

**EXPLORING THE PREVALENCE OF TEACHERS' WORKPLACE  
BULLYING IN LESOTHO PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF PEKA  
LERIBE**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Mponents'eng Lydia Mats'umunyane, affirm that this dissertation, written to fulfil the requirements of the Master of Education degree, is entirely my authentic work, barring where other sources have been acknowledged. I also attest that this dissertation has not been hitherto submitted to this Faculty or any other institution.

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My sons, I hope that, with this achievement, you will one day understand why I gave you little time for your activities, as I was busy with my writing and studies. You are my heroes, and you give me the purpose of life and to persevere.

I dedicate this study to my late father. I will always remember your aspirations for my education and the advice you gave me while you were still here. I hope you are proud wherever you are.

## **ABSTRACT**

Studies conducted worldwide indicate that workplace bullying in schools is on the increase, with teachers negatively affected. In countries such as South Africa, as high as 90.8 percent of teachers are affected by workplace bullying. Teachers at different levels – whether it is class teachers, school principals, or board members – reported experiencing workplace bullying and its adverse results, including poor health, difficulty focusing on work, and avoidance of work to escape bullying. Hence, it was essential to explore teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools, focusing on the Peka area. This study, which adopted the interpretivist paradigm and multiple case studies research design, generated data through interviews of 15 participants who consisted of the principal and two teachers from five selected schools. The study used a qualitative approach used to determine the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Peka primary schools. It detailed teachers' experiences of workplace bullying, the effects of workplace bullying in primary schools, and its management. The findings revealed that teachers experience various forms of workplace bullying and different consequences as a result, including suffering from poor health, experiencing low self-esteem, losing interest in their work and workplace and having fear of doing assigned work. Some teachers who experience such bullying have thoughts of resigning. Perpetrators of workplace bullying in Peka primary schools include principals, colleagues, parents, and learners. The study recommends that teachers and principals be conscientious about workplace bullying in schools. Different stakeholders need to be equipped with ways of handling workplace bullying, including appropriate reporting mechanisms and prevention methods. Schools should create and implement anti-bullying policies and programmes, and properly use them to protect teachers.

**Keywords:** Workplace bullying, prevalence, recognition theory, Peka, primary schools

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

MoET	-	Ministry of Education and Training
LGBS	-	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Society
NASUWT	-	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
B. Ed	-	Bachelor of Education

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Studies conducted in different countries (Einarsen et al., 2011; Fahie & Devine, 2014; De Wet, 2014 & Jacobs & De Wet, 2015b) indicate that workplace bullying is a factor that negatively affects teachers at work. In South Africa, Jacobs and De Wet (2015b) revealed that 90.8 percent of teachers were affected by workplace bullying. Fehie and Devine (2014) reported that in Ireland, teachers of different class levels, school principals and board members experienced workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is reported to have adverse effects, with the victims experiencing poor health, being unable to focus on their work and sometimes dodging their work with the purpose of avoiding the culprits of bullying. Some (De Wet and Jacobs (2014; Malema and Kirsten, 2014; De Vos and Kirsten, 2015) victims reported experiencing emotional exhaustion and low self-esteem, which result in lower teacher productivity as they become inefficient and put less effort into their work. However, there was a paucity of literature on this phenomenon in Lesotho. As a result, the current study intends to investigate teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools. To achieve this, the current chapter introduces this study by providing details on the background of the study. It also highlights the problem statement, the research questions and the objectives. It delineates the purpose and significance of the study. It further provides the methodology that will be used to achieve the purpose of this study. This chapter ends with the chapter outline.

#### **1.2 Background to the study**

Akella (2016) defines bullying as repeated and persistent unpleasant actions directed at one or more individuals that create an unfriendly environment. The influential person torments, wears down, threatens and frustrates persons who cannot protect themselves. Bullying is an abuse of power that humiliates and harms someone physically or psychologically (Munro & Phillips, 2023). According to Fahie and Devine (2014), bullying may be considered a mechanism of power that defines, limits, and controls how specific individuals behave so that they may operate as

perpetrators wish. It is a serious and pervasive problem that can have a devastating effects on the targets of the bullying, their organisations, and society at large (Omrani, 2022). Bullying is intended to cause hurt or fear (UNESCO, 2012). Concerning the workplace, bullying is described as the regular ill-treatment of an inferior, a coworker, or a superior, which is sustained and ongoing. A target of bullying may experience severe psychosocial and psychosomatic problems (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). A bullied person's mind becomes affected by the ways they are treated, which in turn results in various life challenges such as anxiety and depression.

### **1.2.1 The prevalence of workplace bullying in schools**

Attention on workplace bullying has increased in different organisations and settings worldwide. De Wet and Jacobs's (2014) study points to high percentages on the prevalence of workplace bullying in schools in South Africa. Their study investigated teachers' exposure to workplace bullying in South Africa, where four clusters of acts of bullying that participants were exposed to were highlighted. The results showed that 90.8 percent of 999 respondent teachers were bullied during 12 months that preceded the study. "Approximately 89.1 percent of the respondents experienced at least two instances of bullying that fell into four different categories of behaviour: isolating behaviour, behaviour that undermined the teacher's professional status, behaviour that undermined the individual, and direct negative behavior (pg. 14)."

Among South African studies, De Wet (2011) focused on two South African teachers who seemed to be bullied by their principals over an extended period of about 15 years. The main issue was to investigate how they made meaning of their professional lives after being bullied. The study revealed that the participating teachers were said to be bullied after the appointment and promotion of one of their colleagues to the position of principal in their school. The results indicate that both teachers who were the participants in the study lost their self-confidence. For example, one of the participants suspected his self-efficacy in executing an assignment such as creating a set of instructions while another participant was continually restless and tried to rationalise the cause of her mistreatment. In a subsequent study, De Wet and Jacobs (2014) took a different angle and focused on the perpetrators of workplace bullying in schools. The findings of this study indicate that 32 out of 999 participants admitted that they tormented their coworkers. De Wet and Jacobs (2014) further assert that perpetrators of bullying do so as part of retaliation against those who

insinuated that they were incompetent, had humiliated them in public and spread rumours about them. While in some cases, it was an act of transference to third parties because of frustration from being bullied, thus ending up having anger with colleagues at work (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

Moreover, Treurnich (2014) conducted a study in South Africa focusing on teachers who experienced cyber bullying by parents and learners. Parents and learners posted negative and harassing issues about teachers on social networks such as Facebook and Instagram. Such teachers experienced severe emotional distress, anxiety, anger, humiliation, and damage to their human dignity and reputation.

Further afield, a study conducted in Ireland's (Fahie and Devine, 2014) education sector examined workplace bullying experiences in Ireland's primary schools. Participants were purposively nominated based on the richness of their stories and the generalizability of their distinct experiences. These participants were class teachers, Board of Management chairperson and a school principal. The findings of the study suggested that bullying's dynamics extremely weakened the potential of an individual to work as a member of a team. Bullying also undermines individual work in relation to school values in general, as their experience resulted in reduced obligation and allegiance to the school. The conflicts and strain and experienced made them hesitant to be part of any resourceful and ground-breaking schemes in the schools because they were avoiding stirring bullying at any cost. The respondents further reported that, due to their experience, the operation of the school was entirely affected (Fahie & Devine, 2014).

### **1.2.2 Factors that promote workplace bullying**

Apart from the prevalence of bullying in schools, the current study is interested in determining factors that promote teachers' bullying in their workplaces. Studies reveal that, among others, factors that promote teachers' bullying in their workplaces include leadership styles (Asim, Zhiying, Nadeem, Ghani, Arshad, and Yi, 2021; Wu, Liu, Hua, Lo, & Yeh, 2020; Peltokorpi, 2019). Authoritarian or dictatorial management styles of leadership aggravate bullying as they are overly controlling, which contribute to creation of a challenging competitive environment. Some supervisors view excessive pressure as part of the workplace culture. They therefore, use bullying tactics in order to impose their power on subordinates (Kadir,Dhesi, Satrya, Yuniar, Atmajaya,

Fidriadi, Fawwaz & Ramadhanty (2025) In some organisations, bullying may even be institutionalised as part of leadership and managerial practice. The authoritarian style of leadership, also known as autocratic, may also generate an environment with distress, where there is a slight or no possibility for discussion and involvement in the decision-making process as it conveys panic among employees, reduces psychological wellbeing and dismays extra-role behaviour. In such circumstances, complaining may be pointless as it does not help (Wu, Liu, Hua, Lo, & Yeh, 2020). In this type of leadership, leaders attempt to control subordinates through force. In such cases, employee' involvement and helpful reproach may be substituted with fury and commotion. Such rage and shouting may make subordinates, as well as observers see it as threatening and incomprehensible (Kadir,Dhesi, Satrya, Yuniar, Atmajaya, Fidriadi, Fawwaz & Ramadhanty (2025). Kadir et al. (2025) further indicate that in highly competitive work environments, excessive pressure is normalized. This in turn brings frustration and aggression among subordinates, giving rise to peer aggression acts as an antecedent of bullying.

On the one hand, a laissez-faire type of leadership appears to contribute significantly towards bullying among coworkers when management neglects its inherent responsibility to adequately address employees' experiences of role ambiguity and conflicts, or failing to intervene appropriately when approached and disregarding the reported behavior (Nielsen, Skogstad, Gjerstad & Einarsen 2024). In a laissez-faire type of leadership, issues are left in the hands of the employees, and the leaders fail to respond and act in line with the clear expectations of the organization. Laissez-faire leadership leads to bullying by bringing about a traumatic atmosphere. Kadir et al. (2025) add that laissez-faire leadership provokes group conflicts when judgements are incorrectly left to the group when no one is taking control and responsibility for any form of conflict in the organization. The employees could be in groups regarding the situation, those for and those against, hence group conflicts. It can be considered more damaging than zero leadership because it is connected with lesser mediation frequency in definite cases of bullying. This suggests that battle resolution – to create peace – could have been done in this case (Glambek, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2018). Rejection and expulsion may give subordinates experience of the absence of adequate leadership (Nielsen et al. 2024). According to Dussault and Frenette (2015), it has been anticipated that a laissez-faire leadership style could also subsidise bullying by disregarding

conflicts or neglecting to intervene appropriately. Employees receive no help or intervention from their superiors when they experience workplace bullying.

### **1.2.3 Effects of workplace bullying**

Due to the increased occurrence of workplace bullying in schools, Fitzpatrick (2020) revealed that to escape added exploitation, bullied teachers refrain – either enthusiastically or introspectively – from societal and proficient undertakings. Bullied teachers regularly experience diminished allegiance, detachment and inferiority (Meilina, Hidayah & Wahyuni 2024). In addition, Woudstra, Van Resburg, Visser and Jordaan (2018) indicates that bullied teachers may also experience petty inspiration and determination, enhanced indolence as well as counterproductive work behaviour. Fahie and Devine (2014) reiterate that bullied employees show signs of diminished obligation and devotion to the school due to their bullying experience.

