5: Coding the data

In this phase, the researcher "identified key sections of text and labeled them to index their relation to a theme or issue in the data" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017:22). The coding began with the researcher systematically labelling and categorizing significant units within the data. Creswell (2014) states that a systematic approach to coding involves analysing and grouping specific statements into themes that effectively represent relevant areas of interest. The researcher focused only on coding data that would fulfil the objectives of this study, following Lochmiller and Lester (2017:24) recommendation that "a good code is one that captures the richness of the phenomenon being studied." This was achieved by using a coding framework, which could include an established theory or a predefined set of codes, while also allowing new

codes to emerge from the data itself. The researcher employed both descriptive codes that reflected what the data showed and interpretive codes that analysed and interpreted the data to convey the complexities of the university students experiencing bullying in their respective residences.

Phase 6: Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes

In a broad sense, thematic analysis adopted an inductive approach, wherein the researcher actively engaged with the data. During this phase, the researcher progressed from specific instances to broader interpretations. This process involved applying codes, developing categories, and generating themes. As noted by Deveci (2016), the inductive analysis indicated that patterns, themes, and categories arose organically from the data itself rather than being predetermined before data collection and analysis. This underscored the importance of codes as the foundational phase of the analytical process. Metaphorically, codes were compared to individual puzzle pieces; when combined, they contributed to the researcher's overall representation of the data. Alone, codes did not convey the complete narrative. To construct this narrative, the researcher examined how the generated codes related to one another and identified distinctions among them. These relationships and differences culminated in the creation of categories, which grouped individual codes that shared analytical or conceptual connections. As emphasized by Deveci (2016), this step proved crucial in the development of themes.

Once categories were established, the researcher proceeded to construct themes through two steps. First, related categories were amalgamated by identifying commonalities, distinctions, and associations among them. Next, the researcher assigned labels to these categories. The selected theme names encompassed all underlying categories to provide a descriptive account of their content, interrelationships, and similarities or differences. These themes aligned with the study's conceptual objectives and were developed in response to the primary research questions posed.

Phase 7: Making the analytic process transparent

Following the guidance of Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2011), one effective strategy employed was the creation of an analytical process map. This map illustrated the researcher's progression from initial codes to categories and ultimately to overarching themes, providing

transparency in the theme development. It allowed external readers and evaluators to grasp the key analytical decisions made throughout the study. To further enhance clarity and rigor, the researcher established a comprehensive audit trail that detailed the connections among data sources, codes, categories, and themes. This involved selecting representative segments from the data and specifying the initial codes applied to each segment, along with explanations of how these segments corresponded to various categories and themes. By adopting this approach, the researcher made the coding, and interpretation processes visible to external audiences, thereby bolstering the credibility of the data interpretations.

4.9 Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness

According to Connelly (2016), trustworthiness is the level of assurance in the data, interpretation, and methods used to guarantee the validity of a study. A trustworthy study is credible, transferrable, dependable, and confirmable, according to McGloin (2008). The researcher guaranteed the validity of this study as follows:

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility involves matching the results to the interactions and data that participants supplied when the data were collected (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Member checking and peer evaluation were used to enhance credibility. Member checking was done by returning the analysed results to the participants for assessment and validation (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The participants then verified the accuracy and representativeness of the interpretations and conclusions. To ensure that the results were correct, the researcher's supervisor corroborated every step of the data collection and analysis processes. This addressed the reliability of the findings and ensured the sound reputation of the study.

4.9.2 Transferability

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), transferability is the degree to which research findings can be used in various contexts or environments. Purposive sampling and detailed descriptions of the research context and participant experiences are used in qualitative research to increase transferability. In this study, the participants were selected intentionally to ensure that they represented diverse opinions and experiences about bullying in university residences. The thick descriptions that emerged from the data will allow the reader to judge the relevance and applicability of the findings to the topic, while extensive and detailed details of the research

context, data collection process, and participant characteristics are presented in this report. As suggested by Zang and Wildemuth (2009), the researcher thus ensured the transferability of the findings by using purposive sampling and providing in-depth descriptions.

4.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is the reliability of the findings of the study when replicated under identical circumstances (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The researcher kept the interview audiotapes and took thorough notes during the interview sessions to ensure dependability. The researcher can also guarantee the availability of a thorough record for future reference and potential verification as the data collection procedure is thoroughly documented and notes were taken to capture details that might not have been recorded. As a result, the conclusions of the study are trustworthy because the data collection procedure may be reviewed and confirmed if required.

4.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the study's research conclusions can be corroborated by other researchers (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The researcher used an audit trail to establish confirmability. This means that thorough documentation of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation techniques is available to facilitate external review and inspection. Other researchers can evaluate the validity and trustworthiness of the findings of the study as the research methodology is clearly described and the choices and justifications for these processes are well documented (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This audit trail serves to improve the veracity of the research findings.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Connelly (2016), ethical considerations in research are a collection of guidelines for research procedures. These guidelines include discussion of the results, obtaining informed permission, and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Before conducting the study, the researcher wrote a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the research in UKZN residences from the Registrar. After permission had been granted, the researcher submitted an ethical clearance application to the UKZN College of Humanities Ethics Committee, and received approval.

To protect the participants and maintain the validity of the study, all ethical guidelines were adhered to and the research was conducted ethically and responsibly by following the rules of conduct and obtaining informed consent from each participant. The researcher engaged in moral behaviour at all times to guarantee that the rights and well-being of the participants were emphasised, and she preserved objectivity during the research procedures.

4.10.1 Informed consent

One of the guiding principles of research ethics is informed consent. As emphasized by Manti and Licari (2018), the goal is for human participants to enter the study voluntarily and with full awareness of what their participation entails, providing their consent before engaging in the research. In this study, the researcher ensured that informed consent was obtained from each prospective and actual participant. To facilitate understanding, the researcher took care to explain the informed consent process clearly. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and seek additional information before completing the provided consent forms. The consent letter was written in accessible language and included all relevant details about the research, including its objectives, methods, and potential outcomes. By doing so, the researcher ensured that participants had a comprehensive understanding of the nature and implications of their involvement in the study.

4.10.2 Anonymity

Anonymity describes situations when the identity of the person involved is kept secret. According to Manti and Licari (2016), ensuring the anonymity of the people from whom data are collected is important as the reader should not be able to attach any data to a particular name or person. Several meticulous security measures were therefore implemented to ensure that each participant's privacy and confidentiality were maintained during the study and thereafter (Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles, 2008). Hence, pseudonyms are used in this report to conceal the participant's identities. Furthermore, the interview procedure was carefully planned as part of this dedication to protect the participants' identities. None of the interviewer's questions required any personal participant information. The researcher allocated a different pseudonym to each participant to improve data collection while maintaining anonymity. This added an extra degree of confidentiality to the study's data as it enabled the identification of specific responses without disclosing any personal information. In addition to these safety measures, a tape recorder was used during the interviews to capture and record the participants' responses

accurately. The tape recorder was stored in a secure area to ensure the privacy of these recordings.

4.10.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial in research, as explained by Wiles et al. (2008:418), who stated that, “researchers have a duty of care to ensure that they do not openly discuss or disclose observations or discussions that involve participants in their research studies.” In conducting this study on bullying in university residences, the researcher prioritized confidentiality to protect the privacy and well-being of the participants. To achieve this, data were collected through interviews that were anonymised by removing personally identifiable information and replacing it with unique identifiers. Additionally, all documents and digital records containing sensitive data were securely stored in a locked, restricted-access location. Access to this data was restricted to the researcher and the researcher’s supervisor, both of whom recognized the importance of maintaining confidentiality. The researcher assured participants of the strict confidentiality measures in place and emphasized that they could participate without fear of retribution. Furthermore, the researcher adhered to all relevant ethical guidelines. These measures collectively safeguarded participant confidentiality while allowing for a comprehensive exploration of bullying in university residences.

4.10.4 Potential for harm

The ethical principle of ‘no harm’ is paramount in research, and the researcher accepted the responsibility to minimize any potential negative consequences or risks to the participants. This principle, often associated with the broader concept of beneficence in research ethics, required that the researchers prioritised the well-being and safety of the subjects (Wiles et al., 2008). Adhering to this principle meant that the researcher designed the studies and methodologies to mitigate any physical, psychological, or social harm to the participants.

4.11 Communicating the results

Communication is the exchange of information through spoken and unspoken methods and forming connections and cultivating relationships (Wiles et al., 2008). Therefore, sharing the research results is a crucial aspect of any academic pursuit. This work will therefore be published in parts as a contribution to the academic community. This means that the findings and recommendations will be shared with stakeholders, individuals involved in policy-making,

future researchers, and the university community at workshops and by means of peer-reviewed articles in academic journals.

4.12 Limitations of the Study

Exploring bullying as a phenomenon that occurs in university residences provided a valuable perspective on this significant concern, and imparting insightful information about its frequency and underlying dynamics is a necessity. Nevertheless, to gain a thorough grasp of the scope and significance of the study, it is imperative to delve into its limitations under several subtopics.

4.12.1 Generalisation

The generalisation policy will limit the extent of the applicability of this study's findings and conclusions regarding the specific context in which the study was conducted. Factors such as the unique characteristics of each university, demographic variations in student populations, the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies, evolving bullying trends over time, regional cultural influences, and potential sampling biases all contribute to the limited extent to which the study's results can be extended to other university residence settings. For instance, university populations can be highly diverse in age, cultural background, and socioeconomic status. The bullying dynamics observed in one university may not mirror those in institutions with different demographic compositions.

4.12.2 Participation

The participants played a crucial role in shaping the quality and reliability of the research findings. The researcher was aware that socially desirable responses, where participants could have tried to align their responses with what they perceived would be socially acceptable or expected, could have introduced bias into the data. This was challenging as the topic was sensitive and some individuals might have been covertly reluctant to discuss their experiences openly.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the chosen methodology and research design that were utilised to bring this study to fruition. The qualitative approach was the most suitable methodological framework for fulfilling the study's objectives and goals. The use of purposive sampling was

carefully employed to ensure the collection of precise information from participants wellversed in the university residence bullying phenomenon. Additionally, this chapter addressed the ethical aspects of the study and emphasised the researcher's commitment to maintain confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent principles throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

Bullying in university residences is a significant yet often overlooked issue that impacts the mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being of students. Like many higher education institutions, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) faces challenges in addressing and mitigating these harmful behaviours among its resident students. This study was conducted to challenge the prevailing assumption that bullying only occurs in primary and secondary schools, and the study thus emphasises the need for a broader perspective on the bully phenomenon. This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of bullying based on qualitative data to present a nuanced understanding of the prevalence, forms, and impacts of bullying in the context of university residences. The main patterns that emerged from the data were thematically organised and are presented as such in this dissertation. Themes were identified by systematically organising the data, and a detailed discussion and analysis of the information gathered from each participant are thus presented. The perspectives of all the participants were recorded, and common themes were compiled. The findings are compared with those of earlier studies that had already been evaluated. The following research questions served as a guide to address the key objectives of the study:

- What types of bullying occur in UKZN residences?
- What are the factors that contribute to the bullying phenomenon in UKZN residences?
- What impact do bullies in UKZN residences have on their victims?
- Do intervention programs exist and what new ones be initiated to curb bullying in UKZN residences?

To address these questions, this chapter presents the data that were collected from interviews with participants who had experienced or were aware of bullying in both on- and off-campus residences. The findings are organised under themes that emerged from the data, and the findings that are presented are integrated with existing literature to affirm the devastating impact of bullying on university students, particularly those residing in UKZN residences. Although the study had initially recruited 20 participants, the final number was 19 (n=19) due

to one participant withdrawing. To ensure anonymity, the participants were assigned pseudonyms, students were referred to as P1 through P15, RLO staff as RLO1 and RLO2, and RMS staff as RMS1 and RMS2.

5.2 Understanding bullying in higher education institutions

Bullying in university residences is a systematic form of intimidation of targeted victims that manifests in both verbal and physical forms (Jagath, 2023). Olweus (1993a:100) defines bullying as “a pattern of persistent and recurrent aggressive behaviours that are used, either directly or indirectly, to attack a specific individual”. However, the definition by Smith (2016) was most suitable for this study, as it describes a scenario in which a student is subjected to persistently negative behaviour from one or more students. The negative behaviours of bullying, as stated by Tight (2023), include verbal acts like defamation, ridicule, threats, coercion, disparaging remarks, and spreading rumours, as well as physical activities like hitting, pushing, kicking, obstructing, and hiding objects. The participants’ responses to the questions and the views they expressed regarding bullying are presented verbatim, with only limited editing required in some instances. When asked to define bullying, the respondents offered varying definitions, but most came close to the mark.

P12 stated:

“From what I understand, bullying is the repeated, intentional behaviour aimed at causing physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another person. It involves an imbalance of power where the perpetrator uses their power to dominate or control the victim.”

P13 explained bullying as follows:

“Bullying is the repeated behaviour or act of hurting, intimidating, and teasing someone and it causes either emotional or physical harm.”

P10 stated:

“Bullying is the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing, or threat to abuse and aggressively dominate or intimidate. The behaviour is often repeated, and it becomes a habit.”

P1 declared:

“Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury.”

These responses align with Verma, Adebayo, Wagner, Reynolds, Umbach, Rilosevic and Davis's (2024:2270) definition that bullying is "a pattern of persistent and recurrent aggressive behaviours that, either directly or indirectly, attack a specific individual". Similarly, Volk, Dane and Marini (2014) aver that bullying involves repeated harmful attacks on individuals by peers, and that their behaviour creates or is based on power imbalances. This implies that bullying is not a once-off incident, but occurs repeatedly over time, which is consistent with the responses offered by the participants. Therefore, bullying can be defined as *the repeated, intentional behaviour aimed at causing physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another person*. Bullying is encouraged when an imbalance of power exists and occurs repeatedly when the perpetrator uses force, coercion, hurtful teasing, or threats to dominate, control, or intimidate the victim with the intention of causing emotional or physical harm, or both.

P2 argued:

"The way I see it, bullying is when someone is acting bossy toward other students or taking advantage of them in a way that a person disrespects others just because she's older than others".

P3 said:

"The way I see bullying is when a person abuses another person because they want to show off".

P4 asserted:

"It is basically treating a person in a way that is not acceptable and people usually bully others based on their appearance, and things they do, and they want people to do things according to their way of doing things. Yah, that's my understanding".

P15 explained:

"Well, in my understanding, bullying takes place whenever someone bullies or abuses another person just because she's trying to prove a point."

The responses indicated that bullying in university residences was perceived as various forms of abusive behaviour that were generally motivated by a desire to assert dominance or show off. Together, these responses paint a dire picture of bullying in university residences as a means of asserting power, dominance, and superiority by abusing or controlling others, often through unacceptable behaviour based on personal differences or the need for conformity. Kallman,

Vanderbilt and Hun (2021) explain that bullying involves using words, language, and verbal interactions to harm, intimidate, or manipulate others, and it is therefore considered a form of aggression and harassment. Bullying includes a range of behaviours designed to demean, humiliate, and to exercise power over an individual. According to the literature, bullies often target others to exercise power (Kallman and Vanderbilt, 2021). The above arguments were supported by P2, P3, P4, and P15, who highlight that students would bully others to show off, act bossy, prove a point, gain respect, or enforce their way of doing things on others.

P5 stated:

“According to my understanding, bullying is the suffering of a person who does not have the power to fight back. It doesn’t have to be physical only or through hitting. Even if a person continuously says things that you do not like, I consider that as bullying”.

P7 said:

“Bullying is the abuse of a person who is abused by another person; it can be emotional by saying hurtful things or physical”.

P9 explained:

“Uhm...bullying is being hurt by things that will hurt you most emotionally and physically, yeah.”

RMS1 said:

“Bullying it when one abuses someone else by saying hurtful things of him or her, especially at a young age. Then you find out later that you are the one they were talking about all along.”

The literature asserts that insulting behaviour involves deliberately using offensive, disrespectful, or hurtful language toward others (Matsuda, 2018). In other words, when someone engages in insulting behaviour, they are intentionally selecting words they know will offend or harm the person they are addressing. This notion was supported by the experiences of participants P7, P9, and P17, who reported being subjected to this type of bullying when their fellow students repeatedly directed hurtful comments at them.

RLO1 stated:

“Okay, in my understanding of bullying, I think it is essentially the abuse amongst two or more individuals. That is my understanding of bullying. In residences, what explains bullying is if one student intimidates another student either physically or emotionally.

Well, for me that is what defines bullying in the residences.”

RMS2 said:

“Bullying is the abuse of a student being bullied by other students. It can be emotional and physical, but in all bullying instances there is abuse.”