In addition, De Vos and Kirsten (2015) state that bullied teachers may experience ill health, which may have a major influence on the teaching-learning development and act as an obstruction to wisdom. De Vos and Kirsten's (2015) findings indicate that teachers experiencing long-term relentless bullying may suffer physical, psychological, social or health problems. How a person perceives his/her experience eventually affects their social and physical health responses. Also, some teachers eventually leave their jobs, which may unsettle the delivery of excellent education, perhaps causing schools to be undersupplied in the crucial skills that may contribute to a country's economy. Thus, the prevalence of workplace bullying among teachers in schools may be considered a serious problem in teaching and learning. It could also be a severe problem to the health of individuals who experience it. Teachers lose interest in their work, become irritable and cannot focus on their work (Tolentino, 2016). For instance, in the study undertaken by Fahie and Divine (2014), the respondent was reported being absent from work as a result of their experience of bullying behaviours by their superior and were treated for depression. In the same study, bullying resulted in the participant experiencing disturbed sleeping patterns. While sleeping, the respondent would wake up because he could still hear the insults spewed at him. Lastly, Koiv (2020) reported a respondent who claimed that her health was affected. She experienced terrible headaches and grew increasingly depressed. Day after day, she woke up with a knot in her stomach due to thoughts of facing 'the monster,' as she referred to the bullying principal.

De Oliveira Pimentel et al. (2020) claim that illnesses such as anxiety and depression are the aftermath of stress experienced by victims. Victims of bullying are at risk of experiencing poor mental health as they endure psychological distress. A possibility of poor mental health on victims of bullying is also reported as a consequence of their experience (Chan et al., 2019). Their experience brings about memories that their minds become preoccupied with. For instance, in Tolentino's (2016) study, the participants reported having hallucinations of bullying episodes in their minds, which resulted in their hesitance to trust anyone. Bullying has a direct influence on victims' intellectual and physical safety and can have a harmful influence on their capacity to do their roles in school. Moreover, according to De Wet and Jacobs (2014), teachers who feel anxious in their work surroundings cannot effectively participate in school matters and promote learning within the school. Victims of bullying can lose concentration in their work. According to De Wet (2014), bullied teachers detach themselves from other people, hence they endure challenging working situations, damaged health and safety, and experience seclusion. They avoid more extreme bullying and being considered agitators by being silent, which brings about fear and despair. In extreme cases, workplace bullying can lead to teachers leaving a workplace or even leaving the profession altogether.

Although at teachers' workplace bullying appears to have negative effects on the targets, there are cases where it is experienced positively. According to Tolentino's (2016) study, some participants managed their experience with certainty and surprisingly had positive outcomes. For example, they became closer to their families and felt the strong sustenance of their families because of the experience. Other participants were inspired to develop themselves. Such participants believed that their experience made them stronger and enabled them to survive the pains brought by the experience. Their experience made them more robust to endure the harsh times in their lives (McCarty, 2012).

On the one hand, organisations become affected by workplace bullying, particularly when victims negatively view their experiences. According to Kocakulah, Bryan and Lynch (2018), amplified absenteeism is one of the factors that may cause an organisation to experience a loss of productivity. Productivity is likely to be low as the employees become absent from work. This

results in decreased work revenue. The increase in absenteeism may be due to the targets' intensified feelings of negativity towards the workplace (Bukhari & Akhter, 2022). The absenteeism may also hamper efficient running of the organisation (Nielsen et al. 2024). Deficiency of attentiveness may intensify predisposition to make errors, consequently accumulating the likelihood of accidents (Nielsen et al. 2024). In addition, the expenses experienced when embarking on recruitment and selection of new staff and their training, and the cost of programmes for bullying intervention (Van Rooyen & McCormark, 2013) is one of the aspects of negativity of workplace bullying on an organisation.

Although the previous studies (Tolentino, 2016 & McCarty, 2012) reiterated that to some people bullying have positive results, the same could be the case for organisations. According to Akella (2016), bullying aids control as it helps managers to control their subordinates in a work environment. To increase output, influence the employees and instill drive, bullying becomes an effective strategy for managers. Bullying could be intellectualised as another technique to get employees to be more productive. For instance, in a strict environment, employees have to follow and abide by the rules and regulations established by their superiors. This puts pressure on subordinates to work harder with passive resistance out of fear of punishment. The leader makes most of the decisions and passes them down the line and makes threats to ensure that the orders are obeyed (Akella, 2016).

In Lesotho, Matsela and Kirsten (2014) studied teachers' experiences and impact of workplace bullying on their health. The study revealed that workplace bullying prevails in Lesotho secondary schools, and that secondary and high school teachers experience various forms of workplace bullying in their workplaces. However, no such a study has been conducted in primary schools. This calls for investigation in the primary schools in order to establish the prevalence of workplace bullying at this level of education. Putting together the literature from other researchers in other countries, and the experiences informally obtained from other teachers, the researcher came to a conclusion that workplace bullying might exist in Lesotho primary schools, hence this current study aims to investigate its prevalence, and fill the gap in literature in Lesotho.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Workplace bullying has been a concern in different countries, organisations and cultural settings. Researchers such as Fahie and Devine (2014) from Ireland; Tolentino (2016) from the Philippines; Jacobs and De Wet (2015b); De Vos (2013); De Vos and Kirsten (2015) from South Africa, among others, conducted studies detailing issues around teachers' workplace bullying. Research (De Vos, 2013; Jacobs & De Wet, 2015b) shows that workplace bullying affects teachers negatively because they lose their self-confidence, experience emotional distress, anxiety, anger, humiliation and damage to human dignity and reputation (Holm, Torkelson, & Backstrom, 2022) & Treurnich, 2014). Fahie and Devine (2014) reiterate that teachers' individual work is undermined by bullying as some participants indicated that they lost commitment and loyalty to their school. This calls for education stakeholders such as managers and governors to take necessary steps to prevent teachers' workplace bullying as the bullying is experienced at different levels (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). De Wet & Jacobs (2014) reiterate that dedicated and driven teachers who are substantially and expressively confident in their workplace would be able to play a fundamental part in improving their education systems.

In Lesotho, most studies (Mosia 2015; Makafane, & Khalanyane 2017; Seisa, 2020) undertaken point to bullying of learners in schools. One of the few on teachers' workplace bullying was undertaken by Matsela and Kirsten (2014). This study pointed to teachers' experiences and impact of workplace bullying on their health. There is a suspicion that teachers' workplace bullying exists but it is not clear how it happens, how it affects teachers and the type of schools where it happens, as well as how it is managed by teachers who experience it. This calls for further research on this phenomenon and the current study aspires to close this gap by investigating the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The following research question directs this study: what is the prevalence of teacher's workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools?

This main question is divided into the following sub questions:

1.4.1 What are teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools?

1.4.2 How does workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho primary schools?

1.4.3 How do teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools?

### **1.5 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of study is to determine the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools.

### **1.6 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

**1.6.1** Investigate teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools.

**1.6.2** Examine ways in which workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho primary schools.

**1.6.3** Establish how teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools.

### **1.7. Significance**

This study hopes to raise awareness on the prevalence of workplace bullying faced by teachers in primary schools and the effect it has on their emotional, psychological and professional well-being. This will enable teachers to realise situations and actions within schools that are regarded as bullying, and be in a position to act accordingly on such matters. Acting accordingly includes reporting and dealing with acts of bullying as they arise. Perpetrators of bullying will also realise that their actions are considered to be bullying and therefore refrain from such activities.

The study will also enrich school managements' sphere of knowledge concerning workplace bullying in schools. This might lead to better understanding and support by different stakeholders in schools. It could help to uncover critical areas around the issue. School administrators, in this case the principals and administration officials as people who are on the frontlines in the schools, may be enlightened on how bullying in primary schools occurs, its effects and effective interventions of dealing with bullying. Armed with this information, school management can design tools that may bar acts of bullying within school premises. Information from this study may also help school management to design school level policies that can prevent bullying of teachers at school.

The study will also provide enlightenment to the Ministry of Education and Training on the prevalence of bullying in Lesotho primary schools. As a result, the government of Lesotho could embark on developing educational policies that will be responsive to workplace bullying in schools following the knowledge gained on how bullying in the primary schools occurs, and its impact on individual targets and on teaching and learning in schools. Such policies would be aimed at protecting teachers against workplace bullying as well as outlining procedures that have to be followed in cases where teachers experience bullying in schools.

There appears to be limited literature in Lesotho that investigates the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying because library and virtual research shows that there is paucity of information of the experiences and impact of teachers' workplace bullying on their health, hence this study intends to add to the available literature. Also, the study could help other researchers to take advantage by using it as a point of departure for further investigation on workplace bullying in schools.

### **1.8 Theoretical framework**

Recognition Theory was used as a theoretical lens in this study. This framework states that individuals need recognition from their surrounding in order to feel free and happy. Rachmad (2022a) reiterates that Recognition theory is the act of admiring an individual; giving credit to his/her contributions. Lepold (2019) states that recognition is reflected as consent and declaration of human beings as part of a society as it happens fully among members of a society even though they might belong to different groups. Recognising efforts and successes in different organisations portrays an indispensable role in increasing pleasure, devotion and improved yield whether in schools, workplaces or communities (Rachmad, 2022b). Pioneers of Recognition Theory emphasise that social recognition helps social beings with the need to become who they are. The framework also presents social changes moulded in previous struggles, predisposed to prejudices, power dynamics, manipulation and supremacy (Hirvonen & Koskinen 2023).

Busch and Zurn (2010) describe Recognition Theory as a theory that presents an account of conventional association expression concerning individual experiences of distress and their social origins. It further gives an account that clarifies the existing eminence of several authentic social struggles, non-dominating practices of individual life, as well as a sociocultural atmosphere free

from condemnation and discernment. Bullying is a social struggle that happens in a school community and be manifested through denied rights. Hence, this theory is a perfect fit for this study as it helped the researcher to interpret the results that emerged on the factors that give rise to teachers' workplace bullying.

## **1.9 Research methodology**

This section highlights the research methodology and procedures that were used in this study. It discusses the details of the research paradigm, research approach, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

### **1.9.1 Research approach**

Ishtiaq (2019) describes qualitative research as a tactic to traverse and comprehend the meaning individuals or groups accord to a social or human problem. Researchers using a qualitative approach are interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of people's experience. A qualitative approach is not interested in obtaining information that can be generalised to other larger groups (Thomas, 2017). On that account, the researcher in the current study was able to get a deeper understanding of the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying from the participants' perspectives.

### **1.9.2 Research paradigm**

Siddiqui (2019) describes a research paradigm as a collection of logically related assumptions that orient thinking and research. It entails the beliefs that guide the researcher's action. This study adopted interpretivism as its paradigm. Interpretivism emphasises individuals' interpretation of the world around them. It believes in socially constructed multiple realities. The prominence is retained on assimilating the individual and their analysis of the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Such individuals attempt to derive their constructs from the field by thoroughly examining the phenomenon of interest (Thomas, 2014). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), in interpretivism, the researcher and the participants are engaged in interactive processes that they associate with, dialogue, question, listen to, read, write, and record and eventually air their views based on their experiences. That is, knowledge arises from human relationships and what is agreed upon. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of

the meaning people bring to them. Workplace bullying is a social phenomenon that happens through interactions of individuals and or groups. Interpretivism is therefore suitable for the current study because, according to Rehman & Alharthi (2016), its goal is to understand the individuals' interpretations of social phenomena that they encounter, such as bullying.

### **1.9.3 Research design**

Research design is defined by Kumar (2011) as a conventional blueprint that is implemented by the researcher to authentically, demonstrably, precisely and cautiously respond to research questions. This study intends to use a multiple case study to examine the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools. According to Creswell (2013), multiple case design discovers a realistic multiple-bounded structures through comprehensive, extensive data gathering concerning numerous sources of information. In this study, a researcher, through the use of multiple case study designs, was able to understand the perspectives of the participants who experienced workplace bullying in schools. A broader investigation of the research question and imaginary progression gave rise to the researcher's understanding of differences and similarities of information provided by the participants on teachers' workplace bullying (Yin, 2018).

### **1.9.4 Research participants**

Research participants are individuals from whom the researcher obtains data (Midgley, Danaher, & Baguley, 2013). Midgley, Danaher and Baguley (2013) add that it is not only those humans who are the principal focus of the research venture but also those upon whom the research impacts, whether simultaneously or retrospectively. In this study, the researcher selected participants from a pool of teachers and principals in Lesotho primary schools because they may have the lived experience of bullying.

#### **1.9.4.1 Selection of participants**

The selection of participants was done using non-probability selection. According to Parveen and Showkat (2017), non-probability sampling is a technique in which items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher. Instead of randomization, participants are selected because they highly possess appropriate information and knowledge. The study that used non-probability sampling is designed not to be generalised to the population but to collect exploratory data. In this

case, purposive selection as a non-probability selection technique is used. Kumar (2014) describes the purposive selection of participants as a procedure in which participants who can provide appropriate information to achieve study objectives are selected. The primary consideration is the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information, and be willing to share it with the researcher (Kumar, 2011).

In this study, ten teachers and five principals from five primary schools were purposively selected to participate. In each of the five schools, one principal and two teachers participated. Principals were selected because they possess the power to enforce laws in schools and may be aware of cases of bullying that were reported to their offices. In addition, they should have information on bullying in schools as they are the overseers. They might have experienced bullying, observed it among staff members, or sometimes be the perpetrators. Teachers with at least five years of teaching experience were selected to participate in this study. They were selected because they had been in the school for some time and may have experienced or observed bullying in their schools. As such, they could be able to share their experiences of workplace bullying and how teachers cope with it.

### **1.9.5 Data collection**

Data collection is gathering evidence from all the appropriate informants to discover explanations to the research problem (Dudovskiy, 2018). For this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and official school documents. Semi-structured interviews gather information through oral discussion using pre-planned core questions (Thomas, 2017). Further, semi-structured interviews allow more detailed information from the participants in a sense that it allows probing and, at the same time, gives participants liberty to express themselves. According to Ruslin, Mashuri, Sarib, Alhabsyi, and Syam (2022), semi-structured interviews can be useful as the interviewer can persistently seek detailed controversies of concern that may provide a route to informed recommendations. Participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs are explored in the sense that they are enabled to say more in cases where the idea expressed is not clear (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The researcher used an audio recorder to ensure that all data was captured from the participants during the interviews. This was supplemented with taking short notes on important issues. The semi-structured interviews were used to collect data that addresses the following study question: What are teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools? How does workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho primary schools? How do teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools? How does workplace bullying affect the schools in which it occurs?

Furthermore, official school documents were examined to find any information related to teachers' workplace bullying. Some of the documents that the researcher looked at in detail are policy manuals and disciplinary hearing minutes. The policy manuals may show national and school policies regarding workplace bullying of teachers in schools. In contrast, the disciplinary hearing books may show the cases of bullying dealt with and how they were resolved. These data collection methods were used to clarify the following study questions: What are teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools? How does workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho primary schools?

### **1.9.6 Data processing**

Data processing is a procedure in which collected data goes through transcribing, editing, coding, classifying, tabulating, charting, and diagramming (Kumar, 2014). Transcribing entails writing down data recorded during the data gathering activity. The transcription must sort the data for analysis (Madondo, 2021). Hussain (2020) indicates that editing means checking for errors and omissions on the interview notes during and after the interviews were conducted. Coding entails providing numbers or symbols to various categories of data (Saldana, 2016). Saldana (2016) further emphasises that corrections on collected data should be made through re-contacting the participants or be made from the researcher's memory. After checking for possible errors and omissions, and providing symbols on data, similar data will be given a corresponding theme in order to form sub-headings. Classifying data, according to Gupta & Gupta (2020), is the process of arranging data in groups or classes on the basis of some common features or objectives in view. Classification condenses the data, facilitates comparisons and statistical treatment of data. It also helps to study the relationships. On the other hand, tabulating means arranging the collected data

in an orderly manner using rows and columns (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008) while charting data is described as a process that involves summarising the data by category from each transcript (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid and Redwood, 2023). It requires balancing reducing the data on the one hand and retaining the original meanings and feel of the interviewees' words.

### **1.9.7 Data analysis**

Lune and Berg (2017) describe data analysis as the reasoning strategy to split a complex whole into its parts to understand its relationships. It is a process of thoroughly examining and establishing the interview records, reflection notes, and other visual provisions that the researcher collects to escalate the interpretation of the phenomenon (Kumar, 2014). According to Flick (2014), data analysis is the systematic method of unfolding the implication of qualitative data which is done by assigning sequential fragments of the information to the groups of a coding structure. The researcher in this study used content analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis to analyse the collected data. Content analysis according to Presier, Garcia, Hill and Klein (2021), looks for patterns in how people make sense of and create meaning through language. The content, themes and meanings that come up naturally are the basics. In this study, content analysis was used to examine data collected from official school documents. Luo (2023) indicates that content analysis helps the researcher to identify patterns in recorded communication. This helps to discover the purposes, messages and effects of communication content. On one hand, interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research approach that targets to deliver comprehensive inspections of individuals' lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Smith and Osborn (2015) further indicate that the purpose of interpretative phenomenological analysis is to discover thoroughly exactly how participants are constructing logic of their personal and social world experiences and events. The two methods provided a generous and more meticulous understanding of the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying.

### **1.9.8 Trustworthiness**

A study is trustworthy if the readers of the research report judge it to be so (Gunawan, 2015). Here the amount of assurance in data, clarification, and approaches used to guarantee the value of study is detailed (Polit & Beck, 2014). In each study, researchers should explain the procedures and events required for the study to be reflected worthy of attention by readers (Amankwaa, 2016).

Four criteria proposed for ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative study are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these were adopted by this study as elaborated below.

**1.9.9.1 Dependability** denotes that work repeated in the same context, using similar methods and participants, yields similar results. That is, data will be replicated. To enable this replication, the current study has detailed the context and procedures of this study so that other researchers can replicate it.

**1.9.9.2 Credibility** means ensuring that a study measures or tests what it is actually intended to measure. To ensure credibility, Korstjens & Moser (2018) indicate that the following strategies are important: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checking. For this study, triangulation analysis and member checking were used. Heale and Forbes (2013) view triangulation as the use of a combination of methods of data sources, observers, or theories in order to gain a complete understanding of the issue studied. Triangulation is important to researchers for improving the validity of a study and to avoid biases. The flexibility in triangulation uses a combination of methods by a researcher in order to validate the findings. In this study data was triangulated by collecting information from different sources such as observations and interviews. In member checking, data is returned to the participants to check in-depth the accuracy of the information on their experiences. Member checking gives the researcher the ability to correct errors and challenge wrong interpretations (Birt, Scott, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). In this study the researcher consulted participants about checking the synthesised data. This was done to reconstruct the participants' information by adding omitted information or deleting the extracts that did not represent their experiences. In this case, the synthesised data was generated from participants' responses.

**1.9.9.3 Transferability** is the magnitude to which the results from one study are applied to another. The readers consider the particulars of the research conditions and equate them to the details of an environment or situation with which they are conversant (Kyngas, Kaariainen, & Elo, 2020). If there are sufficient resemblances between the two circumstances, the readers may be able to conclude that the outcomes of the research would be the equivalent or comparable to their own situation. To ensure transferability, the researcher in the current study provided sufficient and highly detailed description of the research situation, context, and methods used so that, the readers may be able to transfer the results of the study to their context. The detailed description of the phenomenon under study was provided.

**1.9.9.4 Confirmability** indicates whether the research information and explanations of findings are productions of the investigator's judgements or whether they are exclusively consequential from the proclamations of respondents (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023). Kasirye (2021) clarifies that the focus is the interpretation procedure applied in the analysis process. The procedure that needs to guarantee confirmability is known as an audit trail. The responsibility of presuming a comprehensive set of notes on judgements made throughout the research process is also very important. Qualitative researchers who believe and pursue equitability, anticipate theories like perfection and accuracy in their research enactment and the entanglement of other researchers, rather than constructing a certainty in findings (Stahl & King, 2020).

The researcher kept a reflective journal detailing the research process leading to the conclusions and recommendations. This includes the methods used, reasons for the selection of the approach and the shortcomings encountered. The researcher also demarcated her academic interest and experience of workplace bullying as a teacher. This study reported feelings and emotions stated by the participants.

## **1.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations ensure the balance between the impending risks of research and the likely benefits of the research. Due to the detailed nature of the qualitative study process, it is essential to protect the human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical ideologies (Mohd Arifin, 2018). The following paragraphs details the ethical considerations that were adhered to in

this study. These are voluntary and informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, beneficence and non-maleficence.

#### **1.10.1 Voluntary and informed consent**

Voluntary and informed consent implies that participants knowingly and voluntarily give their consent to participate in a study (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, its duration, and possible benefits. They were made aware that their participation was voluntary and there would be no financial benefits or incentives for taking part. Participants were also informed about their rights to withdraw from participating in the study at any point if they decided to and there would not be any consequences for them. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were requested to fill in and sign a consent form.

#### **1.10.2 Request for permission**

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho, and from the principals and teachers of the participating schools. The request of a written consent was extended to the Ministry principals, and further to the participants to sign before they participated in the study; all of which are attached in the study. It is an ethical procedure in research to request consent, especially when the study involves human beings. This proves that each participant was not forced to participate; they did so of their own free will.

#### **1.10.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity refer to avoiding revealing the identity of the participants. The researcher refrains from referring to the participants' names, and details such as social security number or driver's license number (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). Codes were used instead of participants' names in order to protect them. The information was written in such a way that it would not be traced back to the respondents. Descriptions were also done in a manner that does not reveal the identity of participants or that of their schools.

#### **1.10.4 Participants' privacy**

Moreover, the privacy of participants in a research project is an important part. Privacy in research means to be free from illegal meddling or releasing personal information (Walliman, 2011).

Participants' information should be kept a secret and not be disclosed to anyone. This leads to the researcher's intention to keep the raw data collected from participants in a private place where she will be the only one to get hold of it. The participants were interviewed in their convenient and private spaces of their choice. Also, data recordings were kept private with a strong password to safeguard participants' information.

#### **1.10.5 Beneficence and deception**

Beneficence and deception is the act of revealing the truth about the purpose and benefits of the study to the participants without deceiving them. According to Akaranga and Makau (2016), the researcher should not exaggerate or understate the benefits of the study while giving explanations to the participants. The researcher revealed all that is entailed in the study to the participants.

#### **1.10.6 Non-maleficence**

Non-maleficence, which is sometimes called the principle of no harm, expresses the potential risks of participation in a research study. According to Varkey (2021), non-maleficence requires actions that avoid and minimise harm to the research subject. It emphasises what constitutes physiological, emotional, social or even economic harm. In this concept, harm is avoided. Honesty towards the respondents is enhanced by shielding them from bodily and mental injury thus warranting that the researcher does not ask humiliating questions which can sicken or even astonish the respondents (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). The participants were not asked embarrassing questions, or forced to give out information which could have resulted in anxiety and fear on their part.

### **1.11 Chapter outline**

This study is divided into five chapters as follows:

**Chapter 1** provides the introduction to the study. It details background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives as well as the methodology used to carry out the study.