P8 asserted:

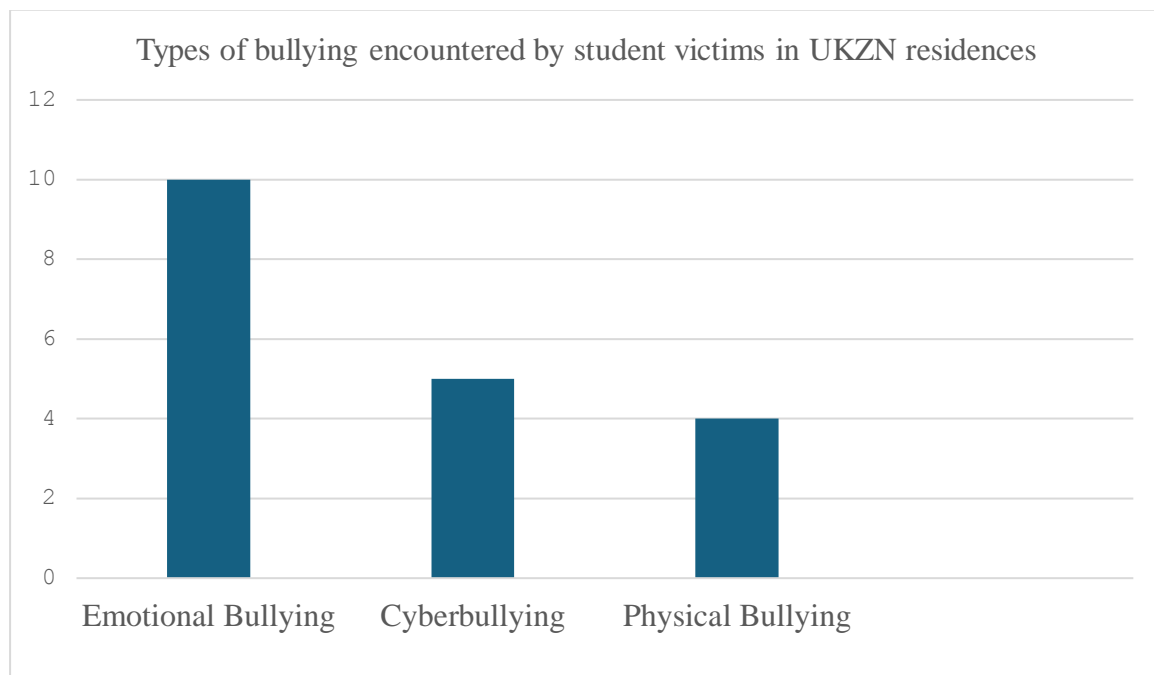
“According to my understanding, bullying is a person who abuses another for no reason. It might happen that it comes from past traumas, or the person just wants to satisfy himself.”

The participants argued that bullying encompassed a wide range of abusive behaviours that some students inflicted on their peer victims. According to them, bullying is primarily a form of abuse that manifests either physically or emotionally. This notion is affirmed by the literature, as abuse is seen as acts that often involve one individual intimidating or dominating another through repeated aggressive actions (Juvonen and Graham, 2014). The participants highlighted that physical bullying might include actions such as hitting, pushing, or other forms of physical harm, while they agreed that emotional bullying could involve verbal insults, spreading rumours, or social exclusion. The participants perceived bullying as acts of unjustified abuse that are both harmful and damaging, and they believed it could stem from various underlying factors, including past traumas, a sense of insecurity, or a desire for personal satisfaction to feed their perceived power. This means that bullies might be bullying others because they once observed it during their childhood and later years. Some participants suggested that bullies might engage in such behaviour as a coping mechanism for their unresolved issues, or in an attempt to exert control over others to feel a sense of superiority. This finding is supported by the literature. For instance, Sotomayor et al. (2022) state that students who employ bullying as a coping mechanism do so to assert power and control, and their acts may perpetuate social dominance dynamics to marginalise their peers and create an environment that is conducive to exerting their need to triumph over others.

5.3 Forms of bullying experienced by students residing in UKZN residences

Various types of bullying are experienced in higher education institutions, and these may include, but are not limited to, sexual, social, physical, emotional, verbal, and cyberbullying. However, in this study in which the participants brought their distressing bullying experiences to light, they exposed various subthemes to illustrate the bullying phenomena they had experienced. The table below shows that the majority of the study participants experienced emotional bullying in their university residences. This corroborates the earlier finding that emotional bullying is an issue at universities worldwide. For instance, according to Chapell et al. (2004), emotional bullying, which includes both verbal and non-verbal aggression, is prevalent among university students in the US where it has significant adverse impacts on victims' psychological well-being.

Table 5.3: Forms of bullying experienced by students in UKZN residences



Source: Researcher's summary

The findings above reflect the total number of study participants who reported experiencing bullying in UKZN residences.

5.3.1 Emotional bullying

Emotional bullying is characterised by subtle, insidious behaviours such as exclusion, gossip, and manipulation (Kleffner, 2020). This type of bullying can be especially damaging because it frequently goes undetected by authorities and thus causes victims to endure their pain in silence. In response to the question regarding the types of bullying students experienced, some of the participants identified emotional bullying. In university residences, students frequently encounter emotional bullying that can profoundly affect their overall well-being. A study conducted by Chapell et al. (2004) also uncovered the prevalence of emotional bullying, and these authors argue that it encompasses both verbal and non-verbal forms of aggression among students across various universities in the US. Their research revealed, amongst other findings, that emotional bullying significantly undermined the psychological health of affected individuals (Chapell et al., 2004). The participants of the current study corroborated this finding, as emotional bullying was the most common form of victimisation they experienced in their respective residences.¹

In light of the above, P1 stated:

“I have experienced emotional and physical bullying. I experienced emotional bullying by my room mates whereby I was doing my first year, so when we arrived at res, they didn’t have anything, and I had to share my food and everything with them up until they got their allowances. When they got their allowances, we decided to buy and cook food together, so we did that. I lost the dishes many times and my res mate kept asking why I had this kind of dishes and that’s where the problem started. They started telling rumours, making jokes about me, posting me on the group and their actions affected my self-esteem. Through physical bullying, we ended up fighting with one of my res mates because of sharing and that he had the mental mentality that he’s older than me.”

P7 said:

“I have experienced emotional bullying. Well...uhm...my roomie was giving me stress as she would spread false rumours about me. On my way back from campus, as I was about to enter our room, I overheard a conversation where she was telling her friends I had been involved in multiple relationships within the residences, naming the boys she

¹ The authenticity of the participants’ responses is ensured as their words are presented verbatim as far as possible.

claimed I had slept with. These baseless rumours quickly spread, leading to whispers and judgmental looks from other residents. I felt bullied and lonely and I didn't know what to do."

P11 said:

Emotional bullying. So, I was staying with six students, separated by the bedrooms as we were sharing them by two, sharing the bathroom as well as the kitchen, so when the year 2022 started I had no roommate, but she arrived a month later. So, others had roommates all along. I am a quiet person. My personality is I am an introvert and I enjoy staying alone. So, as they were getting along, I was that type of person who would just greet you and pass, and then they started gossiping about me, saying I thought I was special. Whenever they went out for fun, they came back drunk and said things about me indirectly."

P13 said:

"Emotional bullying. I have experienced emotional bullying from a roommate. My roommate consistently used my belongings without asking for permission. For example, I like to keep my things in a certain way. This one time I found my roommate using my pots and she didn't even clean them. That time I came from campus and was in a rush to cook. This behaviour continued frequently, and I was afraid to confront her because she was doing the third year and I was doing my first year. So, whenever I stood up for myself and tried to address the issue with her, she would become dismissive and assert her dominance by stating that it was her room and she was allowed to use everything in the room. This act made me feel undermined and disrespected. It created an environment where I constantly felt like my boundaries were being ignored and my personal space invaded. Sometimes, her friends would visit her in our room, and they would make noise and laugh while I was studying. When I asked them to keep their voices down, my roommate would tell them otherwise, emphasising that it was also her room and they shouldn't listen to a 'fresher'. Despite trying to communicate calmly with her, she would use hurtful words and tease me, refusing to acknowledge my feelings. As time went on, this situation took a toll on my emotional well-being. It made me question my own rights to privacy and respect within our shared living space. I found myself withdrawing and feeling increasingly anxious about confrontations with my roommate, which impacted my overall happiness and peace of mind."

It is indeed true that UKZN is not immune to bullying, particularly in its residences. This was evident in the findings of the current study, as participants honestly shared their experiences of and perceptions on bullying in these spaces. These experiences align with Haepler's (2015) findings, as this scholar also notes that spreading rumours and gossip often involves passing along unconfirmed information, which potentially leads to the dissemination of fake news. Fitzpatrick and Bussey (2011) state that such rumours can be harmful and significantly impact targeted individuals. This fact was evident in the current study, as the participants admitted that they had become the victims of emotional bullying due to rumours, even in an environment where they should have felt safe.

P2 expressed the following insight:

“I will say that the bullying that I have experienced was emotional and I was bullied by the people I was staying with last year. I noticed that they were bullying me through their actions. I understand that, as people, we are not the same and we come from different backgrounds, so they were complaining about the way I dressed and about the things that I ate, saying it was not like theirs. So, they were making sure that they isolated me at all times.”

Emotional bullying, particularly through exclusion, can have a profound effect on the targeted individual. Williams's (2007) definition highlights the intentionality behind exclusion as it avers that it is not an accidental oversight, but a deliberate attempt to isolate someone from social interactions. This argument aligns with the experience shared by P2, who felt a clear sense of being excluded from the group. Such exclusion can deeply impact the targeted student's sense of belonging and emotional well-being. When people are intentionally left out of social activities or gatherings, it not only affects their immediate social interactions, but can also contribute to long-term feelings of isolation and diminished self-esteem.

P9 stated:

“Uhm...it was emotional bullying. People used to say that when I was a first-year student at res, I never cooked for myself so I started to cook for myself and did everything myself. I was used to it being done for me so I couldn't cook well and when those who knew how to cook just laughed at me and called me names, joking that my

food smelled bad and all that. They said I couldn't cook, they talked about me, they too photographs of my food and posted them on the group and they laughed at me. Even when I came across students at res they pointed at me and said, 'That's the guy who cannot cook!' And in this way, I was emotionally bullied."

P10 explained:

"I have experienced emotional bullying. Okay, I was still staying at an off-campus residence, and I had a roommate who used to have friends who always visited her in our room. I am an engineering student, as a result I am always in my books and I am always busy, so it started whenever her friends visited her in our room, they teased me and said that I was always studying, thinking I was better than others. Sometimes when I was sleeping, they would say like hurtful comments maybe about my body shape and then, at times, they used to chat with my roommate about me and I could see that on my roommate's statuses that she posted on WhatsApp. And sometimes when I posted a photo of myself, they will send nasty or hurtful comments about my body."

The participants detailed accounts of the emotional bullying they had encountered and were still experiencing while residing in UKZN accommodations. A key theme that emerged from their responses is the significant prevalence and impact of emotional bullying in this setting. This form of bullying often manifested in acts of deliberate isolation and exclusion. Peers would make disparaging comments about personal choices, such as fashion preferences or eating habits, leading to the social marginalisation of the victim. Moreover, the dissemination of false rumours and gossip emerged as a frequently employed strategy to tarnish the reputation of the victim, thereby fostering a hostile and uncomfortable living environment. These findings corroborate those of earlier research, such as that by Feinberg et al. (2014), who highlight how the spread of misinformation can result in social and academic ostracism. This, in turn, exacerbates the emotional suffering of the victim and further isolates them from their peers. The participants in the current study also reported enduring significant emotional distress as a consequence of such bullying, and the deep hurt they expressed underscores the severe impact of these negative experiences on their overall well-being.

5.3.2 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was identified as one of the types of bullying experienced by students in UKZN residences. Kyriacou and Zuin (2016:260) define cyberbullying as “the intentional effort to harm an individual or group by repeatedly sending messages and images electronically to target the victim(s) over a prolonged period”. Aune (2009) highlights that cyberbullying has escalated because students spend much time on their smartphones and the Internet. This observation highlights the potential influence of technology and online platforms on the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents. As smartphones and the Internet have become increasingly accessible and integrated into students’ daily lives, they now have numerous opportunities to engage in online interactions. Digital platforms provide avenues for communication and socialisation, but they also create spaces where cyberbullying can occur. The responses provided by the participants revealed that cyberbullying occurred in both on- and off-campus residences at UKZN.

P12 said:

“Not to mention when there were instances when hurtful comments were made about me on public forums and WhatsApp res group chats about my forehead and body. These online attacks were relentless and felt inescapable, as they followed me even when I was in the safety of my own room.”

P5 stated:

“Well, in my case, I don’t know how they got that picture of me, but I saw it on our res WhatsApp group and I was half naked in that picture. They were not making bad comments about it, though. However, it made me feel bad knowing that people now knew my body. I was ashamed and I failed to understand why she had shared it with the group. What was clear was that she wanted to make me the laughing stock in the res.”

The responses that exposed this sub-theme were consistent with the findings of Willard (2006), who found that cyberbullying frequently included the unwanted transmission of text messages, instant messages, or emails designed to intimidate or irritate the victim. This type of harassment can cause significant distress, disgust, and even anger, particularly given the potential for such harmful content to be seen by millions of online users.

The experience described by P5 of cyberbullying in her university residence strongly resonates with recent findings, highlighting how even a single incident can profoundly impact a victim's dignity and mental well-being. Saha et al. (2024) emphasise that cyber harassment often involves sharing defamatory content on social media, aiming to damage the victim's reputation and foster negative perceptions. In P5's case, the sharing of a private, half-naked photo on the residence WhatsApp group was a clear violation of her privacy and dignity. Although it was a one-time occurrence, it constitutes cyberbullying due to the enduring psychological harm it caused. Willard (2007) notes that such acts tend to create lasting negative impressions, particularly in tight-knit environments like university residences. This example underscores that cyber harassment need not be repetitive to have long-term psychological impacts, fitting a broader definition of bullying.

P15 stated:

“The form of bullying I experienced was cyberbullying. What happened was that in our residence the toilet and the sink in the kitchen were always dirty and smelling bad. So, I don't know how but, at some point, my floormates thought I was the culprit. So, one day I was in town and when I arrived at the res, I said because I was bored, let me just be busy on my WhatsApp. Guess what? There were about 2 000 unread messages on our res WhatsApp group, and they were all about me calling people names. So, one of my floormates wrote on the group that she now knew who the person was that was busy giving them trouble, and she dropped my name together with my room number on the group. I had never felt like that! The insults aimed at me even today still make me angry.”

P4 stated:

“I have experienced cyberbullying whereby the people I called my friends wrote about me on our res WhatsApp group. They even wrote my name and surname and it was clear for people to see that was the one they wrote about.”

Experiences of bullying in UKZN residences provided a deeply unsettling and sobering glimpse into the lives of students who endured victimisation in a space where they should have been safe from any form of violence. The residence environment was supposed to be a space where they could focus solely on their academics without the burden of fear and intimidation. Such cases highlight that some students face significant difficulties in their residences, and this issue

deserves considerable attention. One factor that contributes to the prevalence of bullying in residences is the widespread use of smartphones by and Internet access for students. With Wi-Fi or data readily available, students spend a considerable amount of time online.

The experiences of bullying that occurred in UKZN residences, particularly cyberbullying, can be understood through the lens of the social learning theory. This theory posits that aggressive or harmful behaviours are learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of UKZN residences, the widespread use of smartphones and ready Internet access create an environment where students are constantly exposed to online interactions that could be either positive or negative. When students observe others engaging in cyberbullying without facing any consequences, they may learn to imitate these behaviours, believing them to be acceptable or even rewarding. The constant connectivity provided by Wi-Fi or mobile data allows these behaviours to be reinforced and perpetuated, and this contributes to a culture in which cyberbullying becomes normalised within the residence community. As a result, the very place intended to be a haven for students becomes a breeding ground for victimisation, which underlines the importance of addressing this issue through education and intervention.

5.3.3 Physical bullying

Once considered sanctuaries of learning, universities are now grappling with an unsettling reality, which is the shadow of physical bullying where the powerless are increasingly preyed upon. Pontzer (2010) conducted a comprehensive study on this issue and revealed that approximately 10% of university students reported experiencing physical bullying which, although lower than rates of verbal and cyberbullying, remains a notable issue in university environments. Physical bullying encompasses actions such as hitting, pushing, or other forms of physical aggression. The current study echoes these concerns, as the findings affirm that physical bullying persists in the university setting under study. This situation sends the troubling message that the university, once considered safe havens for learning, is now an environment where those who are perceived as powerless are often victimised. Such experiences underscore a disturbing shift in the university environment, highlighting the need for measures not only to address, but to prevent physical bullying as it undermines the safety of students and the effectiveness of the educational experience.

In this context, P6 stated:

“Okay, physical was when Romza wanted to kill herself so when I tried stopping her, she started to fight. Secondly, she said that she should have killed us first and that hurt me deeply.”

P8 asserted:

“The type of bullying I experienced was verbal bullying and some physical as well. To illustrate that it was verbal, he was speaking harsh words and was insulting at some point. In a physical altercation he almost hit me.”

P12 stated:

“Another time, I found my belongings tampered with. My laptop was found with its keyboard damaged and some of my clothes were torn or had gone missing from our room.”

Physical bullying in higher education institutions is an underexplored issue even though it significantly impacts the well-being and academic performance of students. As Espelage and Swearer (2023) explain, bullying can involve various covert forms of physical aggression, such as tripping, pushing, or deliberately blocking the path of an individual. Additionally, physical bullying extends beyond direct physical contact and can include various actions that inflict harm or distress. These behaviours can include taking or damaging personal belongings, vandalizing property, and/or engaging in lewd behaviour or assault. The findings of this study support the discussion by VandeNest (2016), as P12 reported that a laptop and keyboard had been damaged and some of their clothes had been torn. This evidence demonstrates that physical bullying is not limited to physical contact, but that it can extend to stealing or damaging the belongings of an individual.

The routine activity theory effectively helped to explain the occurrence of different types of bullying experienced by the participants in UKZN residences, particularly physical, emotional, and cyberbullying. This theory suggests that bullying is highly likely to occur when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. For example, P8's experience of both verbal and physical bullying, where harsh words escalated into a near-physical altercation, illustrates the presence of a motivated offender and a vulnerable target, with the situation intensifying due to the absence of immediate

intervention. Similarly, emotional bullying was prevalent in these residences because the environment facilitated negative behaviours that isolated and marginalised students who then became suitable targets for motivated offenders. The lack of capable guardianship, such as resident assistants (RAs), closed circuit television (CCTV) and security personnel who could intervene, further exacerbated the situation. Therefore, the routine activity theory suggests that bullying in UKZN residences is not only a product of individual tendencies, but is significantly shaped by the environmental context, where routine activities and lack of effective supervision allow these harmful behaviours to persist unchecked.

5.4 Common types of bullying in UKZN residences

The study revealed various forms of bullying in the university residences under study, as affirmed by the sub-themes that emerged from the data. Table 5.4 summarises the bullying experiences the victims shared and what they thought the most common types of bullying in UKZN residences were.

Table 5.4: Most prevalent forms of bullying in UKZN residences

Sub-themes	Frequency
Emotional bullying	10
Cyberbullying	9
Verbal bullying	5

Source: Researcher’s summary

The reader should note that some participants listed more than one type of bullying as they argued that many students in UKZN residences experienced multiple forms of bullying.

5.4.1 Emotional bullying

When the participants were asked to mention the most prevalent form of bullying in UKZN residences, emotional bullying was identified by most. Einarsen (2020:439) define emotional bullying as “the use of words to tease, mock, or isolate another person”. Emotional bullying, as the term suggests, targets a person's emotions. It can affect their joy, optimism, self-trust, self-worth, and confidence. The reported prevalence of emotional bullying in university residences varies across different studies and cultural contexts. For instance, Tanrikulu and Erdur-Baker (2019) studied Turkish universities and found that approximately half of the

participants had engaged in cyberbullying, reflecting the widespread nature of emotional bullying in digital spaces. The current study also highlights emotional bullying as the most prevalent form of bullying in UKZN residences.

P1 said:

“I would say it is emotional and cyberbullying because when people do things, they do not pay attention to how these actions affect a person in the long run. Another thing that happened was that I lost my dad and they made it a joke. My dad was sick and was in ICU for about four months. So, they made it a joke that my dad had died. Nobody supported me; instead, it was a joke. People should not think about such things.”

P14 stated:

“Here at UKZN residences emotional bullying is the most common. I am saying this because on the residence WhatsApp group, they talk badly about each other. Even if someone did something wrong, they will start talking about her. So, what I want to say here is that on the residence WhatsApp group, they can make fun of another person even if what happened was a mistake. They won’t tell a person in a good manner, but will expose it on the group and that is hurtful.”

Emotional bullying involves the use of words and actions that aim to hurt and harm others emotionally. As mentioned by P14, students often express themselves without considering the potential emotional impact on others, and this cruelty often leads to a harmful environment where emotional bullying becomes rampant.

P9 said:

“The most common, I think, is emotional bullying because there are many things that people talk about that end up affecting other people and they become bullied. When someone is gay, others might speak condescendingly to them. Also, if someone is poor, they’ll talk badly about that person.”

P3 said:

“I think it will have to be emotional bullying. I think I am not the only one who is experiencing this form of bullying because it might happen that maybe you are not talking to your roommate, or some don’t want to share something...I don’t know, but I would say it is emotional bullying.”

Most participants shared experiences of being bullied emotionally. Table 5.4 illustrates that emotional bullying was the most troubling form of bullying experienced by the student participants in UKZN residences. This point was further corroborated by other participants.

P11 said:

“I think it is emotional bullying because it is rare to find students physically fighting.”

P7 stated:

“Emotional and cyberbullying. I am saying this because I faced emotional bullying.”

P6 said:

“Cyber and emotional bullying. Most students just post something about other students on our WhatsApp group and make fun of her or him even if there is no need for that. Just like the incidence in the res when a student put poison in her roommate’s juice. They started making fun of that incident on the group saying that whoever still had some juice they should just throw it away, wondering why people would still hang on to it.”

RMS1 said:

“The forms of bullying that are most common in UKZN residences are sexual and emotional bullying. Sexual bullying is most common because in residences you will find both males and females on one floor. Another thing is that males and females share bathrooms, which also plays a role in contributing to sexual bullying. Being under the influence of alcohol and drugs also contributes to sexual and emotional bullying.”

RLO2 stated:

“Uhm...I’ll say the cases that I have encountered were generally emotional bullying where people were confronting each other using words. Usually, it occurs between roommates when they don’t get along. Cyberbullying also occurs. We had a case when they [students] intimidated each other on the res group. Most of our residences have their own WhatsApp groups, so when sometimes views are not the same. [For instance], something might happen involving a house committee member or any other person and the case may [escalate] to a point where they misuse those platforms which are mainly for communication, but now they get to be used for cyberbullying where people are insulting each other. Sometimes it gets to a point where it’s only the house committee and Ras who are allowed to comment or post something in those white type groups.”

In a university residence, students from diverse backgrounds are likely to encounter conflicts due to differences in cultural norms, lifestyles, and personal values. These conflicts can sometimes escalate into bullying as individuals struggle to navigate their differences in a shared living environment. The study participants affirmed that emotional bullying, which includes behaviours such as exclusion, verbal harassment, and manipulation, was particularly prevalent in the residences at UKZN. The social learning theory supports the participants' view that emotional bullying could be deemed the most prevalent form of bullying in UKZN residences. P4 mentioned that physical bullying was less common because of the awareness that it could lead to arrest. However, cyberbullying was deemed prevalent, suggesting that students observed and learned that they could engage in emotional and cyberbullying with impunity and few immediate legal consequences. This behaviour is modelled and reinforced within the social context of the university where students learn that emotional and cyberbullying are more socially acceptable and less risky compared to physical violence.

5.4.2 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was the second most prevalent form of bullying identified by the study participants. University students worldwide are said to experience this form of bullying because every student now owns a smartphone and can access the Internet anytime (Aune, 2009). Therefore, students can be bullied using social media platforms, especially in university residences where they have access to data on a monthly basis, and many have access to Wi-Fi. All the student participants shared their views on the extent of cyberbullying in UKZN residences.

P10 stated:

“From my perspective, cyberbullying is most common in residences because, in modern days, we use cell phones and the Internet most of the time. Also, there are WhatsApp groups in residences, so some will [send messages] not noticing that they are bullying someone if they send maybe a comment to tease someone.”

P2 shared the following view:

“I think it is cyberbullying. Here in UKZN we have gays and all that so on WhatsApp groups they have this mentality to bully gay students. You will find people saying, ‘I won't be involved with someone like this’, and all that.”

P5 stated:

“Cyberbullying. In the res there are no rules and a person can just post and say whatever he wants to say about another person. As long as the group is open, you can say anything as there are no rules [in this regard]”.

P12 said:

“Cyberbullying is on the rise due to the increased use of digital communication among students, [and this provides] bullies with a platform to target their victims around the clock”.

As access to social media is easy, students experience bullying on an almost daily basis. The literature by scholars such as Joshua, Nehemiah, and Ernest (2015) supports this view of the participants as they found that cyberbullying involved the deliberate and persistent harm done through various technological platforms and applications. Cyberbullying includes the use of the Internet to harm and harass people through obscene images, text messages, and other inappropriate posts. The study participants also reported that this form of bullying occurred in their residences, specifically on residence WhatsApp groups, which is a technological platform mentioned by Joshua et al. (2015) as one used by bullies to target other students.

P4 stated:

“Cyberbullying is very common and emotionally impactful. Physical bullying is less frequent because it can lead to legal consequences, such as arrest. As a result, cyberbullying has become the more prevalent form of harassment.”

P7 said:

“Emotional and cyberbullying. I am saying this because I faced emotional bullying.”

P15 said:

“I think cyberbullying, as that is what I have experienced.”

These and others' similar responses align with a growing body of research that highlights the shift from physical to cyberbullying as a major concern in university settings and beyond. Cyberbullying often feels more pervasive because it can occur around the clock and reach

individuals even in their safe spaces. The anonymity and ease of digital communication can also exacerbate the severity of bullying, leading to profound emotional distress.

P4 stated:

“Cyberbullying is very common and emotionally impactful. Physical bullying is less frequent because it can lead to legal consequences, such as arrest. As a result, cyberbullying has become a prevalent form of harassment.”

Legal repercussions associated with physical bullying, such as arrest, might indeed contribute to its lower prevalence compared to cyberbullying. Many people may perceive the online environment as less risky or less likely to result in legal consequences, thus amplifying the prevalence of cyberbullying. Moreover, the personal experiences the participants shared about cyberbullying shed light on the broader issue of how this form of harassment affects the mental health and well-being of individuals. P10’s response aligns with the social learning theory as it suggests that individuals might engage in cyberbullying because it has become normalised within the social context of university residences. The constant use of cell phones and the presence of WhatsApp groups in UKZN residences create an environment where certain behaviours, such as teasing or making negative comments, are observed and potentially imitated without individuals fully realizing the impact of their actions.

5.4.3 Verbal bullying

Students in UKZN residences are not immune to instances of verbal bullying, which is said to be a pervasive and insidious form of harassment that can inflict deep emotional scars that linger long after the words were spoken. This form of bullying involves the use of words, language, and verbal interactions to harm, intimidate, or manipulate others, and is recognised as a form of aggression and harassment (Kallman, Vanderbilt and Han, 2021). In the current study, the participants referred to verbal bullying as one of the most prevalent forms of bullying in UKZN residences.

P13 stated:

“I think the most common type of bullying is verbal abuse or bullying. Most cases of bullying that I am aware of, are when a roommate bullies another roommate because of reasons like asserting dominance or feeling superior, particularly in the environment

of shared living spaces. Some students want to fit in with a particular social group. This pressure leads to harmful behaviours like verbal bullying.”

RMS2 said:

“[It is] verbal, especially between girls and where they are sharing bedrooms, it happens that one of them is a bully. Physical bullying...I don't think it is more prevalent cause fighting is not allowed in residences.”

P12 stated:

“At res, you meet all different kinds of people. The communal and often crowded nature of university residences create an environment where students are in constant contact, making it easier for bullying to occur and persist. Verbal and social bullying are common because they can be carried out subtly and continuously, often without immediate repercussions.”

P8 said:

“The type of bullying that is most common here at UKZN is the verbal one because it is what I have experienced mostly.”

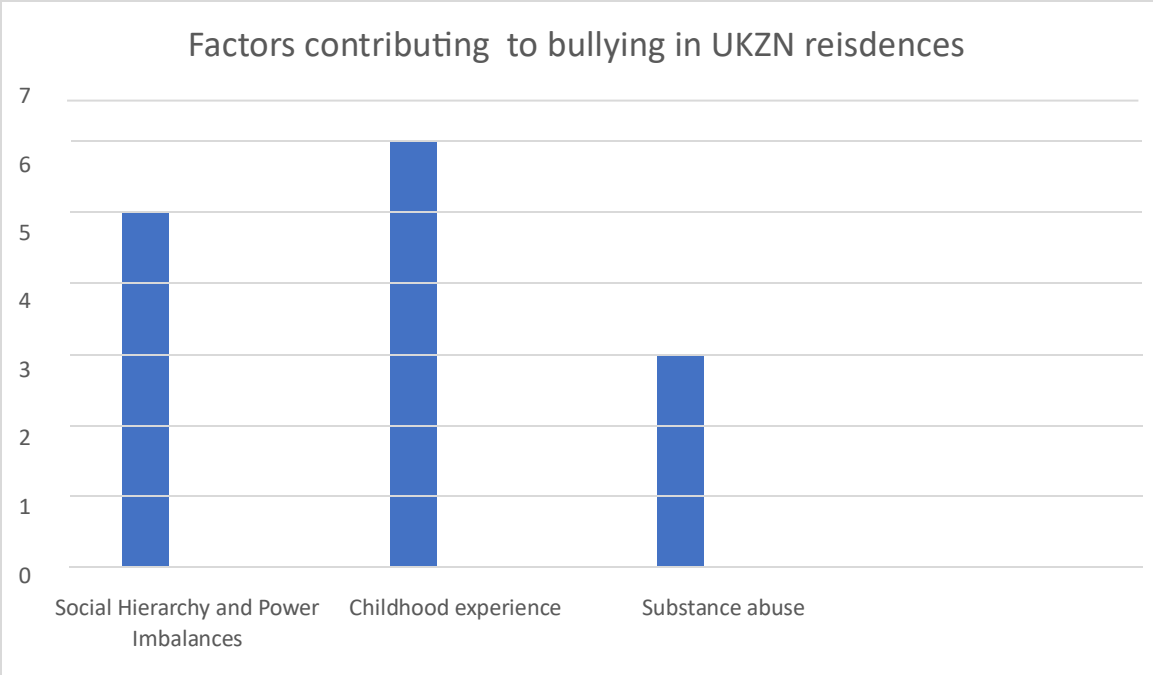
The participants claimed that the most predominant form of bullying in university residences was verbal abuse. These responses were closely aligned with findings by Smith (2015), who also concluded that direct verbal aggression was the most common form of bullying at universities. The observations of the participants and Smith's (2015) finding highlight that verbal abuse is the predominant type of bullying in academic settings. P13's and RMS2's accounts emphasise verbal bullying, particularly in shared living spaces where it arises from power dynamics or social pressure. P12 observed the ease with which verbal and social bullying can occur in communal environments along with the rising issue of cyberbullying, and these views also support the findings by Smith (2015) that verbal aggression is prevalent. The experience of P8 in a UKZN residence further confirms that verbal bullying is the most frequently encountered type. Smith (2015) underscores that verbal aggression is common across both genders, which is consistent with the participants' shared experiences of verbal bullying being prevalent irrespective of gender differences.

The responses of the participants can be aligned with the tenets of the social learning theory, indicating that different forms of bullying, such as emotional, cyber, and verbal bullying, are prevalent in UKZN residences. Observational learning plays a key role, as students often model their actions based on what they see others do, such as making insensitive jokes or participating in cyberbullying on platforms like WhatsApp. This behaviour is reinforced through positive feedback through social approval or attention, which encourages its repetition. Additionally, the lack of formal rules and oversight in digital and social environments allows these behaviours to go unchecked, which further normalises and perpetuates bullying. Cognitive processes also contribute to this phenomenon, as students may rationalize their actions by underestimating their impact or believing that such behaviour is acceptable within their social context.

5.5 Factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences

Students are susceptible to becoming targets of bullying in university residences because they are often perceived as powerless. Bullies seek to dominate, always have the last word, and always want to prove a certain point, which lead to some students becoming victims of bullying in university residences. Therefore, this theme responds to the second objective of the study which was to understand the factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences. Subthemes were then identified based on the responses of the participants.

Table 5.5: Factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences



Source: Researcher's summary

The feedback in this section highlights three significant factors that, according to the participants, contributed to bullying in UKZN residences. It is important to note that the research participants identified multiple contributing factors. Additionally, the participants identified various factors mentioned in the literature, but one new factor was introduced.

5.5.1 Social hierarchy and power imbalances

In environments where people frequently come together, such as university residences, power imbalances often emerge. Some individuals come from backgrounds where they are accustomed to be dominant and they carry this behaviour into university residences where they seek to assert their authority and gain respect. Greenlee, Winter and Marcovici (2020) support this notion, stating that students often bully others to maintain their status, as many adolescents strive to find their place in the social hierarchy and avoid being at the bottom. The participants shared their opinions on how social hierarchy and power imbalances might contribute to bullying in UKZN residences. P12 stated:

“So, UKZN has a diverse student population with varied cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. While this diversity is a strength, it can also lead to misunderstandings, prejudices, and conflicts that result in bullying. Students from minority or international backgrounds may be particularly vulnerable to being targeted due to perceived differences; and also, the desire to fit in with peer groups and the influence of dominant social cliques can lead to bullying. Students may bully others to gain acceptance, assert dominance, or conform to the expectations of their group. I also read somewhere that people who have experienced bullying themselves or have personal insecurities may bully others as a coping mechanism or a way to assert control. So, we’ll never know.”

P13 stated:

“Bullying victimisation in university residences is mostly influenced by peer pressure as students may bully others to fit into a particular social group. Another factor can be the environment where students live. If you are a student and reside in a residence where there are high incidences of bullying, one may end up imitating that behaviour because it is something that is frequently observed in your living space.”

P6 said:

“I think it is because we are a large number in the res, and I believe that res students just bully others to fit in with a particular group or to gain acceptance from their peers.”

The literature affirms that power imbalances and social hierarchy can foster bullying incidences (Andrews, Cillessen and Craig, 2023). According to earlier research, seeking power and dominance in a particular environment is typically the primary motive of bullies (Scaglione and Scaglione, 2006; Davis and Davis, 2007), which is a notion that was supported by the participants. P12 explained:

“Students may bully others to gain acceptance, assert dominance, or conform to the expectations of their group.”

Greenlee et al. (2020) also support this view as they mentioned that students bully others to maintain their social status. This means that adolescents aim to find their place in the social hierarchy and avoid being at the bottom, and that is why they end up making vulnerable students the targets of their bullying behaviour.

P10 said:

“From my perspective, I think age...most importantly for those with roommates...age is a factor contributing to bullying because let us say someone stays with a roommate but there is a six-year gap between their ages, obviously the older one will want to dominate. And another contributing factor is that, let's say for example I am an engineering student staying with a bachelor of art student, the workload is not the same. So, some roommates always have friends over and end up affecting the other roommate with their actions, like they don't understand each other.”

P8 said:

“The common one is that I will say that I am a first-year student...and I am placed with someone who is doing a third or second year, she will take advantage [of the fact] that I am younger and I do not have the power to do whatever she does.”