**Chapter 2** provides a critical review of related literature on teachers' workplace bullying globally, on the African continent and in Lesotho. In this chapter, the literature is extracted in relation to the study objectives, teachers' experiences of workplace bullying, ways in which workplace bullying

affects teachers, how teachers manage workplace bullying and, how teachers' workplace bullying affects the schools in which it happens.

**Chapter 3** provides the study's methodology. This indicates the related literature on the research paradigm, design, data collection methods and analysis. It also provides the description of measures that were taken to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 4** details the presentation of collected data, data analysis, and the interpretation of the data collected.

**Chapter 5** presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the study.

### **1.12 Chapter summary**

This chapter served as the introductory phase of the study. It detailed the background of teachers' workplace bullying, the statement of the problem, the research questions and objectives guiding the study. The significance of the study and the research methodology were also discussed. The chapter concluded with the outline of chapters.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on the topic. The review will cover teachers' encounters with workplace bullying, its impact on both teachers and the schools where it occurs, and how teachers cope with it. Additionally, the literature addresses the lack of alignment between classroom instruction, clinical skills laboratory, and clinical settings.

#### 2.2 Theoretical framework

The current study used Recognition Theory as a lens through which the prevalence of workplace bullying in primary schools in Peka was discussed. Recognition Theory gained prominence since early 1990s, when philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth developed recognition theories. Rachmad (2022a) defines recognition as the action by which a person is given admiration, credit, and gratitude for his/her contributions and achievements. According to Lepold (2019), recognition is synonymously considered as approval and affirmation, and is defined as something that occurs entirely between individuals even though they might belong to groups. According to Rachmad (2022b), this theory was established to offer direction on efficiently accepting constructive performances and accomplishments to cheer individual progress and welfare.

Moreover, Recognition Theory was developed to get the depth of the essential role of recognition in improving individual motivation and performance. Recognising contributions and achievements in different organisations plays an essential role in developing satisfaction, loyalty and increased productivity whether in schools, workplaces or communities (Rachmad, 2022b). Hirvonen and Koskinen (2023) reiterate that the basis of recognition theorists is that social recognition helps social beings with the need to become who they are. Theorists of recognition present social change moulded in previous struggles, predisposed to prejudices, power dynamics, manipulation and supremacy.

Busch and Zurn (2010) proclaim that recognition theory presents an account that expresses a conventional association concerning individual experiences of distress and their social origins. It

further gives an account that clarifies the existing eminence of several authentic social struggles, non-dominating practices of individual life, as well as a sociocultural atmosphere free from condemnation and discernment. Lepold (2019) states that a person who is positively recognised acquires freedom hence it is good to be recognised while disrespect as a factor of misrecognition can cause individuals excessive hurt. Lepold (2019) further indicates that persons' being and aspirations about themselves depend on recognition by others. As a result, they are able to develop a positive understanding of themselves. Bullying is a form of disrespect where a person is tormented and thus experiences a lot of negative aftermath on their lives (De Wet and Jacobs, 2014). In light of previous literature (Fahie & Devine, 2014; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018), workplace bullying happens between persons as groups or individuals. As a social issue, likewise, recognition transpires in societies and communities.

According to Iser (2019), recognition theories embrace that in order to develop a concrete distinctiveness, individuals are dependent on the reaction of other people as well as the entire society. Those who fail to experience satisfactory recognition, that is, those who are depicted by the surrounding others or the societal norms and values in a one-sided or negative way, will find it much harder to embrace themselves and their projects as valuable. Iser (2019) further states that in this manner, misrecognition hampers persons' positive affiliation to their selves. According to Batchelor (2019), victims of bullying question their capabilities and think less about themselves due to bullying. De Wet (2011) reiterates that bullied people suffer low self-esteem; they perceive themselves as unskilled and incompetent, and their tormentors negatively criticise their work. And sometimes, they are ignored and denied opportunities to take part in some activities. White (2019) proclaims that there are three things described in the theory, love, rights and solidarity which, if unaccounted for, individuals would cry for recognition, and their essential distinctiveness is endangered. Love is linked with self-confidence, rights with self-respect and solidarity with self-esteem. Love helps individuals to develop trust in others and a normative self-image. If robbed of meaningful company, individuals' dignity and social approval are at stake.

Furthermore, White (2019) indicates that loss of self-esteem on individuals diminishes the possibility of accomplishing goal and giving credit to their own capabilities. In cases of bullying, victims can find themselves socially isolated from colleagues and powerless to change the

situation. The experience of love includes not only the love and friendship of others but also an individual's practical relationship to themselves. It is this experience of love that provides self-confidence.

White (2019) states that if an individual with a weak sense of self and low self-confidence encounters abuse, he or she feels defenceless and at the mercy of others. There is the danger that the resulting harm may totally damage that person's identity. According to Lepold (2019), recognition theory clearly understands that disrespect endangers individuals' freedom and positive understanding of themselves. Failing to be recognised positively gives rise to a person feeling incomplete in their existence.

Teachers' workplace bullying appears to be a negative recognition of them and their efforts by people in their environment which is the school. Instead of their efforts and contributions being appreciated and acknowledged, they are humiliated, undermined and criticised (De Wet, 2014). Factors of workplace bullying, such as leadership styles, make it difficult for employees to engage effectively with their work and gain positive recognition from managers and colleagues for their contributions. Those in power positions may withhold recognition in the case of workplace bullying, contributing to toxic environment. This may in turn create a feel lack of recognition or respect from colleagues or superiors. This can also lead to feelings of marginalisation, humiliation and reduced self-esteem. Victims may even question their competence and value (Portelada, Candeias and Joao 2024).

### **2.3 Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying**

Teachers experience bullying differently. It could stem from work-related or personal disputes and be enforced through acts such as humiliation, isolation, threats, and undermining of professional and personal status. Each of these forms is elaborated below.

#### **2.3.1 Dispute-related workplace bullying**

Dispute-related bullying results from prolonged work-related conflict between individuals, a victim and a bully in an organisation. The unsettled conflict progressively escalates into hostile scenarios and becomes personal as everyone involved tries to dominate the other participant (Oluwatosin, 2020). Oluwatosin (2020) investigated why temporary staff in a

workplace are more vulnerable to workplace bullying using quantitative research methods using a sample of 250 respondents. Aggressive behaviours, malingering and resentment always result in interpersonal conflicts, which could be highly emotional situations that can escalate into personal attacks on the victim's self-worth. Fahie (2014) conducted a study investigating the lived experiences of workplace bullying in primary schools in Ireland. This study used semi-structured interviews with three participants to gather data. The study revealed that teachers are bullied through undermining, shouting, public humiliation, overt exclusion and prosecution threats. Participants reported being shouted at by some teachers using vulgar language in the office. Yelling, open dishonour, evident non-acceptance, lies and danger of litigation seem to be used to torture teachers in their workplaces.

In Fahie's (2014) study, participants complained about being mistreated by the principal after trying to correct the principal's wrongdoings. They bemoaned that anything negative would be blamed on them even when the victim had not provoked the bully in any manner that might sensibly validate the actions of the bully.

### **2.3.2 Work-related bullying**

In a study conducted by De Wet (2011) using narrative analysis, the lived experiences of two teachers were gathered. The study revealed numerous forms of bullying behaviours that teachers experience from principals, including ignoring teachers' needs, feelings, and accomplishments. Furthermore, ruthless and emotional principals undermine teachers' dreams, efforts, and enthusiasm. In agreement, De Wet and Jacobs (2013) indicated that teachers' work is frequently evaluated to ensure mistakes are found, and sometimes, they are given more work than they can manage.

On the other hand, Mollema (2018) states that victims were threatened by the principals when they felt that the contents of the examination papers were not adequate. Principals even threatened them with dismissal and offered no chance for the victims to go anywhere. Furthermore, Kyellu's (2016) study sample of 80 respondents focused on workplace bullying practices and their effect on teachers' performance in Tanzania. It listed the following teachers' bullying experiences:

withholding promotion, denying opportunities for furthering studies and assigning unsuitable exceptional burdens.

Kyellu (2016) further states that teachers are bullied by delaying their remuneration, promotion, release to engage in further study, and inappropriate special duties. D'Cruz, Bisht and Noronha (2021) indicate that work-related bullying, such as unreasonable deadlines and excessive monitoring and assignment of insignificant work, materialises as fundamental fragments of unmannerly means connected to person-related bullying acts. Work-related bullying acts also include impersonal disgrace at work involving situations such as workload, work hours, breaks, leave income and benefits (D'Cruz, Bisht, & Noronha, 2021).

Perpetrators of teachers' workplace bullying purposely ignore teachers in different ways. De Wet and Jacobs (2013) state that principals deliberately create situations beyond teachers' knowledge or withhold information to make them fail and appear incompetent. According to De Wet and Jacobs (2013), principals purposefully engineer scenarios surpassing teachers' expertise or withhold crucial information to induce their failure and portray them as incapable. In the same vein, Fahie (2014) asserts that teachers are often bullied through exclusion from various aspects of school life. Important information is frequently withheld, and resources are taken away. This lack of transparency can leave victims feeling uninformed and may hinder their ability to foster positive relationships with their colleagues. According to Batchelor (2019), bullies demonstrate disrespect towards their targets by intentionally ignoring them during meetings or casual conversations.

Furthermore, there needs to be more support for bullied teachers from principals and school management; teachers may feel set up to fail and experience social and professional isolation (Batchelor, 2019). There are various ways in which teachers can be targeted by workplace bullying. De Wet and Jacobs (2013) argue that principals intentionally create situations or withhold information to make teachers fail and seem incompetent. Additionally, Fahie (2014) highlights that teachers may be excluded from different aspects of school life regarding information and resources, leading to uninformed feelings and hindering positive relationships with colleagues. Batchelor (2019) also points out that bullies may disrespect their targets by intentionally ignoring

them during meetings or casual conversations. Furthermore, the lack of support from principals and school management can leave bullied teachers feeling set up to fail and socially isolated (Batchelor, 2019).

Lyons (2015) opines that bullying can also be in the form of non-verbal behaviour and psychological. The non-verbal behaviours experienced by the participants consists of the managers disregarding the victim, glimpsing through glass doors, watching them up, not talking, not admiring them for their endeavours, segregating and eliminating them. On the other hand, the psychological abuse suffered by the participants involves denying to let them go for trainings when others were given the chance, piling lessons instead of uniformly allocating students in terms of whether they were on or below grade level, and making them feel incompetent (Lyons, 2015).

Despite this, De Wet (2014) found that unwarranted written notes and reprimands were used as examples to claim that educators were inefficient and to spread spiteful rumours. According to the study, victims of bullying regularly received notes on their desks indicating that their work was inadequate. The same study revealed that participants were exposed to managerial bullying, including unrealistic and inhumane demands, being told to resign if they could not cope with changes in their work, and being asked to perform their duties even while on leave. Victims of workplace bullying were also subjected to attempts to tarnish their professional image. They were labeled incompetent and unfit to teach, and their professional qualifications were questioned over minor mistakes such as misspelled words. Teachers who made errors in their work were considered poor and incompetent (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet's (2011) findings indicate an array of strategies to generate an aggressive working environment used against the targets so that they are threatened with dismissal should they fail. Although bodily harm is possible in workplace bullying, it is not shared. Furthermore, De Wet and Jacobs (2013), in a study conducted in South Africa, reiterate that victims of workplace bullying experience threatening behaviours by the bullies in the form of severe bodily harm, reduction of fringe benefits and instant dismissal by principals.