According to Andrews, Cillessen and Craig (2023), asserting dominance over the social structure of a residence may involve verbal, social, or physical aggression. When students believe they hold a position of social prominence and superiority, they may feel entitled to manipulate the social dynamics within a residence or similar environment. This involves engaging in acts of aggression, both overt and subtle, to assert dominance and maintain their perceived status. The responses offered by P8 and P10 argue that it is always the older one who wants to dominate in the room and have the last word as they perceive younger students as powerless to stand up against them due to their inferior age and position.

According to the routine activity theory, the likelihood of a crime occurring is influenced by three factors: the presence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. This study supports this theory as it demonstrated that students who came from backgrounds where they were dominant or had experienced bullying might be motivated to assert power and control in their new environment, thus acting as motivated offenders. As noted by P12, students from minority or international backgrounds, or those perceived as different, tended to be more vulnerable to being targeted, especially in the residence environment where there was no capable guardian such as an authoritative figure to prevent bullying.

5.5.2 Childhood experiences

Understanding the roots of bullying in university residences also required an examination of the influence of childhood experiences on the bullies and victims. Roberts (2009) posits that the behaviours exhibited by adults, including those that lead to bullying, are significantly influenced by their childhood experiences. This suggests that the motivations behind bullying in university residences may stem from patterns and behaviours developed earlier in life. Essentially, individuals who engage in bullying at university level may be acting out learned behaviours or coping mechanisms from their formative years. In this study, when the participants were asked about the factors contributing to bullying in residences, 6 cited diverse backgrounds, and they specifically referred to childhood experiences. For instance, P5 elaborated on this as follows:

“Uhm, in my opinion, something that contributes to bullying I think, we come from different backgrounds so what a person says to others back at home they think it is right

when they come to res. They don't understand that we must accommodate each other. Yeah, I think I can put it like that."

P2 said:

"Uhm, I think it is because we are not equal in terms of our ages and that we come from different homes. Yeah, that is what I think contributes to bullying in residences.

P8 stated:

"According to my understanding, bullying is a person who abuses another for no reason. It might happen that it comes from past traumas, or the person just wants to satisfy himself."

P1 stated:

"Different beliefs about you believe in from where you come from and what kind of a person you are. If you are too kind and have a good heart, it leads to bullying that one. They take advantage. And also, the lack of being taught about bullying and how it happens, because bullying can be any sort of bullying and you might not notice that you are bullying someone."

P4 said:

"There is rarely a boy who is bullish; it's always girls and I think it all stems from hate to find out that someone has this idea that you are doing better than them and you want to be seen. I'm just the type who always embraces the body. I don't care, I just wear something because I like it and not because I'm doing it for people, so they'll make comments about my body because here I wear short clothes. If I have a small conversation with boys, they say I like them and things like that."

P2 states that individuals bring behaviors from their backgrounds into the university setting, believing that what they say or do at home is acceptable in residences. This suggests that some students may have been raised in environments where verbal aggression, dominance, or exclusionary behavior was normalized, leading them to unintentionally engage in bullying behaviors in their new social setting. If a student comes from a home where conflict is resolved through aggression or belittling others, they may replicate this behavior in residence, resulting in verbal bullying, intimidation, or social exclusion.

These responses align with existing literature that explored adult behaviours to elucidate the motivations behind bullying. Roberts (2009) emphasises that these behaviours are significantly shaped by the childhood experiences of an individual, and this notion was also evident in the responses provided by the participants. For instance, P2 states that individuals bring behaviors from their backgrounds into the university setting, believing that what they say or do at home is acceptable in residences. This suggests that some students may have been raised in environments where verbal aggression, dominance, or exclusionary behavior was normalized, leading them to unintentionally engage in bullying behaviors in their new social setting. If a student comes from a home where conflict is resolved through aggression or belittling others, they may replicate this behavior in residence, resulting in verbal bullying, intimidation, or social exclusion. Therefore, the participants' responses also align with the social learning theory as they illustrated how earlier experiences and observed behaviours might influence the likelihood of engaging in bullying in UKZN residences.

5.5.3 Substance abuse

The connection between substance abuse and bullying in university residences is a significant concern as substance abuse is closely linked to bullying (Borsari, Murphy and Bannet, 2007). Research has shown that victims of bullying are likely to engage in substance abuse as a mechanism to deal with the stress and emotional pain caused by bullying. Additionally, perpetrators of bullying may also be involved in substance abuse if they use drugs or alcohol to enhance their perceived power or to suppress their issues, which may contribute to their aggressive behaviour (Espelage and Holt, 2013). The university residence environment where students live in close proximity to one another can exacerbate these issues, as peer pressure and the desire to fit in can lead to increased substance use (Borsari et al., 2007). This theme could not be traced in the existing literature, and it was a novel finding when some participants mentioned this as a factor that contributes to bullying in UKZN residences. For instance, P11 stated:

“Eh, I think it is because students do not respect each other and that maybe we come from different backgrounds, so they will go out to have drinks and come back drunk, and they start to fight others just like that [snapping fingers].”

RMS1 stated:

“Factors contributing to bullying in a residence include the mix of genders per floor, sharing of bathrooms, and the usage of alcohol. All do contribute to bullying.

Likewise, RMS2 said:

“This is because students reside together, whereas at home they were under the guidance of parents. So, here they get the freedom of getting involved with alcohol and drugs which they didn’t have when they were at home.”

These and other similar responses highlight several key aspects of substance abuse in university residences. Primarily, they emphasise the role of alcohol consumption in creating conflict and contributing to bullying behaviour among students. The responses suggest that the lack of respect and the diverse backgrounds of students exacerbate the problem, as some students, when intoxicated, may become aggressive and instigate fights with others. For example, RMS1 mentioned that various factors, including co-ed living arrangements, shared facilities, and alcohol use, contributed to bullying. This aligns with existing literature that indicates that substance abuse can exacerbate aggressive behaviours and lead to an increase in interpersonal conflicts (Langdon, Burkley and Martin, 2010). The use and abuse of alcohol can lower inhibitions, increase impulsivity, and reduce the ability to assess risks, thus making it highly likely that such affected individuals will engage in bullying behaviours (Swahn, Simon, Hammig and Guerrero, 2008).

Similarly, RMS2 pointed out that the newfound freedom of a student who has been released from parental supervision can lead to increased experimentation with alcohol and drugs. This transition from a regulated home environment to an independent university life often results in high rates of substance use, which can contribute to aggressive and bullying behaviour (Wechsler and Nelson, 2008). This relates to the routine activity theory, which suggests that bullying is likely to occur when three elements are present: an offender (the bully), a suitable target (the new student), and a lack of capable guardianship (in this case, the absence of parental supervision). The idea is that the change in environment from home to university, where students are no longer under the direct oversight of their parents, creates a situation where bullying is quite likely to happen. The lack of guardianship, coupled with increased substance use, renders new university students highly vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying.

5.6 The impact of bullying on student victims

Every type of crime leaves a mark, and bullying in university residences is no exception. Students who are victims of bullying suffer and their overall well-being and academic performance are affected in various ways. These impacts can be profound and long-lasting, affecting the victim during and after a period of severe bullying (Andar, 2014). The participants of this study mentioned how their overall well-being and academic performance had been impacted by bullying.

Table 5.6: Impact of bullying on students residing in UKZN residences

Sub-themes	Frequency
Academic impact	9
Emotional impact	7
Social impact	8
Perceived threat and the erosion of safety	11

Source: Researcher's summary

The responses that are presented in this section highlighted two main areas that were impacted by bullying, namely students' academic achievements and their emotional well-being. While other impacts were mentioned, they were excluded from the analysis because they were reported by only one or two participants. It is important to note that the numbers do not add up to the total number of participants interviewed because some participants indicated that they were affected both academically and emotionally, or by multiple impacts.

5.6.1 Academic impact

In response to how bullying impacted the victims of bullying, many students raised the point that bullying impacted them academically. Porhola, Almonkari and Kuntuu (2019) also found that bullied victims frequently experienced elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and fear, which significantly impacted their cognitive functioning and academic performance. The inability of students to focus, concentrate, and effectively engage in their studies is hampered by the hostile and intimidating environment that the experience of being bullied can create.

P4 stated:

“Wow, you know, last year I was about to write my Constitutional Law exam but didn’t do well. Even though I saw my mistakes and wanted to improve, I was supposed to graduate this year. But the day before another exam, there was an incident when our residence WhatsApp group involved cyberbullying. Some people I didn’t get along with sent me secret messages. I knew who they were because they lived next door to me. I heard them laughing and realised they were the ones behind it. I stopped studying that day because I was so upset. The next day I tried to study and then took the exam on the third day. Unfortunately, I failed because I couldn’t focus properly due to what they had done to me.”

P3 said:

“Well, for me it has affected me. As I am here now, I am not okay. I just received my marks and am not happy with them. It has also affected me in general ‘cause now I don’t know what it is that I should do about this girl because believe me, I never said anything to her. I’ve been letting her have her moments bullying me and talking about me on the group or with her friends. I don’t care, but it does impact you because you change and you are not the same, you see. Academically, you don’t know any more how to focus because you don’t know what she’s gonna bring today; so, you have to be prepared for anything that she’s gonna bring instead of focusing on your academics.”

P1 stated:

“Well, the bullying that I experienced affected me so much in my academic records, and it affected me toward my experience”.

These responses highlight the significant negative impact bullying has on the academic performance of university students. The hostile and intimidating environment created by bullying lead to victims’ inability to focus, concentrate, and effectively engage in their studies. P4 mentioned how cyberbullying incidents in their residence, particularly on the WhatsApp group, caused such distress that it affected her ability to study and perform well in her exams, ultimately leading to failure. Another participant described how the constant fear and anxiety caused by a bully affected her general well-being and academic focus, making it challenging to concentrate on her studies. A third participant shared how bullying affected his academic

record, self-esteem, and sense of safety, even to the extent that he felt the need to leave the residence. These accounts collectively illustrate how bullying severely disrupts the academic experiences and achievements of students as it creates a pervasive sense of fear, distraction, and emotional distress.

P7 said:

“Yeah, I ended up having a low self-esteem. Even at school, when you don't have selfesteem, you will be afraid to talk to other children. Even if there is something that you don't know, you won't be able to ask other children, you will think that maybe they will just see a monkey chick on you.”

P11 said:

“Wuuu xeim! It affected me so much because I even had that module that I failed when doing my second year.”

P13 stated:

“It affected my well-being and academic performance in a significant way as I was disturbed when I was trying to study. In the presence of my roommate's friends, I lost motivation to study and struggled with concentration because they would make fun of me saying I think I am better than them because I spent most of my time in books. So, in the hands of my roommate, I suffered emotionally, and my self-esteem decreased which cause my grades to decline.”

P9 said:

“Bullying affected me in a bad way as I couldn't have freedom in the res as I was no longer able to cook while other students were still around. I mean, I didn't have freedom; I was even scared of meeting other people having the thing that they would laugh at me. It was even difficult for me to ask for assistance when I needed it from my mates with regards to my work. So that's how I was affected.”

Similarly, P10 said:

“Academically, I ended up not liking to be called a book worm and stuff, so I ended up compromising 'cause I wanted to avoid that. Som as a result, my academic performance dropped.”

Porhola et al. (2019) also found that victims of bullying frequently experienced elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and fear, and they argue that these emotional states can significantly impact cognitive functioning and academic performance. For instance, chronic stress can interfere with the brain's ability to process and store information, leading to difficulties in concentration, memory retention, and problem-solving skills. Anxiety can cause constant worry and distraction, further diminishing the capacity of a student to focus on their studies. Fear, particularly in a tertiary environment where bullying occurs, can lead to avoidance behaviours, such as skipping classes or avoiding certain areas of the campus, which directly affects academic engagement and performance. These detrimental impacts on cognitive functioning and academic outcomes underscore the profound impact that bullying can have on victims, as illustrated by the experiences of P7, P9, and P10.

Discussing a friend's experiences, RMS1 stated:

“Academically she gets disturbed because she no longer feels comfortable. She even lacks attending, thinking maybe some students are laughing at her.”

RMS2 said:

“Well, the victim develops the feeling of feeling scared and feeling unsafe in UKZN residences, and this kind of a feeling can make a victim lose concentration on her studies and that might result in failing some modules.”

These responses are supported by Young-Jones, Fursa, Byrket and Sly (2015), who investigated how bullying affected the ability of students to succeed academically. The study found that bullied students were afraid to come to campus because they felt unsafe, which also rendered them incapable of focusing on their studies and succeed academically. The current participants' responses align with the routine activity theory, which emphasises the role of individual actions and environmental factors in influencing outcomes. According to P13, exposure to bullying led to a significant decline in academic performance due to a hostile environment created by peers who mocked her academic efforts. This disruption in her routine activities, such as studying and engaging in academic tasks, affirms that an unfavourable environment can directly impact the performance and mental health of a student.

5.6.2 Emotional impact

Bullying in university settings can have far-reaching and profound impacts on both individuals and the broader academic community. Lim and Hoot (2015) highlight that individuals who experience bullying often suffer from reduced self-confidence and self-esteem. This decline can negatively affect their lives, including their academic performance, social interactions, and overall quality of life. The impacts of bullying are long-lasting as they extend well beyond the immediate experience. Additionally, bullying has broader implications, such as harming the entire university community and not just the individuals who are directly bullied. This suggests that bullying creates an environment that is detrimental to the well-being and functioning of the university.

P1 said:

My self-esteem was affected, [and I] was not even comfortable. There was a point when they posted me on the res WhatsApp group. They made funny comments and I was even afraid to go outside. I ended up calling my family at midnight, asking them to come fetch me as I was not comfortable with the people I stayed with and in the res it became a joke.”

P7 stated:

“It’s affected me because of the things they said, and they made me think that maybe they were right. They said I looked like a monkey chick which didn’t sit well with me, so I kept on looking at myself in the mirror and say no, but I’m like this chick.

P10 stated:

“Okay, ehm...it affected me emotionally and as a result I ended up having low self-esteem as they were teasing me about my body and the way I do things. So, I ended up getting depressed, yeah”.

These replies by the participants align with Swearer, Espelage, and Napolitano’s (2018) findings in several ways. Swearer et al. (2018) highlight that low self-esteem is a significant issue for bullied students who often internalise negative comments and derogatory remarks, resulting in a diminished sense of self-worth. P1 and P7 discussed how bullying impacted their academic records, self-esteem, and overall experience. They felt uncomfortable and afraid, even to the point of seeking help from their families. This aligns with the assertion in the literature that bullying can lead to low self-esteem and a diminished sense of self-worth. The

fear and discomfort they experienced are indicative of the negative emotional impact that bullying can have. P10 explicitly mentioned how bullying led to a low self-esteem and depression. The teasing about her body and actions resulted in emotional distress and a drop in academic performance. This directly correlates with the findings of Hymel et al. (2008) that the internalisation of negative comments and derogatory remarks leads to compromised academic performance and a decrease in self-worth.

P12 stated:

“Bullying had a profound and detrimental impact on both my well-being and academic performance during my time in university residences. Mentally, it caused significant stress, anxiety, and feelings of depression, making it challenging to concentrate on my studies and affecting my motivation to engage in academic activities. Physically, the stress from bullying manifested in frequent headaches, stomach-aches, and disrupted sleep patterns, further impairing my ability to function effectively. Socially, I withdrew from interactions to avoid potential bullying situations, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The constant fear of encountering bullies in communal spaces made me feel unsafe and unable to relax in what should have been my home away from home. Emotionally, repeated bullying attacks deeply undermined my self-esteem and confidence, contributing to a negative self-image.”

P13 said:

“It has affected my well-being and academic performance in a significant way as I was disturbed when I was trying to study. In the presence of my roommate's friends, I lost motivation to study and struggled with concentration because they would make fun of me saying I thought I was better than they because I spent most of my time in books. So, at the hands of my roommate, I suffered emotionally, and my self-esteem decreased causing the decline in my grades.”

P14 said:

“Bullying affected me a lot. I had stress and was failing to focus on my studies.”

RMS1 stated:

“No, it affects them emotionally. They feel objectified. It is more like harassment this thing, approaching a girl while insulting, and that affects them emotionally.”

These responses support Feldman's (2023) and Dore's (2017) finding regarding the emotional impact of bullying and insulting behaviours in university settings. P12 described how bullying in university residences led to significant stress, anxiety, depression, and physical symptoms like headaches and disrupted sleep patterns, which in turn impaired academic performance and caused social withdrawal and a feeling of isolation. This aligns with the assertion by Feldman (2023) that insulting behaviour can occur in various communal settings, and with the findings by Dore (2023) that such behaviours aim to damage the self-esteem and self-confidence of the victim. P13 also reported that being made fun of by a roommate and her friends severely affected her motivation and concentration, leading to a decline in her academic performance and a decrease in self-esteem. The feelings she shared demonstrate the emotional toll that bullying exerts on victims. The experiences of P13 of emotional harm and decreased self-esteem align with the concept of learned behaviour and social reinforcement as posited by the social learning theory, as the bullying she experienced was perpetuated by a group dynamic. At the same time, the lack of intervention in these communal spaces, as highlighted by the routine activity theory, allowed the behaviour to continue.

5.6.3 Social Impact

As much as bullying has physical, psychological, and emotional impacts, the participants revealed that bullying also affected them socially. A theme that emerged from these data was the social impact theme. According to Stuart-Cassel et al. (2013), social bullying is a form of aggression and harassment that targets the social status, relationships, and the sense of belonging within an individual. This aligns with the experiences of some study participants such as P3, who stated:

"[It impacted me] so much 'cause I hardly go to the kitchen. Yes, I make food because I have to eat, but I try to go if it is late or early as I don't wanna be around people on that floor because the thing is she has already painted me as the bad guy on the group and I can't stand up for myself. So, if people on my arrival in the kitchen...they gonna ridicule me or whatever, so I don't go to shared spaces."

P5 stated:

"I don't go to campus or res events and I just stay in my room." Similarly,

P8 said:

"Yes, it affected me a lot, as most of the time I would lock myself in my room."

The data revealed that after a repeated bullying incident had occurred, student victims avoided any social contact that would expose them to further emotional harm.

In this context, P11 stated:

“Yeah, bullying affects that a lot, as it can make you to have social anxiety. [You] avoid crowded places and it prevents you from going to cook in the kitchen because you are scared that they will gossip about you, say harmful things, and bully you.”

P7 stated:

“You see, when I was still a first-year student we were all sharing the kitchen so when we all shared the kitchen as girls I wouldn't go to the kitchen if there were people around. Even if I had to pee, I wouldn't go, I won't pass by because now I'm going to pass by and there are nasty comments they make.”

P10 said:

“Yeah, it does cause you to end up having low self-esteem that will lead to social anxiety and all that. As a result, you will avoid crowded places. Even when going to the kitchen, you will be scared that they will tease you about what you are cooking and how you cook it, so you will end up not being able to do things freely in the res. Even when going to the bathroom, you will first check who might be watching you, and all that.”

The responses provided by the participants vividly illustrate how social bullying can lead to significant behavioural changes and avoidance of shared spaces, which closely aligns with the findings by Crothers et al. (2019). The latter study highlights how social bullying involves behaviours that isolate or alienate individuals who exploit relationships to inflict harm. In this context, the participants described their attempts to avoid communal spaces, such as kitchens and bathrooms, as they feared being the victims of gossip, teasing, and harmful comments. This avoidance stemmed from their anxiety and low self-esteem caused by bullying, which forced them to withdraw from social interactions to protect themselves from further harm. These accounts underscore how social bullying can create an environment where victims feel unsafe and excluded, as mirrored by Hanani (2018).

P12 stated:

“Yes, bullying can significantly affect the willingness of residents to engage in communal activities or utilize shared spaces within university residences. Victims of bullying may avoid common areas such as lounges, kitchens, and study rooms where they fear encountering their bullies or facing further harassment. The fear of being mocked, excluded, or physically intimidated can lead to social withdrawal and isolation. This reluctance to participate in communal activities not only impacts the victim's social interactions, but also diminishes their overall residential experience. Additionally, witnesses or bystanders when incidences of bullying occur may also feel uncomfortable and unsafe in these shared spaces, which further contributes to their reluctance to engage [by supporting the victim and admonishing the perpetrator].”

P13 said:

“As a student, I believe that bullying impacts the willingness of residents to engage in communal activities or utilise shared spaces within residences. When students feel threatened or harassed, they are likely to avoid places where they might encounter their bullies, leading to reduced participation in communal events and less frequent use of shared areas like TV rooms, gyms, or study rooms. Avoidance of such activities leads to isolation or loneliness.”

The responses provided by participants P12 and P13 align with the social learning theory. Both participants highlighted how the fear of encountering bullies in communal spaces would lead to avoidance behaviour, social withdrawal, and isolation. This suggests that the bullying behaviour observed and experienced in shared university spaces compels the decisions of a victim to avoid these areas to prevent further harassment. Moreover, the impact of bullying on social interactions and the reluctance to participate in communal activities reflect learned responses to the social environment shaped by bullying.

5.6.4 Perceived threats and the erosion of safety

Bullying, particularly in residential university settings, poses significant challenges to the wellbeing and perceived safety of students. At UKZN, where a diverse student body resides in various on- and off-campus accommodations, understanding how bullying impacts the sense of security among students is crucial. This theme could not be traced in the current literature,

yet it emerged strongly as 14 of the 19 participants indicated that their safety had been affected due to incidences of bullying.

P1 explained:

“Well, I can say that you are not safe if you are being bullied because you end up taking decisions you shouldn’t take because of the way you are feeling at that time. As you can remember, last year there was a case of a student who fell off Victoria building because of bullying, so you cannot say that you are always safe ‘cause you don’t know; you might be next.... Some students have this thing of poisoning each other. It happened last year that they were poisoning other students’ food so we are not safe. Once you become a victim you are not safe of bullying that surrounds you if you haven’t got any help around you.”

P3 said:

“It does influence the victim’s feeling of being safe in res. You do not feel comfortable going around knowing you are being bullied and you don’t know what people gonna gossip about when they see you.”

P11 stated:

“You feel unsafe because the people who bully you indicate that you are not loved and not safe because you may never know their next move.”

P13 explained:

“The constant threat of being harassed in your private space creates an environment that is hostile and unwelcoming instead of being a place of comfort. If my own room becomes a source of anxiety and stress where I am always bullied, it is hard to relax or focus when you are in that space. You are always on edge because you have no idea of what your roommate will do next. You are always worried about your safety around your roommate.”

Bullying extends beyond emotional distress and academic setbacks, as the participants in this study highlighted. An alarming consequence of bullying was that their sense of safety in the university residences was compromised. This revelation underscores the pervasive nature of bullying, showing that it infiltrates even the personal spaces where students should feel most secure.

P8 further said:

“I won’t lie and say I am not 100% safe - maybe I would say 50% because we have securities, but they don’t stay in our rooms, so they don’t know what happens.”

Similarly, P6 said:

“I feel safe when I am at res but not in the room.”

P2 stated:

“Yeah, it does make students feel unsafe in res because even if you decide to spend most of your time on campus, in the end you will go back to your room.”

After an incident of bullying that was referred to above had occurred, students started to feel uncomfortable in their private spaces. Many felt that they were no longer comfortable or secure.

P4 said:

“It’s bad because, firstly, they perpetrate violence. Of course, you always know that these are the people who have a problem with you. There was this time when someone went straight to their group, wanting to confront them. She asked what they were doing, and they almost ended up stabbing each other. In that way, they’re not the only ones who might get hurt; we could get hurt too, which makes us feel unsafe”.

P15 stated:

“After that incident occurred, I have never felt the same way. Now, I don’t feel safe.”

P7 said:

“No, I feel unsafe in the res.”

P5 said:

“I no longer feel safe when I am in the res because that is where I got abused.”

Most participants agreed that their safety in their respective residences was compromised due to bullying. Their mental health and academic performance were also adversely affected. These findings are supported by Silva et al. (2013), who found that students who were exposed to bullying often felt unsafe in their living environments. Among the participants, this led to increased anxiety and a sense of vulnerability in their respective residences where fear exposed them to further bullying. The current study thus highlights that the prevalence of violence and bullying significantly impacts the safety and well-being of students in tertiary residential settings.

5.7 Intervention strategies to mitigate bullying

The researcher also explored the participants' views on intervention strategies to mitigate bullying in university residences. In light of the findings reported in earlier and in the current study, it seems crucial that UKZN should recognise the detrimental impact of bullying on the mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being of its student body, and it is therefore imperative that the UKZN should adopt multiple approaches to address this pervasive issue by adapting or abolishing those measures currently in use that are not effective.

5.7.1 Existing intervention programs and initiatives to address bullying

The participants were asked if they were aware of any intervention programs to address bullying at UKZN, but only a very few were cognisant of any such programs. In fact, 13 of the 19 participants admitted that they were not aware of any programs that addressed or attempted to curb bullying at UKZN.

Table 5.7: Knowledge of existing bullying intervention programs at UKZN

Sub-theme	Positive (n = 19)	Negative (n = 19)	No Response (n = 19)
Students' awareness of strategies by UKZN to address/curb bullying	5	13	1

Source: Researcher's summary

One participant did not reply 'yes' or 'no' when asked if he/she knew of any strategies in place at UKZN to address bullying. Those who were aware of such measures commented as follows:

P9 stated:

“Yes, I am now aware of a few such as counselling and the programs they initiate, such as information on gender-based violence. So yes, I am aware.”

P11 said:

“Yes, I am familiar with some, plus I think that they are helpful to the students because they can help them in bullying situations.”

P12 said:

“All I know is that there is RMS, but I don’t see it holding the bullies accountable. There’s also counselling and a Support Services unit which offers confidential counselling services and support groups for victims of bullying.”

One participant mentioned that the university had a Risk Management Services (RMS) unit as well as counselling services for students, while P9 pointed out that programs initiated by the university, such as those addressing gender-based violence, played a crucial role in supporting victimised students. Smith (2016) argues that education and awareness programs at tertiary institutions significantly increase students’ understanding of and ability to resist bullying as they are made aware of its forms and impacts. Such programs generally equip students with the knowledge to recognise signs of bullying, report incidents, and access support services that can assist them in taking action. Furthermore, the participants echoed Rigby’s (2003) contention that universities should offer counselling services and support groups for victims of bullying to help them cope with the emotional and psychological impacts of their experiences.

RLO1 said:

“Okay, I think the first, the main task is to train our RASs. This training is very important in such that they are able to understand their role. It can be difficult to deal with bullying when the people on the ground do not understand their roles. In terms of the training, it is very important in terms of how to address bullying, how to attend to those issues, what are the procedures that need to be followed, how to deal with the perpetrators decisively, and in that space. But then, when it comes to programs, it is difficult to have a programme because a programme ought to address a particular issue or a trending phenomenon, and you then have to understand the culture of that residence. You cannot have a readiness workshop maybe for first years, and you can’t have a postgraduate application program for first years because they just arrived. If in a residence you do not understand the culture, background, and the population that stays there, you will not understand the cases. When an RAS receives a case of bullying, then receives another one the following week and maybe in the third week receives another one, you will then have an obligation to have an immediate programme or to raise awareness obviously to attend to that matter. You just cannot have a programme that raises awareness when there are no cases. Our programmes are more intentional

and ought to address extreme problems. But I think the issue of bullying in any case overlaps with GBV. So, about programs, the university puts so much effort into them—there is even a module about gender-based violence. In that case that's where we then cover bullying and all the kinds of violence that are happening within the [university] space. To be quite honest, you will get one or two programs being initiated by RASs to raise awareness and then to motivate as to why. Every programme must be motivated.”

RLO2 said:

“We have written down the steps that need to be followed when there are cases of bullying. You have to advise a student about what bullying leads to and report the case to an RMS. That is the first step. The second step is to refer them to our counsellors, and the third step it obviously to report to the institution and then have someone for the student for a disciplinary hearing.”

According to RLO1, UKZN has made significant efforts to address cases of gender-based violence (GBV). One notable initiative is the introduction of a zero-credit module focused on GBV, which also covers bullying and various forms of violence occurring on campus. This effort is supported by Olweus and Limber (2010), who emphasise the importance of implementing educational programs that raise awareness about bullying, its impacts, and strategies for preventing it to reduce the high rates of bullying among university students living in residences.

The social learning theory is particularly effective in explaining interventions aimed at reducing bullying in UKZN residences. This theory emphasises the importance of learning behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling. It is especially relevant for strategies that target behavioural change within social environments, such as university residences. Interventions that are based on the social learning theory could include educational programs. As affirmed by P9, UKZN initiated programs to address GBV in particular. According to the social learning theory, any such programs should demonstrate respectful and inclusive behaviour by means of campaigns that reward and reinforce positive actions while discouraging bullying. By reshaping social norms within residences and providing students with examples of respectful interactions, interventions grounded in the social learning theory will curb bullying by altering the behaviours that students observe and emulate.

Conversely, in response to the question whether they were aware of any strategies that UKZN implemented to reduce bullying in university residences, some participants stated that they were not aware of any such strategies.

P2 said:

“Mmm, I haven’t seen any programs.”

P4 stated:

“Well..eh..I am not familiar about that.”

Similarly, P6 said:

“I am not familiar with any of them.”

P13 said:

“I would be lying if I said I am familiar with existing intervention programs aimed at preventing bullying. I haven’t heard of such initiatives.”

P3 stated:

“I don’t know, obviously because if they were I don’t think I’ll be in this situation I am in currently. I would have tried to use those..uhm...to just make sure that I am healthy or I am okay when it comes to my emotions, because if you are not okay emotionally, I don’t think things go well for you anyway.”

The above responses indicate a clear lack of awareness among these participants about existing intervention strategies to reduce bullying at UKZN. Thirteen (13) participants stated that they did not know of any programs aimed at preventing bullying incidents. This high lack of awareness among the participants suggests a critical gap in communication about and visibility of the anti-bullying initiative at UKZN and highlights the need for the university to enhance its efforts to disseminate information about available resources and programs designed to combat bullying. By improving these communication channels, UKZN will ensure that all students are better informed and can take advantage of the support and interventions intended to create a safer and more inclusive campus environment.

5.7.2 Recommendations by participants to assist bullied victims

This theme emerged when the participants were asked to provide practical guidance and actionable strategies to help students manage and reduce the negative impacts of bullying. By emphasising coping mechanisms and supportive advice, the aim is to empower students with the tools they need to navigate and overcome the impacts of bullying, thereby fostering a safe and supportive university environment. During data collection, the participants who had once been victims of bullying in UKZN residences shared some advice on how current students could handle and alleviate the negative impacts of bullying.

In light of the above, P1's advice was the following:

“Any advice? Uhm...I would much say that just talk to someone if you feel like you are facing bullying. And avoid too many crowds because this starts when you are surrounded by many people where you would say something and people start looking at you [in a] bad [manner]. And also, something else that you can do, is to always keep quiet and never have too many opinions and engage with people's names because some things will backfire at the end. So, I would say just stick to yourself and be alone when you find a space to be alone. Avoid large crowds and always leave your opinions to yourself not always to everyone who is around and don't be more and more friends because in the end those people who you call your friends are the ones at the end who will bully you.”

P4 said:

“Be strong and surround yourself with supportive people who can comfort you. This approach has worked well for me. My circle of friends ensured that I was okay, and open communication with them helped me a lot. I decided to let go of past grievances, forgive those who wronged me, and stop caring about how others perceive me. Even if someone seeks forgiveness, it doesn't mean they need to be allowed back into your life. Forgiving them doesn't require you to give them access to your personal space again. It's essential to set boundaries, especially with those who have acted inappropriately. Remember, silence can breed resentment, leading to actions you'll regret. Keep communicating openly to prevent hatred from taking root.” P6 suggested the following:
“I would tell the person to attend counselling and that she shouldn't pay any attention to the bully because that person is not from your family. She can change anytime, so

just focus on yourself without paying attention to what others say. Pray if you can or find people you can talk to so you can feel better.”

The advice to find someone to talk to in order to cope with bullying aligns with several studies in the literature. One notable study was conducted by Holt, Kowalski and Limber (2011), and they emphasise the importance of social support in helping victims cope with bullying. Holt et al. (2011) found that having someone to talk to, such as a friend, family member, or counsellor, could significantly reduce the negative impacts of bullying on victims' mental health. Another relevant study was conducted by Craig, Pepler and Blais (2007), who highlight that seeking support from trusted individuals is a crucial strategy for victims to manage and overcome the emotional distress caused by bullying. These studies underline the critical role of social support systems in providing emotional relief and practical solutions to those experiencing bullying.

P8's advice was as follows:

“Well, I can say that don't be patient because your patience may ends up annoying you; so, try ways to get help. Maybe find someone you can talk to and advise you. Maybe telling you that it is okay, this is what you can do to solve the problem, because some people end up thinking of quitting school, but quitting school is not a solution.”

P9 said:

“What I can say is do not pay attention to what people say or do, even if it's physical. Just find people you can talk to and try to seek help regarding the type of bullying happening at that time. If it is emotional, try to get counselling, and if it is physical, report the case to a RAS or the relevant authorities on campus. And do not pay much attention to it, because the fact that you are at university means you are special somehow.”

P10 stated:

“Okay, to help them cope with bullying, firstly, I will advise the student to find someone that will be easy to talk to about the situation. I will also advise the student to not react while angry because he or she might end up doing wrong things. Find someone to talk to so that you will find an appropriate solution for a situation. And also, not to have patience when you are being bullied, you should report the situation and not keep quiet.”

To address and curb bullying in UKZN residences, the participants suggested that a powerful coping mechanism would be to seek support by finding someone to talk to. P10 emphasised that victims should not endure bullying in silence but should seek help to navigate the situation effectively.

P12 offered the following suggestion:

“If you're facing bullying, remember that you're not alone and there are steps you can take to cope and seek support. First, confide in someone you trust—a friend, family member, or a supportive university staff member like a residence advisor. Keeping a record of incidents can also help if you decide to report the bullying. It's important to set boundaries to protect yourself, whether by avoiding certain areas or limiting interactions with those involved. Practise self-care through activities that promote your well-being, like exercise, hobbies, or spending time with supportive peers. Consider reaching out to university counselling services or a mental health professional for additional support and strategies to cope with the emotional impact. Know your rights and familiarise yourself with university policies on bullying. Lastly, focus on your goals and don't blame yourself. Seeking help is a courageous step towards reclaiming your sense of safety and well-being.”

P14 said:

“The advice I can give to cope with bullying is to report the incident, or find someone to talk to. Get someone older who will scare or threaten the bully so she will stop to be a bully because it hurts a lot.”

Studies have shown that having a support system is crucial in dealing with the emotional impact of bullying (Smith and Brain, 2000; Rigby, 2003). This notion is supported by the participants' responses regarding strategies for managing and reducing the impact of bullying. In alignment with the advice offered by P14, reporting the incident and finding someone to talk to are vital steps. Sometimes involving a figure of authority to intervene may deter the bully from continuing this behaviour, as supported by student testimonials and documented interventions (Olweus, 1993b). This combined approach of seeking support and involving authority figures helps create a safer environment for the victim and can lead to a decrease in bullying incidents overall.