Physical bullying is a common form of workplace bullying and can result from psychological and emotional bullying (Tolentino, 2016). Psychological issues often manifest as physical symptoms of depression and may cause headaches, fatigue, and digestive problems, while anxiety can lead to an upset stomach (Tolentino, 2016). According to Bulut and Hihi (2021), excessive stress from bullying may contribute to the development of illnesses like cardiovascular disease. The physical consequences of bullying can persist long-term, leading to issues such as headaches, sleep disturbances, and somatization (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016).

### **2.3.3 Person-related workplace bullying**

Person-related bullying includes humiliation or ridicule in front of others, making offensive remarks, spreading malicious rumours and gossip, excessive teasing, intentionally ignoring someone, constant and direct criticism, and physical threats (Ramdeo & Singh, 2023). D' Cruz, Bisht and Noronha (2021) indicate that person-related bullying is closely linked to social interaction processes and dismantles targets' relational dignity. Teachers do not only get bullied for their jobs and dispute relations but they are also bullied due to personal matters and bullies spread lies about them (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015). Pheko's (2018) study reported that participants heard from the corridors that the bullying perpetrators spread fabricated gossip with the intent to hinder victims' progress and improvements. Perpetrators maintained dominance, control and jealousy manifestation to demean victims through the use of gossip. Lee, Chou and Wu (2016) on one hand, indicate that gossip creates stress and destroys personal status. It breaks hearts and rips relationships and reputation apart. Furthermore, it negatively influences job performance.

Furthermore, Kauppi and Porhola (2012a) proclaim that communication facilitated through technology is one of the forms of bullying that teachers experience. In their study, teachers had been bullied using e-mail, telephone calls, and text messages, which belittled and insulted them. This form of bullying is known as cyberbullying. NASUWT-Teachers' Union (2012) reiterates that in cyberbullying, teachers are exposed to bigot and prejudiced comments and have their photographs spread through the internet. Insults related to intelligence, bodily features and the value of victims are some of the things posted against teachers on social networking websites. Studies demonstrate that participants experienced cyberbullying by learners, who edited their

photographs using computer programs to portray the victims sensually (Treurnich 2014). The photos were produced and posted on a school notice board, which caused severe dishonour to the entire school body. In addition, as stated by Bulut and Hihi (2021), cyberbullying encompasses various bullying types in the sense that one does not use spoken words but instead writes offending words or inappropriate content, technologically uploading them on social media.

In their 2023 study, Ifada and Sunawan investigated how cyber-victimization predicts cyberbullying and explored the moderating effects of emotional regulation on this relationship. The study's findings confirmed that cyber-victimization is linked to increased cyberbullying and that individuals who experience cyber-victimization often express their emotions by hurting others, primarily through cyberbullying. Santos (2020) asserts that many participants faced harmful treatment from their school administrators, leaders, parents, and peers due to their positions, roles, skin colour, and nationalities.

In a study by Matsela and Kirsten (2014), the experiences of teachers and the impact of workplace bullying on their health in Lesotho were investigated. The study utilized a qualitative research design and involved 21 secondary school teachers in Lesotho. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The study's findings revealed a high prevalence of workplace bullying among school teachers. Teachers reported experiencing various forms of bullying in their work environment, including disputes and issues related to both work and personal relations.

Moreover, Mahabeer (2020) revealed that in South Africa managing and negotiating bullying in schools has become progressively challenging for teachers, more so, for novice teachers entering the profession. The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews for KwaZulu -Natal Province. They expressed fears about not effectively identifying and responding to bullying behaviour.

#### **2.4 Effects of teachers' workplace bullying on the victims**

The impact of workplace bullying on teachers can be profound, affecting their physical, psychological, and social well-being. De Vos and Kirsten (2015) identified a range of health issues associated with bullying, including stress and trauma-related symptoms that can contribute to psychiatric illnesses such as mood and anxiety disorders. Similarly, Tolentino (2016) affirms that

teachers experience adverse effects on their physical, psychological, and social health as a result of workplace bullying, leading to decreased interest in work, irritability, and difficulty focusing. Furthermore, Batchelor (2019) explains that bullied teachers may become absent or disengaged from their work and may even contemplate leaving the school.

Besides, people who have been bullied regularly at work generally develop psychological symptoms and can show a syndrome that is very similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Pye, 2016). Pye (2016) further indicates that, often, victims experience extreme agony and react with robust sentiments and physical overreaction to vital trials in their workplace. Health problems, such as gastric problems or high blood pressure, may be connected to physiological overreaction. Reduced attentiveness, petulance, and sleep problems are typical. Fahie (2014) states that it is common for teachers to go on sick leave after several bullying incidents by superiors. Such teachers are diagnosed and treated for depression. Their thoughts of facing the perpetrators cause them to have knots in their stomachs as well as severely disturbed sleeping patterns after experiencing bullying (Fahie, 2014). Furthermore, De Vos and Kirsten (2015) cite psychiatric health problems victims experience, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and panic attacks, and teachers ultimately leaving the profession.

Bernstein and Batchelor (2022) indicate that anxiety, depression, emotional strain, and feelings of ineffectiveness are marked as the aftermath of bullying. Overwhelming workloads and inadequate support resources characterise teachers' work environments. Bernstein and Batchelor's (2022) study investigated bullying repercussions on teachers' health and welfare in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The study employed semi-structured interviews with 13 teachers comprising 10 females and three males. The findings of this study revealed that the bullying atmosphere is said to foster trauma, fury, obstruction and hostility and breeds the rise of bullying deeds, with educators going against one another.

Teachers can experience a range of mental health issues as a result of being exposed to workplace bullying, which can negatively impact their self-esteem. Some may even begin to question their abilities and self-worth. Batchelor (2019) reported that victims of workplace bullying felt that their teaching skills were affected, leading them to feel incompetent and unqualified in their profession.

Participants in the study expressed that they lost confidence in themselves and were emotionally affected by the bullying experience (Batchelor, 2019). De Wet (2011) also found that victims of bullying experienced significant distress in their work environment, affecting their relationships with colleagues and students, as they began to doubt their abilities and self-assurance. On the other hand, Lyons (2015) highlighted that teachers who are victims of workplace bullying often experience verbal cruelty. They described being isolated, disrespected, belittled, and shouted at by principals in front of colleagues and students, leading to feelings of inadequacy and undermining their professional work (Lyons, 2015).

Furthermore, Lyons (2015) proclaims that victims of workplace bullying endure non-verbal and psychological maltreatment. The superiors budge into the victims' classrooms unannounced, eavesdropping through the windows, overlooking victims, observing them now and then, not offering appraisals of work, segregating and rejecting them. At one point, victims suffered the experience of being denied developmental access, such as getting into training. Victims were made to appear unskilled by withholding critical information such as departmental circulars, memoranda, workshops, appointments with learning facilitators, and their classes being interrupted. Grades and learning outcomes were also frequently changed. Lyons (2015) and De Wet (2014) reiterate that this system forced victims to become diligent educators.

Workplace bullying has several unpleasant consequences for teachers. Teachers are affected by their sense of self, profession, and personalities and are impacted at personal and work levels (Fahie, 2014). Treurnich (2014) adds that the bullying done to teachers often causes them to lose their motivation for teaching, with obvious negative implications for the teaching profession. Fahie (2014) further indicates that the strain derived from bullying in the school caused participants to become hesitant to get involved in every imaginative structure. The findings from Fahie's (2014) study also show that the bullying practices around the school highly damaged the teamwork between the perpetrator and the victim and the school culture. In agreement, Pye (2016) shows that victims may avoid or withdraw from their usual activities and enjoyment. According to Jamshaid, Malik and Parveen (2021), the negative experiences of individual victims lead to negative consequences on productivity and turnover rates.

On the same point, De Wet (2014) states that teachers' welfare and expertise are injured, and they experience escalating concern and demoralisation due to bullying in the school environment. Thus, teaching and learning are affected negatively as both bystanders and targets are affected. Kyellu (2016) reiterates that the lives of workplace bullying victims as well as their job performances and gratification are powered by experiences such as dishonouring, humiliation and misery. Kyellu's (2016) findings indicated that:

Bullying behaviours such as assigning incorrect or meaningless tasks to someone or behaving in an offending style, asking for worthless responsibilities, restricting others from sharing their feelings and responsibilities, and gossiping behind one's back are related to nervous tension, indicating decreased well-being.

Situations that overwhelm people tend to strain their minds, thus causing low concentration and focus. Oluwatosin (2020) adds that strain, irritation, rage, nervousness, and feelings of weariness and intolerance all disturb victims' enactment. Oluwatosin (2020) further posits that the magnitude and excellence of work proficiency drops, and the desire to resign rises. According to Bukhari and Akhter (2022), the effects of bullying on interest loss shows a change in perspective, a loss of concentration on work, insomnia, alterations in compliance when cooperating with people and matters, and fluctuations in attentiveness.

Workplace bullying has a significant personal effect on victims. Some victims believe leaving their jobs is the best way to escape the situation (Shaw, 2017). They doubt themselves and frequently do not report to work (Emamzadeh, 2018). Workplace bullying leads to a decrease in the performance of the victims. Some consider switching to a different profession due to decreased job responsibilities and dissatisfaction (Bukhari & Akhter, 2022). Victims of workplace bullying endure high levels of psychological and physical suffering while maintaining a composed façade at work.

Additionally, Bukhari and Akhter (2022) discovered decreased teacher performance. Similarly, Batchelor (2019) found that participants experienced stress, frustration, and fatigue. The participants attributed the increase in workplace bullying reports within schools to their stressful

working conditions and the resulting poor well-being. Prolonged exposure to bullying behaviours led to feelings of depression, stress, and incompetence among the participants. Furthermore, they noted that workplace bullying hurts school functioning, contributing to increased turnover intentions, absenteeism, and breakdowns in working relationships (Batchelor, 2019).

De Oliveira Pimentel, Della Mea and Dapieve Patias (2020) claim that bullied people may experience stress, which leads to anxiety, depression or illnesses. The psychological pressure victims suffer during this phase results in illnesses. Nervousness, loneliness, and negative thoughts trigger depressive and anxiety disorders. Tolentino's (2016) study adds that the participants reported playing flashbacks of bullying incidents in their minds, which made them hesitant to trust anyone. Bullying has a direct impact on victims' capability to show their potential and can also affect their psychological and bodily welfare. Chan, Wong, Yeap, Wee, Jamil and Nantha (2019) aver that the minds of bullying victims become occupied with memories of the acts of bullying they experienced. Bullied individuals are likely to have aggravated and reduced mental well-being (Chan et al., 2019). Victims may experience reduced mental well-being due to recurring memories of their encounters. Santos (2020) investigated stress, burnout, and turnover among black expatriate education professionals in South Korea. He found out that due to bullying, victims developed stress and burnout, which influenced their suicidal behaviour and career decision. Similarly, Koiv (2020) indicates that victims reported suffering an increased amount of workplace stress due to bullying.

Bullied employees lose interest in their work. This view is supported by the findings of De Wet and Jacobs (2014), who explain that teachers who feel emotionally and physically insecure in their work environment are unable to address the challenges of an ever-changing teaching setting effectively. According to De Wet (2014), bullying of teachers leads to victims detaching themselves from their colleagues at work, making functioning at school problematic and challenging. This demoralises victims, leading to feelings of isolation at work. In order to avoid further mistreatment and being labeled troublemakers, bullied teachers tend to remain silent, causing distress and anxiety (De Wet, 2014). In severe cases, workplace bullying results in teachers seeking job changes or retiring from teaching careers.

According to Lyons (2015), victims of workplace bullying become unhappy, fragile, irritated, uncertain, disappointed, anxious and even helpless. Workplace bullying may also cause a high rate of non-attendance, low confidence and inspiration and victims engaging in counterproductive work behaviour, which results in low levels of motivation and morale of employees, increased absenteeism, and employees becoming involved in counterproductive work behaviour (Dhar, 2012).

Psychological, spiritual, and social effects of workplace bullying include temperament alterations, disturbed interpersonal relationships, seclusion, and aggression toward others (Matsela & Kirsten, 2014). Lipinski and Crothers (2014) emphasise that individuals who are bullied at work often transfer their psychological trauma to their families and friends, creating additional stress in the target's life. Targets of bullying may experience strained relationships with family and friends as they withdraw from social interactions to protect themselves from mistreatment (Lipinski & Crothers, 2014). Pye (2016) notes that victims become hypervigilant, focusing solely on their struggle to survive at work, leading to an obsession with their work situation and hindering their ability to enjoy relationships. According to Tolentino (2016), bullied teachers may suffer from shame due to public scrutiny, criticism, and ridicule from workplace bullies. Workplace bullying can create a climate of fear that affects everyone in the work environment (Pye, 2016).

Ozkilic and Kartal's (2012) work reported teachers' declining prospects for students and the teaching job and that their classroom contact with learners had worsened, thus causing distress because of workplace bullying. Also, because of teachers' workplace bullying, affected classes may be in danger regarding instruction and learner-teacher communiqué. Pye (2016) emphasises the severe and lasting psychological distress caused by workplace bullying. The harmful consequences affect not only the targeted worker but also the workplace observers, overall productivity, and the financial health of the organisation. The targeted person may become very anxious, preoccupied with their problems at work, and may suffer mood disturbances. They cannot relax and have fun, even if that is their usual personality. They might block out some of the upsetting events or have trouble remembering important aspects of what has happened to them. The sense of a future is darkened for the individual, who can see no promising future for themselves (Pye, 2016).

Although teachers' workplace bullying appears to have adverse effects on the targets, it is experienced positively in some cases. Victims became tough and resilient as a result of workplace bullying experience, indicating that bullying is perceived negatively or positively depending on each victim's perspective of the situation. (McCarty, 2012). According to Tolentino (2016), some participants took the experience positively and earned positive outcomes. Those participants mentioned being determined to improve their work and themselves. At the same time, a limited number observed it as comparable to extra commitment because it gave them the power to do better. Shaw (2017) found that workplace bullying by colleagues did not affect the professional development of victims.

## **2.5 The perpetrators of teachers' workplace bullying**

Teachers can face bullying from various sources. When students display aggression and hostility, it can become a problem, especially if it is ongoing and the teacher lacks the necessary support and resources to address the issues (Pye, 2016). However, research suggests that bullying primarily stems from school authority figures, occasionally from colleagues, and sometimes from former superiors or subordinates (Matsela & Kirsten, 2014). Bullying from parents is less common (Shaw, 2017). Different individuals in the school environment can subject teachers to various types of bullying. The following sections delve into the individuals who bully teachers in the school setting.

### **2.5.1 The school management bodies**

Several investigations found that school management bodies, more specifically, bully teachers with principals mostly bullying teachers (De Vos, 2013; De Vos & Kirsten, 2015; De Wet, 2010; De Wet & Jacobs, 2014). Hollis (2015) reiterates that a leader could use mediated bullying to continue extortion in his absence or to reserve a cover-up of sympathy, while using rebellious strategies to regulate employees. It appears that principals use their authority to create an atmosphere of fear and oppression among teachers. This is consistent with the findings of De Vos and Kirsten's (2015) study, which concluded that school administrators misuse their power by subjecting teachers to harassment through strict enforcement of school regulations and policies, such as excessive monitoring of their work.

De Wet (2010b) argues that bullies are often branded as holding a position of authority; therefore, they destructively abuse this supremacy. On the contrary, Alameddine and Mirza's (2020) findings indicate an opposite view that teachers' superiors do not bully their subordinates. Instead, they support them in their professional development and developing a pleasant and friendly environment at school. However, they further found that not much is done to address the issue of bullying by other parties. Their study examined the perceptions of teachers who have been bullied by the authorities or were bystanders in teachers' workplace bullying (Alameddine & Mirza, 2020). Principals abuse their managerial positions and often use teacher-colleagues in the bullying process.

### **2.5.2 Colleagues**

De Vos and Kirsten (2015) assert that bullying among teachers may involve colleague-on-colleague and learner-on-teacher bullying. Teachers can be bullied by their colleagues. De Vos (2013) adds that colleagues sometimes become part of the bullying process perpetrated by principals. Colleagues work as accomplices of principals in this dirty work. During principals' absence their stooges help to assert control. According to Lyons (2015) teachers become accomplices of administrators to sustain bullying acts. Teachers who require acceptance in the schools are usually used by superiors as they are not effective and are easily irritated by targets. They revel in making the victims look useless.

Shaw (2017) discovered that teachers can be victimised by their colleagues at the same level and position which can be very demoralising. Teacher bullies often belittle, humiliate, isolate, and exclude their targets in an attempt to intimidate them. They go to great lengths to tarnish the image and dignity of their victims.

### **2.5.3 Parents**

Sometimes, parents can behave like bullies towards teachers in their workplace environments. They may use tactics similar to those used by students to intimidate targeted teachers. According to Billet, Folgelgarn, and Burns (2019), parents have been known to verbally insult teachers and advocate on behalf of their children. In rare cases, some parents have physically attacked or hit teachers. Other tactics include invading teachers' personal space, spreading lies about them,

organising others against them, swearing at them, and belittling them through social media, phone calls, and text messages (Billet, Fogelgarn, & Burns, 2019). Additionally, Kucuksuleymanoglu (2019) indicates that teachers receive harassing and threatening messages from parents online.

#### **2.5.4 Learners**

De Wet (2010a) claims that teachers can become victims of bullying not only by their superiors and colleagues but also by students who engage in disruptive behaviours such as holding targets captive in their offices, teasing, back chatting, and slapping. Kauppi and Porhola (2012b) found that teachers experience destructive signals and laughter directed at them, and learners impersonate their characteristic features somehow. Teachers also face troublesome student behaviours, including disrupting their work, refusing to collaborate, showing viciousness, and ignoring the teachers. Kauppi and Porhola (2012b) further indicate that teachers experienced bullying in forms such as students repeatedly lying, dodging lessons, hiding from the teacher, and frequently coming late to class, in addition to engaging in speculative gossiping and unjustly criticizing the teacher's professional skills. Billet et al. (2019) found that teachers experienced annoying written emails and phone calls from learners. Sometimes, learner bullies would occupy victims' spaces and turn other learners against the targets, getting them in trouble through lying, segregating them, and getting parents involved in disputes on their behalf. Being sworn or yelled at was commonly used in student-teacher bullying and harassment experienced by teachers.

Woudstra, Van Rensburg, Visser, and Jordaan (2018) suggest that students often bully teachers in classrooms during teaching and learning. Bullying from students to teachers typically occurs during class time, within the confines of the classroom. Woudstra et al. (2018) further state that the classroom background offers spectators of onlookers, initiators, or followers of the bully, which may make it more fascinating for the student to involve in nerve-wracking behaviour. For teachers, experiencing bullying in a public space where there are passive bystanders can be very impactful. Teachers have reported experiencing forms of physical bullying, such as having their belongings stolen or damaged, as well as being physically attacked or wounded by a student.

## **2.6 Teachers' management of workplace bullying**

Given that workplace bullying can have a significant negative impact on teachers, it is crucial to understand how they cope with such toxic work environments. Coping strategies for managing workplace bullying may involve victims presenting their case in a reasonable manner or realising that the situation cannot continue as it is and taking action to prevent further harm to their well-being (Tolentino, 2016).

Targets of continuous bullying often resort to different coping mechanisms. Dhar (2012) discovered that bullied individuals may experience feelings of hopelessness, which can lead to alcohol abuse, stress-related complaints, anxiety, illness, or even thoughts of self-harm. Additionally, Tolentino (2016) suggests that targets may consider resigning from their current position and seeking employment elsewhere. According to Shaw (2017), some teachers cope with bullying by increasing their alcohol consumption and becoming dependent on food. Victims of workplace bullying may also use submissive or reserved responses. They may ignore the bully by focusing on their work, and continuing to support their colleagues.

De Wet and Jacobs (2013) proclaim that all the participants in their study decided not to confront their tormentor, the principal. They avoided being bullied further by the bullies. Similarly, De Wet's (2010b) participants kept a low profile by not confronting their bully and remaining silent to protect themselves against further bullying. According to Upton (2010), an effective coping mechanism to deal with bullying is when victims do nothing and act as if nothing is going on in their lives. In agreement, Killoren (2014) avers that to avoid termination by bullies who are bosses, victims have to be silent even if they feel oppressed. On the contrary, Fitzpatrick (2020) claims that targets' responses may be considered covert, seeking confidential advice, talking to family and friends, taking notes and working to rule tactics.

Surprisingly, Alameddine and Mirza (2020) reported that teachers solve bullying issues by beating learners who bully them. The more beating they do on learners induced fear for bullying continuation, hence, the end of it. Moreover, Lopes, Bortolon, Macioce and Raffard (2020) reiterate that when teachers feel injustice and are harassed and bullied in the workplace, they show workplace deviance as a form of revenge and retaliatory strategy to impose equity and fairness.

Such teachers feel that justice is done in the form of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and as a coping response to manage their paranoid beliefs of the perceived malevolence of other people against them in their workplace.

Targets often do not report or react to mistreatment because the perpetrator holds a superior organizational position. Killoren (2014) states that victims of workplace bullying fear speaking out about their mistreatment because they are afraid that their bullying superiors may terminate their employment. The power imbalance is considered one of the primary reasons for employee silence (Rai & Agarwal, 2018).

Upton (2010) asserts that sustaining shunning and doing nothing as active coping strategies in workplace bullying minimise the bully's attention on the target, thus making the situation less appealing for the bully. De Wet (2010b) adds that some teachers keep a low profile and become silent to protect themselves from further abuse. Most of the targets decided not to antagonise their abusers. The targets may adopt avoidance strategies, such as absenteeism (Casimir, McCormack, Djurkovic, & Nsubuga-Kyobe, 2012) as they 'withdraw both emotionally and physically from social and professional activities to avoid further mistreatment'. Moreover, Hollis (2015) points out that in response to bullying, any character who creates danger, including the principal and co-worker, is sidelined by victims and bystanders. The targets and witnesses ignore the abusive boss, the harassing colleague, or any other personality who creates a threat.

Despite showing decreased productivity, targets of bullying may be able to improve their performance by exerting more effort to prove the bully wrong and surpass them in their work. Tolentino (2016) reiterates that some targets were motivated to excel and enhance their skills. Choi (2018) also suggests that workplace bullying can unreasonably push victims to strive harder in their work.

In several cases, principals received reports from victims hoping that the issue of workplace bullying would be addressed. However, in Lopes et al. (2020), the authorities did not address the reports on bullying. According to Kauppi and Porhola (2012b), most respondents reported sharing their bullying experiences with a member of their work community. The study by Kauppi and

Porhola (2012b) involved an internet survey of 215 respondents to examine the attributions made by Finnish elementary and lower secondary teachers for their victimization, along with the people with whom they shared their experiences and the links between their experiences and attributions.