5.7.3 Recommended intervention strategies to mitigate bullying

To create safer and more inclusive environments in university residences, it is essential to understand and address the complexities of bullying. Insights from participants who had experienced or observed such behaviour provided valuable perspectives on what measures might be most effective. The participants shared a range of suggestions for strategies to address the issue of bullying in UKZN residences.

5.7.3.1 Awareness campaigns

Some participants recommended raising awareness as a strategy to reduce bullying in UKZN residences. They suggested that raising awareness should start by informing both students and staff about the nature and impacts of bullying. This could be achieved through workshops, seminars, and training sessions that highlight the different types of bullying, the psychological and physical consequences for victims, and the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

For instance, P1 stated:

“Well, the first one that I can say to reduce bullying is by educating because it doesn’t always start at the top. It starts from the bottom; mostly about sharing rooms in off-campus residences. Educating first-year students about bullying [saying] that this is how you behave when you are staying with someone. Of course, you are not at your family’s house, but this is how you should behave when you are around people [and] this is how you should communicate with other people. So, in simple terms, educating first-year students about bullying and also creating awareness campaigns in residences [is important], because sometimes it doesn’t help for campaigns to be held on campus, which happens [only] once in a while. Create awareness campaigns and also have house committees that have seven positions: the one of people affected by bullying, low self-esteem we don’t have it of which whereby even if you want to talk in a res you cannot talk because you don’t know who to talk to [sic]. It would be better if we can have positions that cater for when a student encounters a problem; or, sometimes you may find that even at home you are being abused and you cannot talk to someone at home, because that person might not take it seriously. It is much better staying with someone who lives in the res and who will check if you are okay, asking ‘How are you coping with this?’ And also, another thing we can do in residences, actually at UKZN

as a whole, we can also implement a strategy or a certain type of way to deal with bullies that are bullying students by creating examples that if you bully someone, these are the consequences you face. Because here at UKZN I haven't seen someone reporting bullying or that there are consequences. It is always warnings. But the thing is, after warning that person, okay fine, he or she will stop, but then as a victim you haven't found comfort that you are fine now because someone else will come and bully you and get a warning. There are no serious actions taken against bullies."

P3 said:

"I think if there can be campaigns that are addressing the forms of bullying and maybe there can be someone, a counsellor or psychologist, who can once in a while just check on students, because you don't want to end up committing suicide if your issues are not easily taken into considerations and not addressed as such."

The participants' responses support the findings of Salmivalli (2010), who discovered that raising awareness about bullying and implementing comprehensive intervention strategies significantly reduced its prevalence in educational institutions. Similarly, the participants in the current study believed that if the University of KwaZulu-Natal initiated awareness campaigns, the number of bullying cases could be reduced. Also, Li (2007) argues that educating students about bullying is the most important preventative measure. In this context, P12 offered the following recommendations:

"Implement comprehensive education programs that raise awareness about bullying, its impact on individuals and the community, and devise strategies for prevention and intervention. These programs should be integrated into orientation sessions, workshops, and ongoing residence life activities. Also, develop and enforce clear antibullying policies that define what constitutes bullying, outline the consequences for perpetrators, and establish support mechanisms for victims. Ensure that these policies are widely communicated and accessible to all residents."

P13 said:

"There can be regular education awareness where the RAs and DRSA staff members visit residences occasionally to raise awareness about the various forms of bullying and its impact, emphasising the consequences of bullying to the perpetrators of bullying. By doing so, bullies will be afraid of the consequences and refrain from bullying. I think

that can be effective in reducing bullying incidents in university residences. Another strategy can be exercising a proactive residence life management strategy. This is where RAs build a sense of community through regular social events, team-building activities, and inclusive programs that can foster positive interactions and reduce instances of bullying. Also, implementing conflict resolution programs can address interpersonal conflicts before they escalate into more severe bullying. Constant regular check-ins by RAs or residence staff can help monitor the residence environment and address emerging issues early on.”

P14 said:

“They must initiate some programs that will teach students about bullying, get to understand what bullying is and what it does to a person, and they need to be made aware that someone might end up committing suicide because of bullying”.

The participants' advice support the recommendations made by Hinduja and Patchin (2014), which focused on expanding awareness and understanding bullying issues. They advise offering lectures to students, parents, and community members that highlight how to stop and respond to bullying, and warning bullies and their caregivers about the negative impacts of bullying. These recommendations by Hinduja and Patchin (2014) align with the suggestions by P12, P13, and P14, who emphasized the need for UKZN to implement awareness campaigns to educate students about bullying. This strategy is supported by the literature, and specifically by Ttofi and Farrington (2011), who found that anti-bullying programs incorporating awareness-raising components were effective in reducing bullying behaviours. Thus, UKZN's efforts to devise and implement such campaigns could significantly contribute to mitigating bullying on campus.

Furthermore, the participants' suggestions also align with the routine activity theory. For instance, P13 recommended that implementing regular educational awareness programs during which advisors and the Department of Student Resident Affairs staff raise awareness about the consequences of bullying alongside proactive residence life management strategies and conflict resolution programs would be of benefit to students and the institution. Similarly, the routine activity theory suggests that criminal behaviour (in this case bullying) can be reduced by increasing capable guardianship and preventing opportunities for such behaviour to occur. Moreover, if RASs monitor the environment and foster a sense of community through regular

activities, the university can effectively reduce the likelihood of further bullying behaviours on campus and in residences.

5.7.3.2 Implementing student-centric programs for positive resident interactions

The current body of research does not extensively cover the implementation of student-centric programs aimed at fostering positive interactions in residential settings. However, a significant number of participants highlighted the necessity for such programs at UKZN. Many participants argued that there was a pressing need for initiatives to educate students regarding appropriate and respectful ways to interact with one another in residential environments. This feedback urges the formulation of a strategy that will focus on developing educational programs designed to enhance interpersonal relations and promote a harmonious living atmosphere within university residences.

P8 said:

“What I think is the first and the most important one is that of having programs that will educate students residing in university residences on how to treat each other. Even if you are older, you should learn how to treat the young ones. I feel we need programs that will educate people. Also, if someone is experiencing problems back at home, she or he must talk about it so that you won’t take your frustrations out on other people.”

P9 stated:

“I think that we should have more activities that will build a relationship among residents to get along and stay happy. They must develop programs that will educate students on how they should treat each other [while living] in residences.”

P10 said:

“I think, firstly, we can have programs, maybe a few times or once a year, in residences especially for first-year students that will educate them on how to respond or react when they face such situations in residences. Also, let's say bullying is now occurring at a residence, there must be leaders like RASs who can stand up for students if their rights are violated.”

The responses of the participants underscore the necessity for implementing student-centric programs designed to foster positive interactions in university residences. This aligns with the literature that emphasises the importance of creating supportive residential environments that

prioritise the well-being and social development of students. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight that residential life significantly impacts student outcomes, including personal and social development. Furthermore, Strayhorn (2018) argues that involvement in residential activities can foster a sense of belonging, which is crucial for the overall academic and social success of students.

P11 said:

“Maybe they can initiate more programs that will be initiated just for students, so they will be taught about treating each other well in residences. If, maybe, you are the student who is a problem amongst other students, there should be actions taken against you as you fail to live with other people.”

Implementing educational programs on respectful behaviour is crucial, as such programs should teach students the value of mutual respect, conflict resolution, and empathy, while providing platforms for discussing personal issues to prevent frustration from manifesting as bullying. Community-building activities foster a sense of belonging and reduce the likelihood of negative behaviour. Such programs that are offered on a regular basis, especially for firstyear students, can be utilised to educate them on handling potential bullying situations. Moreover, appointing suitable leaders or resident assistants will ensure a safe and supportive environment in these spaces. Decisive disciplinary actions against persistent offenders will also reinforce the importance of maintaining a respectful and inclusive community. This suggestion aligns with the social learning theory, which suggests that behaviours are learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Therefore, modelling and reinforcing positive behaviours through structured programs will create a safe, more respectful, and positive residence life experience for students, and ultimately reduce incidences of bullying.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented data that were pertinent to the topic under investigation and analysed the results in relation to the research questions and objectives to achieve the aim of the study. The findings based on the participants' experiences of bullying in UKZN residences were also related to those in the literature. The data revealed various contextual factors that cause students to be vulnerable to bullying. These factors include social hierarchy and power imbalances, childhood experience, and substance abuse that influences bullying.

The participants also discussed how these forms of bullying affected their lives and academic performance. It was revealed that students often face bullying as bullies have the urge to establish dominance or gain acceptance among certain social groupings, and this social dynamic creates an environment in which bullying becomes a tool for asserting power and dominance. Moreover, the role of substance abuse was affirmed as a significant driver of bullying, as most participants agreed that bullies often engaged in aggressive behaviours when they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and they asserted that this exacerbated bullying incidents. Furthermore, the backgrounds and upbringing of bullies were found to contribute to their behaviour, which suggests that childhood and earlier experiences as well as learned behaviours play a role in how bullies attempt to dominate their peers. The participants reported experiencing emotional distress, anxiety, and a lack of concentration, which hindered their academic achievements. The emotional toll of bullying led to a diminished self-esteem and a sense of isolation among the victims, and it further affected their overall well-being and academic success.

Overall, the chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the interview findings and linked them to findings in the literature in a corroborative manner. New insights into the factors that contribute to bullying in university residences also emerged, particularly the role of substance abuse. This study underscores the importance of addressing these issues as it is imperative to create a safe and supportive environment for all students living in university residences.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to address the problem that was identified in the first chapter, which was the limited information available about bullying in higher education institutions. Traditionally, bullying was viewed as an issue that primarily affected primary and secondary school learners, but this erroneous focus led to a lack of attention to its prevalence in universities. This study will thus fill this gap and contribute to the existing body of literature on bullying as it emphasises the seriousness of this scourge in higher education settings, and particularly in residences. This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the findings, outlines the study's contributions to the current body of knowledge, and provides recommendations based on the study's objectives. Additionally, the research limitations are acknowledged and directions for future studies are suggested. The conclusions are based on the analysis of the data that were presented in Chapter five.

6.2 Overview of the Study

The first chapter provided an introduction to the study and offered a comprehensive overview of the aim and nature of this investigation by outlining the background to the study, the problem statement, and the study's purpose and significance. The researcher established four key objectives to guide the study: (i) to identify the various types of bullying that occur in UKZN residences; (ii) to investigate the factors that contribute to bullying in the residences; (iii) to examine the impact of bullying on victims residing in UKZN residences; and (iv) to evaluate intervention programs aimed at reducing bullying in residential settings. The second chapter delved into a review of existing literature relevant to these objectives and offered a thorough understanding of the bullying phenomenon as it manifests at higher education institutions. The third chapter presented the theoretical framework. Two key theories were explored as they were employed to deepen the researcher's understanding of bullying in the university residences under study. The routine activity theory was employed to explain why bullying was prevalent among students in UKZN residences. This theory highlights the three core components of bullying, namely: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of guardianship. The second theory that was employed was the social learning theory, which was also applied to explain the bullying phenomenon in the university residences under study. This theory focuses

on the processes of observation, imitation, and modelling. The fourth chapter concentrated on the methodology that was employed in this study to achieve its objectives and its ultimate goal. The discourse explained and justified the use of the qualitative research approach that was framed within the interpretive research paradigm. In the fifth chapter, the data gathered from in-depth semi-structured interviews involving nineteen participants were presented and analysed. This analysis was then connected with relevant literature and theories as discussed in Chapter three and Chapter six.

6.3 Conclusions Related to the Findings of the Study

The first-hand stories that were shared by the participants demonstrated and highlighted their authentic experiences of bullying in UKZN residences. These accounts offered compelling and credible evidence of the prevalence of bullying in the residences under study and underscored the fact that bullying should be regarded as a significant issue at the higher education institution under study, and possibly at others as well.

6.3.1 The types of bullying prevalent in UKZN residences

The participants identified three types of bullying that were commonly experienced in UKZN residences: cyberbullying, emotional bullying, and physical bullying.

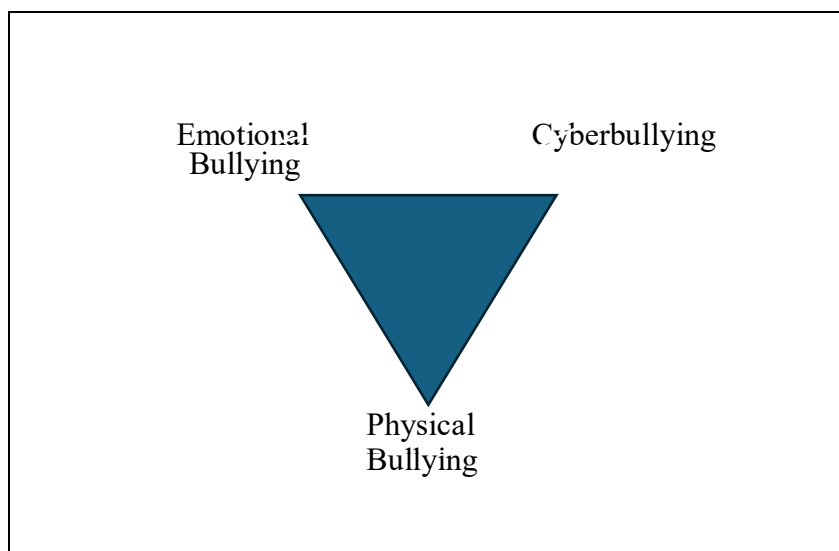


Figure 6.3.1: Types of bullying that occur in UKZN residences

Source: Researcher's illustration

Most student participants revealed that they had suffered due to emotional bullying. This suffering was elicited by subtle yet harmful behaviours such as exclusion, gossip, and manipulation. These forms of bullying often go unnoticed by authorities as they are not as overt as physical bullying, but they can be equally, if not more, damaging (Finkelhor, 2018). The experiences of the participants shed light on the profound impact of emotional bullying as it negatively impacted their mental and emotional well-being. The literature is clear that the emotional toll of bullying is particularly insidious because it often occurs in spaces where students are expected to feel safe and supported (Finkelhor, 2018). University residences are meant to be environments where students can form friendships, grow academically and personally, and find a sense of belonging.

In an era when digital connectivity defines much of our social interactions, the dark shadow of cyberbullying has increasingly permeated spaces once considered safe (Aune, 2009). In this context, the findings of the current study underscore this unsettling reality, revealing that cyberbullying has emerged as a prevalent form of bullying among students. However, contrary to this notion, only five of the participants mentioned cyberbullying when asked about the forms of bullying they faced while residing at UKZN residences. Those who did highlight the severe impact of these incidents, particularly as they involved sharing hateful comments on WhatsApp and the posting of one's picture of her half-naked body on media platforms. These were experienced as severe bullying, because even though the latter was only one incidence, the repercussions lasted for a long time. This cruel behaviour not only violated the victims' privacy, but also amplified the emotional and psychological harm inflicted on them.

The above discourse vividly illustrated the severe impact of physical bullying on victims in UKZN residences. Other reported incidents, such as near-physical altercations, tampering with personal belongings, and missing or torn clothes, highlighted a troubling pattern of harassment that extended beyond mere verbal abuse. The fact that personal belongings, including a damaged laptop, were targeted emphasises the bullies' deliberate attempts to invade others' personal space and undermine their victims' sense of security. The emotional and physical toll on participants was significant and reflected the broader issue of bullying that affects not only individuals' well-being, but also the overall atmosphere within university accommodation spaces.

6.3.2 Factors that contribute to bullying in UKZN residences

The participants highlighted several key factors that, in their view, contributed to bullying in their respective residences. These included the influence of social hierarchies and power imbalances, the impact of past childhood experiences, and the role of substance abuse.

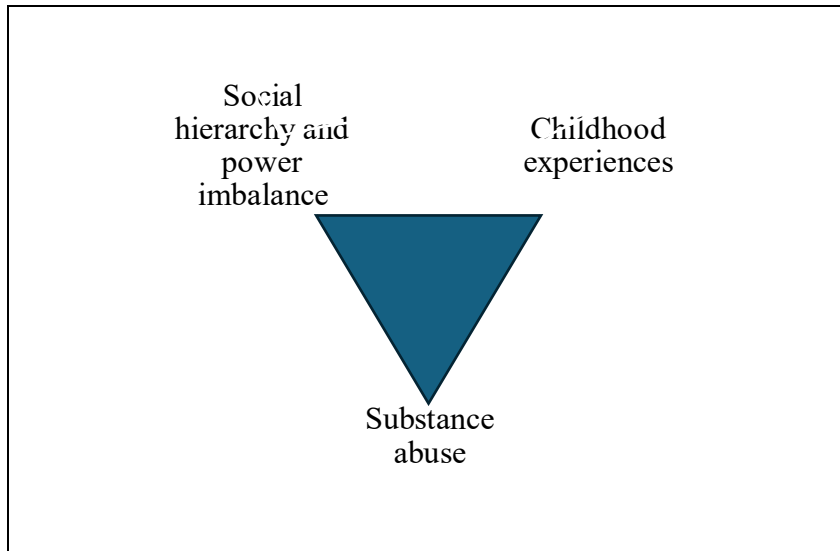


Figure 6.3.2: Factors contributing to bullying in UKZN residences

Source: Researcher's summary

Upon reflecting on the complex dynamics that prevail in university residences, it was evident that the adage “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” aptly captures the experiences of many students. A significant number of participants linked their encounters with bullying to the social hierarchies and power imbalances that permeated these environments. They noted that individuals who exuded social power and high perceived status often wielded their influence through intimidation and bullying, thereby perpetuating a cycle of victimisation.

These experiences highlight the complex interplay between social hierarchy, power, and vulnerability in UKZN residences. The data affirmed what the literature exposes, which is that marginalised and isolated individuals often become easy targets for bullying due to these imbalances (Smith, 2016). The participants emphasised that the social hierarchy and power dynamics within their respective residences significantly contributed to bullying behaviours. They argued that students often engaged in bullying tactics to gain acceptance, assert dominance, and/or conform to the expectations of their peer groups, especially in environments

where such behaviours had been normalised. Furthermore, age differences and academic disparities among roommates also seemed to intensify these power struggles, with older or more socially prominent students asserting control over younger ones. This behaviour appeared to be driven by a desire to maintain status within the social hierarchy and to avoid being marginalised, which are experiences that are consistent with the literature on bullying dynamics. The latter finding aligns pertinently with the social learning theory as it highlights the role of social environments in shaping behaviour. The theory suggests that behaviour such as bullying is a learned behaviour that is reinforced by the desire to conform to peer expectations and to maintain a certain level of social status.

The study found that childhood experiences significantly influenced bullying behaviour among students living in UKZN residences. This suggests that early life experiences can shape behaviours that later affect how individuals interact with others in the university environment. This finding aligns with Roberts's (2009) contention that adult behaviours, including those leading to bullying, are heavily influenced by childhood experiences. The participants' narratives further illustrated how these early experiences contributed to the bullying they experienced in the university setting, and this finding highlights that past experiences can overshadow rational judgment, which may lead individuals to project their anger onto others and to attempt to exert control over their peers through bullying behaviours.

Furthermore, the study found that substance abuse, particularly alcohol use, was a significant factor that contributed to bullying incidents in UKZN residences. Alcohol can heighten aggression and aggressive behaviour toward others, and this exacerbates these individuals' bullying behaviour and their aggression towards their victims. This finding is corroborated by Espelage and Holt (2013), who also observed a connection between substance abuse and bullying in residential settings. These authors suggest that individuals who engage in bullying often have substance abuse issues, and many use drugs and/or alcohol either to bolster their sense of power or to cope with personal problems. Unrestricted substance use can then exacerbate their aggressive behaviour, as the participants in the current study affirmed. The findings based on this theme highlight that the powerful influence of substance abuse can cloud users' judgment, and this may encourage people with bullying tendencies to disregard the wellbeing of other students in favour of their own needs. Their skewed sense of importance

thus compels them to engage in bullying to assert dominance, prove a point, and always have the last word.

6.3.3 Findings relating to the effect of bullying on students

It is a natural phenomenon that individuals' choices are impacted by their early and recent experiences. In this study, the participants emphasised that bullying significantly affected their academic performance as they struggled to cope while living under the cloud of the bullies' influence. Many participants reported that they battled to focus on their studies as a direct result of the bullying they experienced. This led to lower grades, missed classes, and often withdrawal from academic and social activities. The hostile environment created by bullying not only disrupted their academic progress, but also affected their overall well-being. The emotional and psychological toll of these experiences contributed to increased stress and anxiety, further impairing their academic performance and personal development.

These findings highlight the profound emotional toll that bullying in UKZN residences can inflict on students. The participants who had been or were still the victims of bullying reported experiencing a range of intense emotional reactions in the aftermath or during these incidents. These reactions included diminished self-esteem, heightened stress levels, and the onset or worsening of depression. The literature endorses this finding, stating that this emotional impact is not isolated but rather a pervasive issue. For instance, Swearer et al. (2018) found that low self-esteem was a significant issue among bullied students who often internalised negative comments and derogatory remarks, resulting in a diminished sense of self-worth. The emotional damage caused by bullying extends beyond immediate feelings of distress, and a lowered self-esteem can have long-term consequences on the academic performance, social interactions, and overall mental health of affected students. Moreover, chronic stress and depression associated with bullying can exacerbate these issues, potentially leading to more severe mental health problems, such as anxiety disorders or even suicidal thoughts (Swearer et al., 2018).

The social lives of the participants were significantly impacted, as many revealed that the anxiety they experienced due to bullying had a profound effect on their interactions within the residence. This anxiety, rooted in the fear of judgment or further victimisation, made even simple social exchanges daunting, such as asking questions or engaging in casual conversations

with fellow students. For some, this persistent anxiety escalated into more severe psychological distress over time as it manifesting as depression and heightened stress, which further impeded their ability to participate in social activities. As a result, many victims began to isolate themselves and some withdrew from communal spaces like common rooms, dining areas, or study groups to avoid any potential confrontations. This self-imposed isolation, while initially a coping mechanism to escape further harm, gradually deepened their sense of loneliness and alienation and exacerbated their emotional suffering. The fear of encountering their tormentors in the residence or on campus, coupled with diminishing opportunities for positive social interaction, created a vicious cycle in which the emotional toll of bullying continually intensified.

Moreover, the findings of this study reveal the significant impact of bullying on students' sense of safety in UKZN residences. The participants' responses illustrated that bullying extended beyond emotional and academic repercussions as it deeply affected their perception of security in what should have been their most private and secure environments. Bullying led to a pervasive feeling of insecurity among the victims who no longer viewed their private spaces as a safe haven. The constant threat of harassment and the unpredictable nature of the bullies' actions created an environment of anxiety and fear for most of the bullied participants. This compromised sense of safety extended beyond the immediate victim as it clouded the atmosphere in the residence as other students were aware that they could also be targeted. Although security measures were in place, the students felt vulnerable, especially in the privacy of their rooms where they should have felt most secure. The emotional toll of bullying was exposed to its core as the students expressed discomfort, unease, and a persistent fear that their safety was at risk, and this pervasive negative atmosphere in a hostile and unwelcoming living environment jeopardised the affected students' future.

6.3.4 Intervention strategies to reduce bullying

Bullying on university campuses is a significant issue that undermines the safety, well-being, and academic success of students. However, despite its pervasive and invasive prevalence, bullying is often underreported, and many affected students have to cope with the damaging impacts in silence (Li, 2010). The effect of bullying extends beyond immediate emotional distress as it often results in long-term psychological, social, and academic consequences.

The findings from participant responses indicate that the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has implemented several effective programs to support students' well-being. One participant highlighted the presence of the university's Risk Management Services (RMS) unit, which works well to address student safety concerns. Additionally, the study found that, these initiatives play a crucial role in providing support for victimized students, fostering awareness, and promoting a safer campus environment. The availability of these services suggests that UKZN is actively working to mitigate the impact of bullying and other forms of victimization by offering both preventative measures and responsive support systems.

However, some of the study participants recommended the implementation of regular awareness campaigns and student-centric programs to foster positive residential interactions. The participants also advocated for comprehensive education programs to address not only the basics of respectful interaction, but also more nuanced aspects of conflict resolution and emotional intelligence. They suggested that these programs should be integrated into the residence induction process to ensure that students receive this crucial information at the start of their university experience. In addition to education, the participants highlighted the need for proactive residence management strategies. They argued that this should include creating an environment where students would feel safe and supported and where open dialogue about bullying would be encouraged. They also urged the establishment of clear protocols for addressing bullying incidents on campus and in residences.

Therefore, based on the findings, the study urges the implementation of student-centric programs for positive residential interactions to curb bullying incidences in UKZN residences. The study highlights a strong consensus on the need for student-centric programs aimed at enhancing positive interactions within university residences. The participants emphasised that educating students so that they would adopt respectful behaviours and engage in effective conflict resolution strategies was crucial. They suggested that such programs should focus on teaching all residents, regardless of their seniority, how to interact harmoniously. Additionally, it was noted that such programs should address the importance of communicating personal issues to avoid taking one's frustrations out on others. Regular activities and educational sessions, especially for first-year students, were recommended to help them navigate residential life and to foster a supportive environment where leaders can advocate for students' rights. This

approach aligns with Terenzini's (2005) views that underscore the significance of creating a nurturing residential atmosphere to support students' personal and social development.

6.4 Overall findings of the study

The findings of this study reveal that emotional bullying is a significant issue in university residences, with many students suffering from exclusion, gossip, and manipulation. These subtle yet harmful behaviors often go unnoticed by authorities but have a profound impact on students' mental and emotional well-being, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Some participants described experiences of social ostracization, manipulation by dominant peers, and a hostile living environment, which negatively affected their sense of belonging. While cyberbullying is an increasing concern in modern society, it was not widely reported in this study, although those who experienced it suffered severe emotional distress. Physical bullying, though less common, was also reported in the form of near-physical altercations, tampering with personal belongings, and intentional harassment, which heightened victims' feelings of insecurity in their living spaces.

The study identified key factors contributing to bullying in UKZN residences, including social hierarchies and power imbalances, childhood experiences, and substance abuse. Participants noted that students with perceived social power often used intimidation to assert dominance, and marginalized individuals were easy targets for bullying. Past childhood experiences were found to shape bullying behavior, reinforcing patterns of victimization and control. Additionally, substance abuse, particularly alcohol use, was linked to increased aggression and bullying incidents, exacerbating the hostile living environment for many students.

Bullying was found to have far-reaching consequences, particularly affecting students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and social interactions. Many victims reported struggling to concentrate on their studies, leading to lower grades, missed classes, and academic withdrawal. The emotional impact included stress, depression, and reduced self-esteem, with some students isolating themselves from social interactions to avoid further victimization. Furthermore, bullying compromised students' sense of safety in their residences, creating a climate of fear and anxiety.

To address these issues, the study highlights the importance of implementing intervention strategies, including awareness campaigns, student-centric programs, and residence

management initiatives aimed at fostering positive interactions. Participants recommended incorporating conflict resolution and emotional intelligence training into residence induction programs, establishing clear protocols for addressing bullying, and creating an environment where students feel safe and supported. These measures align with broader literature advocating for nurturing residential atmospheres to enhance students' well-being and social development. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for universities to take proactive steps in addressing bullying to create safer and more inclusive living spaces.

6.5 Contribution of the Study's Findings to the Pool of Knowledge

The study on bullying in UKZN residences will contribute significantly to understanding the complexities of bullying in higher education settings. By concentrating on university residences, this investigation explored an environment that was both intimate and intense and where students were not only peers but also cohabitants, which intensified power dynamics and social tensions. This focus on residences was crucial because it captured a side of university life where bullying might have gone unnoticed or be considered a private matter, yet it has profound implications for bullied victims' overall university experience.

The study affirmed the various forms of bullying that can occur in these settings as reflected in the literature, ranging from verbal abuse and exclusion to more subtle forms of psychological manipulation (Cowie & Myers, 2015). The findings affirmed various factors that contribute to bullying behaviours, with specific reference to peer pressure and the struggle for social dominance within confined living spaces. Having documented these behaviours, the study challenges the notion that bullying is primarily a school-level issue as it demonstrated that bullying persists in higher education settings and can exert severe consequences on students' mental health, academic performance, and social relationships.

Furthermore, the research findings underscore the psychological and emotional impacts that bullying has on victims who often face isolation, stress, depression, and a decline in academic performance. The study's findings highlight the urgent need for UKZN, and by extension other universities where this issue might prevail, to recognise bullying as a serious issue in their residences and to implement comprehensive support systems, including counselling services, peer support networks, and clear policies for reporting and addressing bullying incidents. In addition to its immediate findings, the study will undoubtedly contribute to broader academic

and policy discussions on campus safety and student well-being as it offers a nuanced understanding of how the residential environment can either contribute to or mitigate bullying. The findings also provide a scholarly basis for universities to develop targeted interventions that will promote a culture of respect and inclusivity. By focusing attention on the often-overlooked issue of bullying in university residences, the repercussions of the study may not only help to protect students' well-being but may also enhance their overall educational experience through fostering a safer and more supportive campus environment.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

Having examined the study's findings on bullying in UKZN residences, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations that may have impacted the interpretation and generalizability of the results. Understanding these limitations will contextualise the findings and highlight areas where further research may be needed. The key limitations include the study's geographic focus on a single institution and participant access, as well as constraints that were inherent in the study's methodological approach.

6.6.1 Geographic limitations

The study's geographic focus on UKZN in South Africa is a significant limitation in terms of the applicability of the findings to similar institutions in other regions and contexts. The cultural, social, and economic conditions specific to the study environment may have influenced the nature and prevalence of bullying in university residences in ways that are not directly transferable to universities in other parts of the country and the world. Factors such as local cultural norms, societal attitudes toward bullying, and the specific challenges faced by students in this region might differ from those in other geographic areas, thus limiting the study's broader relevance. Additionally, the study's findings may not fully reflect the diversity of student experiences across different countries, climates, and urban versus rural settings as different environmental and cultural factors could significantly shape bullying behaviours.

6.6.2 Access to participants

Accessing participants for this study proved challenging. The researcher initially aimed to include twenty participants, but ultimately only 19 ($n = 19$) were included due to one participant withdrawing. Although this reduction might seem minor, it had implications for the study's statistical power and the ability to draw robust conclusions. The smaller sample size limited the

generalizability of the findings and reduced the study's ability to detect significant patterns or differences within the data. It also increased the margin of error and the potential for sampling bias, as the smaller sample probably did not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives of students and staff associated with university residences. Therefore, while the study offers valuable insights, its conclusions should be interpreted with caution. Further research with a larger and more representative sample may be necessary to confirm and enrich these findings.

6.6.3 Temporal scope

Although data were collected in the current year, which is 2024, and offer a timely and relevant snapshot of bullying behaviours and social dynamics in UKZN residences, a limitation in terms of its temporal scope is acknowledged. While the findings accurately reflect the conditions and experiences of students in 2024, these conditions are subject to change as social dynamics, student demographics, university policies, and broader societal attitudes toward bullying may evolve. Bullying behaviours and their manifestations can shift over time as people are influenced by new societal trends, advancements in technology, and changes in institutional policies. For instance, the increasing integration of digital platforms in student life may lead to new forms of cyberbullying that were not prevalent or recognised during the data collection period. Similarly, future changes in university policies or greater societal awareness of mental health issues could alter how bullying is perceived, reported, and addressed. As a result, while the study provides valuable insights specific to the current context of 2024, its findings may become less applicable as these factors evolve. This limitation highlights the importance of ongoing research to monitor and understand how bullying behaviours and their impacts change over time. Adopting a longitudinal approach to track these trends across multiple years may ensure that interventions remain relevant and effective in addressing the shifting landscape of bullying in university residences.

6.7 Suggestions for Future Research

The researcher offers the following recommendations for future research on bullying in the university context:

- Future researchers should conduct comparative studies on bullying in university residences across different institutions. These studies could be located within or outside KwaZulu-Natal province. Future studies should continue to identify common trends,

unique challenges, and effective interventions to address bullying in specific contexts, but they should also understand the role of institutional culture in perpetuating or mitigating bullying.

- While much of the focus of this study was on the victims of bullying, future research should delve into the psychological and social impacts of bullying on the perpetrators themselves. Understanding the motivations behind bullying behaviour and the consequences for those who engage in it could inform more holistic intervention strategies.
- Studies should also investigate how various aspects of identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, intersect and influence the experiences of bullied victims in university residences.

6.8 Summary and Concluding Remarks

This study on bullying in UKZN residences uncovered crucial insights into its prevalence and impact among the student population. It revealed that bullying takes multiple forms, including physical-, verbal-, emotional-, and cyberbullying. Participants shared experiences of harassment, exclusion, and intimidation, and their intense and frank responses generated data and findings that highlight the widespread nature of bullying in these settings. The root causes of this behaviour were linked to social hierarchies, power imbalances, childhood experiences, and substance abuse. The impact of bullying was found to be extensive as it evidently resulted in significant psychological distress, diminished academic performance, and a pervasive sense of insecurity among the student participants. These consequences not only affected these individuals' well-being, but also contributed to a hostile living environment in the residences under study.

In response to the findings, the study proposes several critical intervention strategies. These include launching awareness campaigns to educate students about the impacts of bullying and implementing programs designed to foster positive interactions among university students who reside in residences. These interventions are essential for creating a safer and more supportive environment for all students. Overall, the study emphasises the urgent need for ongoing efforts to address bullying in university residences. By fostering a culture of respect and support, universities can significantly enhance the safety and well-being of their student communities.

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ANNEXURE A1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE PARTICIPANT:

_____ **INTERVIEWER:**

Title of the study: *An exploratory study of bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal residences*

Name/Pseudonym of Participant	
Age	
Gender (F/M)	
Race	

Questions to the participants

1. From your understanding, what is bullying?
2. Are you residing at an on-campus or off-campus residence on/near the Howard College campus?
3. What types of bullying have you experienced, please share your story.
4. From your perspective, what types of bullying are most common in UKZN residences? Please explain.
5. Have you ever encountered any uncomfortable or repeated situations such as unwanted sexual comments, gestures, or advances from your peers?
6. Who are most likely to be perpetrators of bullying?
7. From your perspective, what factors do you believe contribute to instances of bullying victimization in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) residences?
8. How do you think bullying has affected your overall well-being and academic performance?
9. How did you cope with the experience of bullying?
10. Did you report your bullying incident? If so, who did you inform?
11. Did you receive assistance when reporting your bullying incident? How do you think bullying in UKZN residences influences victims' feelings of safety?
12. Does bullying affect the willingness of residents to engage in communal activities or utilize shared spaces in residences?

13. Are you familiar with any existing intervention programs or initiatives aimed at reducing bullying in University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) residences? If so, could you describe them?
14. What strategies do you think could effectively address and mitigate the factors contributing to bullying victimization in UKZN residences?
15. What advice would you offer to students to help them cope with bullying?