Additionally, in agreement with Shaw (2017), all participants described using a friend, family member, or colleague as a support to cope with horizontal workplace bullying. Some victims opted for alcohol use and ignored the bullies. Shaw (2017) further explains that the support network is an outlet to vent, share stories, and sympathise with others. According to the victims, the most effective coping mechanism in workplace bullying experiences is having a supportive network. Langeveldt (2023) adds that the authorised means offered to teachers who are victims of workplace bullying in South Africa provide various possibilities for pursuing authentic reimbursement.

Furthermore, another coping strategy that victims found helpful is isolating themselves from the bullies and continuing with their own business. While isolation does not stop bullying acts from happening, it provides some relief to the victims of constant assaults. According to Ozkiloglu and Kartal (2012), teachers often seek help from guidance counsellors, assistant principals, and principals. In addition, a study by Woudstra et al. (2018) reported that teachers were able to talk about their experiences with colleagues (29.3%), families (24.5%), or friends (23.8%) and received various forms of support.

## **2.7 Effects of workplace bullying in the schools where it happens**

Workplace bullying has been found to have detrimental effects on the school environment. Schools as organizations are affected by workplace bullying, particularly when victims have negative experiences. According to Field (2010), organizations may experience a loss of productivity due to increased absenteeism. Bullied teachers may feel reluctant to go to work as a way of avoiding the perpetrators. As employees become absent from work, the production quantity will likely decrease. Absenteeism can disrupt the regular operation of the organization due to its unpredictability and unexpected nature (Hoel et al., 2011).

Merilainen, Koiv, and Honkanen (2019) in a study investigating the relationships between perceived bullying, work engagement, and work performance among Estonian academics – found

that workplace bullying is not just a workplace issue, but a personal one. It is connected to work commitment, work performance, and productivity at a community level. In addition to individual well-being, workplace bullying can lead to increased employee absenteeism and intentions to leave the organization or profession altogether, and increases the risk of being forced out of the workforce. All of this affects an organization's ability to operate at its best due to loss of productivity, costs of legal action, potential lawsuits, and the need for intervention programmes.

Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, and Einarsen (2011) suggest that using coercion or pressure as a management strategy can lead to reduced productivity due to cognitive fatigue, which can decrease focus and compliance, potentially causing frustration and conflict among colleagues. Lack of focus can lead to increased likelihood of errors, raising the risk of accidents (Hoel et al., 2011). Additionally, the costs incurred in hiring and training new staff, as well as implementing interventions to address workplace bullying, are some of the downsides of workplace bullying in an organization (Hollis, 2015).

In addition, the entire organisational procedure is also said to be infected by bullying behaviours. Fahie (2014) indicates that the relational disagreement between individuals escalated to a point where the entire school operation was affected. In the same study, it is explained that creativity was severely affected as those troubled were impotent, or reluctant, to work collaboratively towards a mutual objective due to the undesirable school atmosphere and its consequence on the interactive associations within. Therefore, innovative platforms and developments were cancelled, and advanced methodologies were uncultivated. As a result, the school's teaching and learning value might have been compromised (Fahie, 2014). In the same study, it is claimed that restlessness was nurtured in the school as time passed, resulting in collaborative bullying of the head of the Administration Panel by co-workers. This established itself in a value that formed an atmosphere of disobedience in the school. Professional collaboration among teachers became affected.

Hollis (2015) indicates that disconnections are produced by the management that permits unfriendly or unmannerly environments. 'Leadership in these organisations often lacks care or concern; in turn, professionalism is eroded along with mutual trust' (Hollis, 2015). One of the

dogmatic concerns in the organisation is the occurrence of communication breakdown and prejudiced work obligations (Byrne, 2015). In short, the workplace developed into a combat zone for the victims and bystanders of bullying. Ruined employees detached and grabbed a protective attitude instead of captivating the administrative duty. Byrne (2015) further reported that the participants were drained due to oppression through bullying actions. The victims even expressed a desire to leave their workplace to escape ongoing bullying. Such desire challenges the organization, as it entails hiring and training new employees, which requires significant time and resources.

Victims of workplace bullying may demonstrate their dedication by working overtime. However, according to Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, and Einarsen (2011), even when victims work harder to demonstrate their loyalty, it can lead to reduced work efficiency within the organization due to employee mental fatigue. This fatigue may decrease their alertness and compliance, leading to frustration among colleagues.

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature that focuses on teachers' workplace bullying. It outlined forms of bullying, negative and positive effects, management, and the impact on schools as organizations. Forms of bullying, including work-related, dispute-related and personal, were discussed. Perpetrators of teachers' workplace bullying, such as school management bodies, colleagues, parents and learners, were also discussed. Lastly, the description of the theory that directs the study was detailed. The succeeding chapter focuses on the research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and procedures used in this study. The details of the research paradigm, research approach, research participants and their selection, data collection, processing, data and analysis, as well as ethical considerations are discussed.

#### 3.2 Research paradigm

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. Siddiqui (2019) points out that research paradigm can be defined as a collection of logically related assumptions that orient thinking and research. It entails the beliefs that guide the researcher's action. Gannon, Taheri and Azer (2022) state that a research paradigm is used to inform the research methods adopted, the research processes undertaken, as well as the nature and generalisability of conclusions subsequently drawn. .

Interpretivism emphasises individuals' interpretation of the world around them. Interpretivists believe in socially constructed multiple realities. The emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) believe that interpretivism aims at understanding individuals' interpretations of the social phenomena they encounter. Workplace bullying is a social phenomenon that happens through the interactions of individuals and groups. Therefore, interpretivism was suitable for the current study because it targeted social phenomena such as bullying. Through interpretivism, the researcher could understand participants' experiences of workplace bullying.

#### 3.3 Research design

Research design is defined by Kazdin (2022) as the plan of all activities used to examine and respond to the research question. Asenahabi (2019) states that the core of research design is to interpret a research problem into information for exploration to offer significant responses to research questions at a slightest charge. This study used a multiple-case study as a research design to scrutinise the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), multiple case designs explore actual multiple-bounded

arrangements through thorough, comprehensive data gathering involving multiple sources of information. Halkias, Neubert, Thurman, and Harkiolakis (2023) state that the multiple-case study design is a valuable qualitative study research tool in studying the links between the personal, social, behavioural, psychological, organisational, cultural, and environmental factors. It is essential for the in-depth study of participants' perspectives on the phenomenon within its natural context. Creswell and Poth (2018) reiterate that the researcher selects multiple cases to illustrate one issue or concern in a multiple-case study. A multiple-case study compares cases to identify common patterns, relationships, or similarities. The cases may be similar or diverse, but the researcher looks for patterns or relationships across cases (Yin, 2018). In this study, the researcher, through a multiple-case study design, was able to understand the perspectives of the teachers who experienced workplace bullying in schools regarding how it occurs, the perpetrators, effects and coping strategies.

### **3.4 Research approach**

The research approach is a plan and procedure for research that spans the steps from broad assumptions to detailed data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study used qualitative research approach in order to attain detailed comprehension of multifaceted human experiences, behaviours and social phenomena. Ishtiaq (2019) describes qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. Researchers using a qualitative approach are interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of people's experiences. Qualitative research aims at comprehensively understanding social phenomena in their natural environments (Ugwu & Eze Val, 2023). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). On that account, the researcher in the current study was able to get a deeper understanding of the meanings individuals attributed to the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying as she was able to prospect the 'why' and 'how' backing actions and opinions of the teachers.

### 3.5 Research participants

Research participants are individuals from whom the researcher generates data (Midgley et al., 2017). Midgley, Danaher and Baguley (2017) add that not only humans are the principal focus of the research venture but also those who are impacted by the research, whether instantaneously or retrospectively. In this study, a total of 15 participants consisting of two teachers from each primary school and five principals, from five primary schools in the Peka area participated in this study. Along with the two teachers, one principal was recruited from each school. For each participant, a code was given to protect their identity. P stands for Principal, S represents a school and T represents Teacher. Codes include P1 S1 for Principal 1 from School 1, T1 S1 for Teacher 1 from School 1, and so on. Table 1 below summarises the biographies of the participants.

School name	Participants	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Years of experience
1	1	Female	41	B.Ed.	16
	2	Male	40	B.Ed.	14
	3	Female	38	Diploma	8
2	1	Female	39	B. Ed.	11
	2	Female	38	Diploma	12
	3	Female	42	Diploma	17
3	1	Female	51	Masters	22
	2	Male	40	B.Ed. Honours	16
	3	Female	43	Diploma	17
4	1	Male	38	Diploma	10
	2	Female	42	Masters	20
	3	Female	41	Diploma	7
5	1	Male	55	B.Ed.	25
	2	Female	43	B.Ed.	16

	3	Female	36	B. Ed.	12
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**Table 3. 1: Participants’ biographies**

### 3.5.1. Selection of participants

The selection of participants was done using non-probability selection. Non-probability selection of participants is described by Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaei (2017) as a method in which sampling units are selected on the basis of personal judgement. The researcher’s knowledge and opinion are used to identify individuals or items in the population. According to Taherdoost (2016), non-probability sampling is often associated with qualitative studies. The study that uses non-probability sampling is designed not to be generalised to the population but to collect exploratory data (Taherdoost, 2016). In this case, purposive selection was used as a non-probability selection technique. According to Parveen and Showkat (2017), the purposive selection of participants is a technique in which the researcher intentionally selects the participants. Instead of randomization, participants are selected because they are considered to have highly appropriate information and knowledge (Parveen & Showkat, 2017).

In the current study, the researcher purposively selected people who were thought to be typical of the group being studied regarding certain traits (Muzari et al., 2022). Kumar (2014) describes purposive selection of participants as a careful identification of people who can provide appropriate information to achieve a study’s objectives. The primary consideration is the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information and be willing to share it with the researcher (Kumar, 2011). Participants with a minimum of five years teaching experience were selected because they may have experienced workplace bullying.

Principals were selected because they are the overseers of all school activities and, consequently, possess the power to enforce laws in schools. As such, they may be aware of cases of bullying that were reported to their offices. They may have experienced bullying, observed it among staff members, or sometimes perpetrated it themselves. Such teachers were selected because they had been in the school for some time and might have experienced or observed bullying in their schools. As such, they could share their experiences of workplace bullying and how teachers coped with it.

On the one hand, teachers with less than five years of teaching experience were not included because they might need time to learn their rights at work. They see everything happening as part of grooming in teaching and are therefore unable to spot degrading behaviours towards them. Teachers with teaching qualifications were included as they are knowledgeable on the teaching profession ethics and conduct. The qualifications could also explain which specific qualifications seem to experience bullying as they differ.

### **3.6 Pilot study**

A pilot study is a preliminary study carried out before the actual study when a phenomenon specific to a given community is barely studied, and very little is known about it (Dzwigol, 2020). According to Thomas (2017), a pilot study checks the effectiveness of the implemented research methods and tools to inspect a given problem. Dzwigol (2020) further explains that a pilot study helps avoid misperception with an inaccurately invented data collection tool, and it is often conducted on a small scale and establishes the first contact with the analysed reality. The interview schedule for the current study was piloted with six participants from three schools with characteristics similar to those of the target schools of the current study. The participants included three teachers and three principals. During piloting, all the questions on the interview guide proved not to be challenging hence no alterations were made.