ANNEXURE A2: INHLOLOKHONO

UHLELO LWENHLOLOKHONO

Umxoxisi: _____

Okuxoxwa naye: _____

Isihloko sephepha: *An exploratory study of bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal residences*

Igama/Igama elingamanga Lombambiqhaza	
Ubudala	
Ubulili (F/M)	
Uhlanga	

1. Ngokuqonda kwakho, yini ubuqhwaya?
2. Yiziphi izinhlobo zokuhlukumezeka oke wabhekana nazo? ngicela wabelane ngendaba yakho.
3. Ngokubona kwakho, yiziphi izinhlobo zokuhlukumeza ezivame kakhulu ezindaweni zokuhlala zase-UKZN? Chaza
4. Uke wahlangabezana nanoma yiziphi izimo ezingakhululeki njengokuphawula kocansi okungafunwa, ukushukuma komzimba, noma ukunxenxwa kontanga yakho?
5. Obani okungenzeka kakhulu ukuthi babe abenzi bokuhlukumeza?
6. Ngokombono wakho, yiziphi izici okholelwa ukuthi zinomthelela ezigamekweni zokuhlukunyezwa kobuxhwanguxhwangu ezindaweni zokuhlala zaseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)?
7. Ucabanga ukuthi ubuxhwanguxhwangu buyithinte kanjani inhlalakahle yakho iyonke kanye nokusebenza kwakho ezifundweni?
8. Ngokombono wakho, yimiphi imiphumela yesikhathi esifushane neyesikhathi eside yokuxhashazwa?
9. Ubhekana kanjani nokuhlangenwe nakho kokuxhashazwa?
10. Ingabe usibikile isigameko sakho sokuhlukumeza? Uma kunjalo, wazise bani?
11. Ingabe ulutholile usizo lapho ubika isigameko sakho sokuhlukumeza?
12. Ucabanga ukuthi ubuxhwanguxhwangu ezindaweni zokuhlala zase-UKZN buyithinta kanjani imizwa yezisulu yokuphepha nokuvikeleka?

13. Ingabe ubuxhwanguxhwangu buthinta ukuzimisela kwezakhamuzi ukuhlanganyela emisebenzini yomphakathi noma ukusebenzisa izindawo ezihlanganyelwe ngaphakathi kwezindawo zokuhlala?
14. Ingabe uyazazi izinhlelo ezikhona zokungenelela noma imizamo okuhloswe ngayo ukunciphisa ubuxhwanguxhwangu phakathi kwezindawo zokuhlala zaseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natali (UKZN)? Uma kunjalo, ungazichaza?
15. Yimaphi amasu ocabanga ukuthi angabhekana ngempumelelo futhi anciphise izici ezinomthelela ekhlukunyezweni kobuxhwanguxhwangu ezindaweni zokuhlala zaseUKZN?
16. Isiphi iseluleko ongasinikeza abafundi ukuze ubasize babhekane nokuxhashazwa?

ANNEXURE B1: INFORMED CONSENT

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC) APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 19 March 2024

Warm greetings to the University of KwaZulu-Natal residence dwellers

My name is Naniwe Innocentia Ntshangase (219008113), a master's student from the College of Humanities in the Department of Criminology and Forensics Studies at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. I am conducting a study on bullying that occurs in UKZN residences.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on bullying in the various UKZN residences. The aim and purpose of this research are to explore the different forms of bullying that occur in University of KwaZuluNatal residences and its impact on students. The study is expected to involve fifteen (15) students residing in UKZN residences who are the victims of bullying, two (2) Residence Liaison officers, and three (3) Risk Management Services staff. It will be conducted through interviews. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 15 to 30 minutes. The study is funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF).

The study may involve the following risks and or discomforts: (a) re-traumatization as delving into past experiences of bullying can trigger feelings of retraumatization for victims, making them relive the distressing events and potentially exacerbating their emotional pain; (b) psychological distress, as victims of bullying may experience heightened psychological distress when discussing or recalling their experiences. Revisiting traumatic events can lead to anxiety, depression, or other emotional challenges.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits: (a) empowerment and advocacy; (b) research outcomes that empower victims by providing them with knowledge and tools to advocate for themselves and others; (c) encouragement for victims to seek help, speak out against bullying, and contribute to creating a safer environment in university residences.

For research participants who may experience re-traumatization during the interview sessions, psychological interventions are offered at no cost. Additionally, victims who are students can aid in their own trauma recovery by abstaining from alcohol and drugs. Engaging with the community through volunteering can be a valuable way to cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number 000076871).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher at [REDACTED], email address: 219008113@stu.ukzn.ac.za), or the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville

Campus Govan Mbeki

Building

Private Bag X

54001 Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal or withdrawal of participation, the participant will not incur any penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled.

The potential consequence of discontinuing participation is that the withdrawal of a participant might impact the study's integrity if the participant's data are crucial for analysis, potentially affecting the study's outcomes. Participants withdrawing from the study are required to formally notify the researcher about their decision to withdraw via email at 219008113@stu.ukzn.ac.za. The researcher may also terminate the participation of a person under various circumstances, including safety concerns. The researcher will terminate the participant in cases where unforeseen circumstances arise such as a participant developing a medical condition that conflicts with the study requirements. The researcher might then need to terminate their participation in the interest of the participant's health.

No costs will be imposed on participants due to their involvement in the study. Instead, research participants will receive monetary compensation for their time and participation, and each participant will be given R10.

To protect the confidentiality of personal information, the researcher will allocate a pseudonym to each participant and personal identifiers such as names, addresses and contact details will be removed or replaced with codes to prevent direct identification. Anonymizing the data means it cannot be linked to any individual, while pseudonymization involves replacing identifiable information with a code or pseudonym. The researcher will also protect the confidentiality of participants by means of de-identification during analysis. This means that, during data analysis, the researcher will take further steps to ensure participant anonymity. This will

involve aggregating data, removing or aggregating small sample sizes, and avoiding any potentially identifying information in the analysis. There is no limit of confidentiality. With regards to the fate of research data and stored samples, identifiable personal data will be anonymized to prevent re-identification.

Regarding the audio recordings, they will be stored in a Universal Serial Bus (USB) and the notes taken during the interview sessions will all be secured within the supervisor's office locker for a period of 5 years. Access to the locker will be limited to only the researcher and the supervisor, who will possess the keys required to unlock it. The data will also be backed up in the researcher's google account, ensuring that it remains inaccessible to others. This approach will safeguard the data in the event of a break-in, fire, or floods. Upon the completion of the 5-year period, the data will be disposed of. To dispose of the data contained in both the USB and the notebook, the researcher will first reformat the USB. Subsequently, the USB will be physically destroyed using heat as the means of disposal.

CONSENT

I (Name) have been informed of the study entitled (An exploration study of bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal residences) by (Naniwe Ntshangase).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have been answered to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at (write details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact:

HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville
Campus Govan Mbeki
Building
Private Bag X
54001 Durban

4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where
applicable I hereby
provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview /focus group discussion Yes/No
Video-record my interview /focus group discussion Yes/No Use
of my photographs for research purposes Yes/No

_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Witness	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Translator	_____ Date

ANNEXURE B2: IFOMU LOKUVUMA
IKOMIDI LEZENQUBONHLE KWEZOCWANINGO LEKOLISHI LEZESINTU
ESIKOLENI SEZIFUNDO NGENHLALO YOMPHAKATHI (HSSREC)

ISICELO SOKUGUNYAZWA NGOKWEZENQUBONHLE Okocwaningo
olusebenza ngabantu

Umbhalo Wemininingwane Nokuvuma Ukubamba Iqhaza Ocwaningweni

Usuku:19 KuNdasa 2024

Ngibingelele umhlali wase Nyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natal

Igama lami nginguNaniwe Innocentia Ntshangase (219008113), ongumfundi wemasters ekolishi lezobuntu eMnyangweni weCriminology and Forensics Studies eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal, e-Howard College Campus eqhuba ucwaningo ngobuxhwanguxhwangu obenzeka ezindaweni ezihlala abantu base-UKZN.

Uyamenywa ukuba ubambe iqhaza ocwaningweni olumayelana nobuqhanga obenzeka ezindaweni zokuhlala abafundi base Nyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natal. Inhloso nempokophelo yalolu cwaningo ukuhlola izinhlobo ezahlukeni zobuxhwanguxhwangu ezenzeka ezindaweni ezihlala eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal kanye nomthelela wako kubafundi.

Lolu cwaningo kulindeleke ukuthi lubhalise abafundi abayishumi nanhlanu (15) abahlala ezindlini zase-UKZN, abayizisulu zokuhlukumezeka, ababili (2) abaxhumanisa iResidence Liaison kanye nabathathu (3) bokuqinisekisa ezokuphepha (Risk Management Services). Izokwenziwa ngezinhloko. Ukubamba kwakho iqhaza uma uvuma futhi uhlala ocwaningweni kulindeleke ukuthi luthathe (yisho isikhathi). Ucwaningo luxhaswe yiNational Research Foundation (NRF).

Ucwaningo lungaba nalobu bungcuphe noma ukungaphatheki kahle (chaza). Sithemba ukuthi ucwaningo luzoletha lezi zinzuzo ezilandelayo (chaza uma kunesidingo; noma chaza ukuthi ucwaningo alunanzuzo kobambe iqhaza. Chaza ngokuzozuzwa umkhakha wesayensi noma okunye okuzozuzwa ngocwaningo). Umcwaningi kumele aveze ngokugcwele ezinye izindlelakwelapha ezifanele ezingalandelwa njll. ezingasetshenziswa ngale kwezalolu cwaningo.

Uma ucwaningo lunobungcuphe, chaza ngokugcwele ngobukhona besinxephezelo salobu bungcuphe, yiziphi ezinye izindlela zokwelapha noma zenhlalo ezikhona ezingalekelela, nokuthi zitholakala kuphi.

Lolu cwaningo luhloliwe ngokwenqubonhle lwagunyazwa i-UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (00006871).

Uma kunezinkinga noma imibuzo/ukukhathazeka ungaxhumana nomcwaningi lapha (nikeza imininingwane yokuxhumana) noma i- UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, kuleminingwane elandelayo:

**EZOKUPHATHWA KWEZENQUBONHLE KWEZOCWANINGO EKOLISHI LEZESINTU
ESIKOLENI SEZIFUNDO NGENHLALO YOMPHAKATHI**

Ihhovisi LezoCwaningo, iKhempasi i-Westville

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Ucingo: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

I-imeyili: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Beka ngokucacile ukuthi ukubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo akuphoqelekile (nokuthi ababambe iqhaza bangayeka noma yinini), nokuthi uma bengathandi noma beyeka ukubamba iqhaza ngeke bahlawuliswe ngalokho noma baphelelwe ukwelashwa noma balahlakelwe yinoma yikuphi okunye abebekuzuza okufanele bakuthole. Chaza imiphumela engaba khona ngenxa yokuyeka ukubamba iqhaza nenqubo ekulindeleke ukuthi ilandelwe abayekayo ukuze kube nokuhleleka. Kungaphansi kwaziphi izimo lapho umcwaningi engamisa khona obambe iqhaza?

Beka ngokucacile uma kuzoba nezindleko kwababambe iqhaza ngenxa yokuba yingxenywe yocwaningo. Uma kuzoba nokutholakalayo okuyisibonelelo sokubamba iqhaza, yisho ukuthi siyimalini nokuthi banikelwani sona.

Chaza ngokugcwele ukuthi yiziphi izinyathelo ezizolandelwa ukuze kuvikeleke ubumfihlo noma imininingwane yokwelashwa, nezinga lobumfihlo uma kuthinteka. Chaza ngokuzokwenzeka ngemininingo kanye namasampula aqoqiwe uma sekusetshenziwe.

UKUVUMA

Mina (Igama) ngazisiwe ngocwaningo olunesihloko esithi (An exploratory study of bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal residences) luka (Naniwe Ntshangase).

Ngiyakuqonda okuphokophelwe nokuyimigomo zalolu cwaningo.

Nginikeziwe ithuba lokuphendula imibuzo mayelana nocwaningo futhi ngithole izimpendulo ezingigculisayo.

Nginyaqinisekisa ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kulolu cwaningo akuphoqelekile futhi ngingayeka noma yinini nokuthi lokho ngeke kube nomthelela kwengikuzuzayo engijwayele ukukuthola.

Ngazisiwe ngazo zonke izinxephezelo noma ukwelashwa okutholakalayo uma ngilimala ngenxa yokuphathelene nocwaningo.

Uma ngineminye imibuzo/ukukhathazeka noma kukhona engidinga kucaciswe mayelana nocwaningo ngiyakuqonda ukuthi ngingathintana nomcwaningi (bhala imininingwane).

Uma nginemibuzo noma ukukhathazeka ngamalungelo ami njengobambe iqhaza, noma ngikhathazekile nganoma yiluphi uhlangothi locwaningo noma abacwaningi ngingathintana nabe:

**EZOKUPHATHWA KWEZENQUBONHLE KWEZOCWANINGO EKOLISHI LEZESINTU
ESIKOLENI SEZIFUNDO NGENHLALO YOMPHAKATHI Ihhovisi
LezoCwaningo, iKhempasi i-Westville**

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Ucingo: 27 31 2604557 - iFeksi: 27 31 2604609

I-imeyili: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Ukuvuma okwengeziwe, lapho kudingeka khona

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kwenziwe lokhu:

Kuqoshwe ingxoxo yami/yeqembu	YEBO/CHA
Kuqoshwe ngevidiyo ingxoxo yami/yeqembu	YEBO/CHA
Kusetshenziswe izithombe zami ngezinhloso zocwaningo	YEBO/CHA

Ukusayina kobambe iqhaza

Usuku

**Ukusayina Kowufakazi
(Uma kunesidingo)**

Usuku

**Ukusayina Kohumushayo
(Uma kunesidingo)**

Usuku

ANNEXURE C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



24 May 2024

Naniwe Innocentia Ntshangase (219008113)
School of Applied Human Sc
Howard College Campus

Dear NI Ntshangase,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006871/2024
Project title: An exploratory study of bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal residences
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 18 April 2024 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.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 24 May 2025.

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.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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ANNEXURE D: GATEKEPPER'S LETTER



14 March 2024

Naniwe Ntshangase (SN 219008113)
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus UKZN
Email: 219008113@stu.ukzn.ac.za

SibisiN@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Naniwe

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate degree, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"An Exploration of Bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Residences."

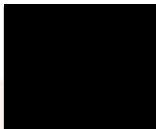
It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with registered students who have experienced bullying in the residences, (2) Residence Liaison Officers and (3) Risk Management Services staff members (Zoom, Skype or telephone interviews recommended) on the Howard College campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using the 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



MR MA TUFTS
Director Governance & Administration

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 7971 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

ANNEXURE E: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES



26 February 2024

For attention: **Ms Naniwe Ntshangase (219008113)**

School of Applied Human Sciences

College of Humanities

Howard College Campus

By email: Ms Naniwe Ntshangase (219008113) - 219008113@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cc: Dr Nomakhosi Nomathemba Sibisi - SibisiN@ukzn.ac.za

CHUM Student Support Services: chum.studentsupport@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Ms Naniwe Ntshangase,

Access to counselling services to participants (registered in the College of Humanities) of the proposed Masters study entitled: *An Exploratory Study of Bullying in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Residences*

This letter serves to confirm that students who are registered in the **College of Humanities, Howard College Campus** may access counselling services should they experience any distress due to their participation in the afore-stated study conducted by yourself.

To schedule a session with a student counsellor (psychologist), students may call our tollfree number on 0800 800 017 during business hours (08:00-16:30) or email our administrator Ms Vino Moodley at chum.studentsupport@ukzn.ac.za

As communicated previously, please send me a copy of your Ethical Clearance once obtained.

I wish you well in your study.

Regards,



Dr Angeline V Stephens

Manager: CHUM Student Support Services

College of Humanities

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Student Support Services

Telephone: 0800 800 017 Email: chum.studentsupport@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

ANNEXURE F: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

lindac@skytec.co.za | 083 344 0706



SARS Income Tax No. [REDACTED]; CC Founding Statement No. [REDACTED]; Tax Clearance Certificate No. [REDACTED]
SACE REGISTRATION NUMBER: N.D. COERTZE – [REDACTED]

DECLARATION OF PROOF-READING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the Master's dissertation referred to below for language editing and proof-reading purposes. I identified and corrected linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies to the best of my knowledge and ability. Using the *Word Tracking* system, I kept track of the changes that I made. I also offered additional annotations for consideration by the author should she deem it necessary to address areas that I considered might need attention. I declare that I adhered to the general principles that guide the work of a language editor and that I remained within my brief as had been agreed with the author of the manuscript. The editing service excluded perusal of the references and the appendices.

Details

TITLE:	AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BULLYING IN THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL RESIDENCES
NAME OF CANDIDATE:	Naniwe Innocentia Ntshangase
STUDENT NUMBER	219008113
PROPOSED QUALIFICATION	Master of Social Science
DEPARTMENT	Criminology and Forensic Studies in the Faculty of Applied Human Sciences
TERTIARY INSTITUTION	University of KwaZulu-Natal
SUPERVISOR	Dr N. Sibisi

[REDACTED] submitted on: 25 October 2024

(MRS) N.D. COERTZE
LANGUAGE EDITOR

DISCLAIMER: The Editor was not responsible for the final presentation of this manuscript. It was the author's/supervisor's prerogative to format the manuscript and to make additional changes after editing without referring the document back to the language editor.

ANNEXURE G: TURNITIN REPORT

Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on: 31-Oct-2024 1:15 PM CAT
- ID: 2503769542
- Word Count: 56221
- Submitted: 1

Master of Social Science Research Paper by Naniwe Ntshangase

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