### **3.7 Data collection**

Data collection is gathering information from relevant sources to find answers to the research problem (Dudovskiy, 2018). For this study, semi-structured interviews and official school documents were used. The semi-structured interviews are organised conversations guided by broad, open-ended questions. (Ahlin, 2019). Interviews allow interviewees to elaborate on events, processes, perceptions and opinions, and the interviewer can continue to use probes to obtain more new information based on interviewees' responses (Muzari et al., 2022). Ruslin, Mashuri, Sarib, Alhabsyi, and Syam (2022) expound that semi-structured interviews are more potent than other types of interviews for qualitative research because they allow researchers to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees on the phenomena. Likewise, participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are explored in the sense that they can say more in cases where the idea expressed is unclear (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) further

explain that, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher can probe participants for more information and clarification. The researcher can supplement the interview with follow-up questions and comments. In this study, semi-structured interviews were appropriate because the researcher could deeply explore the participants' thoughts and feelings about teachers' workplace bullying. The interview guides are attached as Appendix 4. The researcher used an audio recorder to ensure that all data was captured from the participants during the interviews. That was supplemented with taking short notes on important issues.

### **Official school documents**

Furthermore, official school documents were examined for information about teachers' workplace bullying. The documents showed information about people who experienced bullying but were no longer working in the schools when the study took place. Some victims of workplace bullying might have transferred to other schools, resigned, retired, or died. Some of the documents that the researcher looked at in detail were policy manuals and disciplinary hearing minutes. In contrast, the disciplinary hearing books showed how cases of bullying were dealt with and resolved.

### **3.7.1 Data processing**

Data processing is a procedure in which collected data is transcribed, edited, coded, classified, tabulated, charted, and diagrammed (Kumar, 2014). Transcription is the process of writing down data recorded during the data-gathering activity. The transcription must sort the data for analysis (Madondo, 2021). Hussain (2020) describes editing as a strategy used to detect errors and omissions in the interview notes during and after the interviews and correct them whenever possible. Coding entails providing numbers or symbols for various categories of data (Saldana, 2016). It aims to systematically classify all data to be compared with other parts of the data set (Gale et al., 2013). Saldana (2016) advises correcting the data by contacting the participants again or using the researcher's memory.

After checking for possible errors and omissions and providing symbols for the data, similar data was given a corresponding theme that formed sub-headings. Classifying data, according to Gupta & Gupta (2020), is arranging data in groups or classes based on some standard features or objectives in view. Classification condenses the data and facilitates comparisons of the data. It also

helps to study the relationships (Gupta & Gupta, 2020). According to Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid and Redwood (2013), charting involves summarising the data by category from each transcript. It requires balancing reducing the data on the one hand and retaining the original meanings and feel of the interviewees' words.

This study observed data transcription, editing, coding, and classification. I wrote down the participants' responses in a diary, translating those written in Sesotho to English. This was done while listening to the recordings of the interviews, which allowed me to edit where omissions and errors were made. Each participant was given a code to protect their identity. I further identified similar data and classified it into themes.

### **3.7.2 Data analysis**

Data analysis is defined by Lune and Berg (2017) as the reasoning strategy to split a complex whole into its parts to understand its relationships. It is the process of carefully searching and putting together the interview transcripts, observation notes, and other non-textual materials that the researcher collects to learn more about the phenomenon (Kumar, 2014). The qualitative analysis examines written, graphic, or audial data and covers a range from validation to consideration (Mihas, 2019). Flick (2014) says that data analysis is a methodical way to explain the meaning of qualitative data. This is done by categorising parts of the data into a specific order using a coding frame. For this study, I used content and interpretative phenomenological analysis to analyse the collected data.

#### **3.7.2.1 Content analysis**

This study used content analysis to examine data collected from official school documents. The documents used were the disciplinary hearing books, minutes, school policies, and school rules and regulations. These documents helped to clarify the experiences and behaviours of bullying in each school. Content analysis looks for patterns in how people make sense of and create meaning through language. It does this by focusing on the text's content and the themes and meanings that come up naturally (Preiser et al., 2021). Content analysis helps the researcher identify patterns in recorded communication. This helps to discover the purposes, messages, and effects of communication content (Luo, 2023).

The data from the semi-structured interviews was analysed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis method. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a psychological qualitative approach that aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experiences. It aims to offer insights into how a particular person, in a specific context, makes sense of a particular phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Smith and Osborn (2015) further indicate that interpretative phenomenological analysis aims to explore how participants describe personal and social-world experiences and events in detail. Smith and Niz, in Detailza (2022) indicate that IPA researchers focus on lived experiences and how people make sense of these experiences within the context of their personal and social worlds. Interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed the researcher to identify the themes portrayed by different participants and then group similar data together (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The identified themes were made to correspond with the questions asked. In interpreting the interview data, it was transcribed verbatim, using respondents' words, then similar answers related to each research question were identified and classified into themes.

### **3.8 Research integrity**

Research integrity involves producing valid and reliable science while protecting and supporting research participants (Denial & Redman, 2023). This study adhered to trustworthiness and ethical considerations as forms of research integrity.

#### **3.8.1 Trustworthiness**

A study is trustworthy if readers judge the research report as such (Gunawan, 2015). The trustworthiness of the research is one of the shared realities, albeit a subjective one, wherein readers and writers might find commonality in their constructive processes (Stahl & King, 2020). Stahl and King (2020) explain that readers have confidence in what the researcher has reported when interpreting the written work. In each study, researchers ought to create the techniques and processes essential for the study to be reflected, notably in the concerns of readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in the qualitative study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study adopted each of these, as explained below.

### **3.8.1.1 Dependability**

Dependability refers to consistency in the research and the ability of another researcher to achieve the same results with the same research process. Dependability is demonstrated through detailing the changes and context of the research setting. This includes any changes that may occur in the setting and a description and explanation of how these changes may have affected the research process. Researchers, both producers and consumers, actively build their trust in the events as they unfold (Stahl & King, 2020). According to Stahl and King (2020), using another researcher to read and react to field notes with their embedded researcher interpretations is a confirmation that creates a tacit reality for the researcher. To enable replication of the current study, I have detailed the context and procedures of the study to enable other researchers to replicate it should they want to.

### **3.8.1.2 Credibility**

Credibility suggests ensuring that a study measures or tests what it is intended to measure. It is the degree of confidence the qualitative researcher has in the truth of the research study's findings. Korstjens and Moser (2018) indicate that the following strategies are essential to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. Prolonged engagement is described by Muzari, Shava, and Shonhiwa (2022) as long-term observation, which emphasises gathering data over a long or extended period in order to increase trustworthiness. Persistent observation helps discover participants' qualities and unusual characteristics. Peer debriefing allows a researcher to review and assess transcripts, the emerging and final categories from those transcripts, and a given study's final themes or findings. The current study used triangulation, negative case analysis and member checking. As per Heale and Forbes (2013), triangulation is using a combination of methods from data sources to understand the issue studied. Heale and Forbes (2023) further state that validating the study's findings depends on the flexibility in triangulation to use a combination of methods. Likewise, Donkoh and Mensah (2023) reiterate that triangulation helps researchers overcome biases associated with using single observers, single methods, and single theories. Different qualitative approaches must be used to study complex research phenomena to get data and better understand the phenomenon being studied (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023). In this current study, information collected through interviews was triangulated using document analysis.

In member checking, data is returned to participants to check the accuracy of the information on their in-depth experiences. Member checking allows the researcher to correct errors and challenge wrong interpretations (Birt et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher consulted participants to check the transcribed data. This was done to reconstruct the participants' information by adding omitted information or deleting the extracts that did not represent their experience. In this case, the synthesised data was generated from participants' responses.

### **3.8.1.3 Transferability**

Transferability means the findings apply in other contexts (Stahl & King, 2020). Other researchers note the specifics of the research situation and compare them to the specifics of an environment or situation with which they are familiar (Kyngas et al., 2020). If there are enough similarities between the two situations, the readers can infer that the research results would be the same or similar in their situation. Korstjens and Moser (2018) reiterate that a researcher provides a detailed description of the participants and the research process to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable to their setting. To ensure transferability, the researcher in the current study provided a sufficient and highly detailed description of the research situation, context, and methods used so that the readers could transfer the study's results to their context. The number of years the participants experienced workplace bullying provides enough knowledge, either as affected parties or mere witnesses. A detailed description of the phenomenon under study was also provided.

### **3.8.1.4 Confirmability**

According to Awan et al. (2023), confirmability refers to the likelihood of other researchers confirming the findings of an investigation. A data-oriented approach to the audit trail can ensure that the results can be confirmed. This showed how the data eventually led to the recommendations gathered and processed during the study. Here, the focus is on the interpretation embedded in the analysis process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

The researcher kept a reflective journal detailing the research process leading to the conclusions and recommendations. This included the methods, reasons for selecting the approach, and the shortcomings encountered. The researcher demarcated her academic interest and experience of workplace bullying as a teacher. This study only reports the feelings and emotions stated by the

participants. The number of years participants have spent at the workplace enabled the researcher to trust their information.

### **3.8.2 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations balance the impending risks of research with its possible benefits. Due to the detailed nature of the qualitative study process, it is essential to protect participants by applying appropriate ethical ideologies (Mohd Arifin, 2018). The following sub-sections detail the ethical considerations that were adhered to in this study. These are voluntary and informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, beneficence, and non-maleficence.

#### **3.8.2.1 Voluntary and informed consent**

Voluntary and informed consent implies that participants knowingly and voluntarily consent to participate in a study (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). The participants in this study were informed about the purpose, duration, and the possible benefits of the study. They were informed that their participation would be voluntary and that financial benefits or incentives for participation were not offered. Participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from participating in the study at any point, and that the withdrawal would not affect them. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were requested to complete and sign a consent form.

#### **3.8.2.2 Request for permission**

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho. The Ministry provided written consent, which is attached here as Appendix 1. The request was extended to the principals (Appendix 2) and the teachers who participated, attached as Appendix 3. It is an ethical procedure in research to request consent, especially when the study involves human beings. This proves that each participant was not forced to participate; they did so of their own free will.

#### **3.8.2.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity assume the data collection instrument obtains no unique identifiers such as the respondent's name, social security number, or driver's license number (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). According to Wiles (2013), any information that can be used to identify people involved in the research is kept private. It also means that the participants' identities are kept safe by using

different methods to make them anonymous unless they choose to be identified. In this study, codes were used instead of participants' names to protect them. The information was not to be traced back to the respondents. Descriptions were done in a manner that did not reveal the identities of participants or those of their schools. The privacy of participants in a research project is essential. The participants' raw data was collected privately, and the researcher was the only one to access it. The participants were interviewed in the convenient and private spaces of their choice.

#### **3.8.2.4 Beneficence and deception**

Beneficence and deception are the acts of revealing the truth about the study's purpose and benefits to the participants without deceiving them. A researcher ought to do actions related to mercy, kindness and charity, that is, actions carried out to benefit others (Shedgovekar, 2018). According to Akaranga and Makau (2016), the researcher should not exaggerate or understate the study's benefits while explaining it to the participants. In relation to this study, every aspect that it involved was revealed to the participants.

#### **3.8.2.5 Non-maleficence**

Non-maleficence, sometimes called the principle of no harm, expresses the potential risks of participation in a research study. According to Varkey (2021), non-maleficence requires actions that avoid and minimise harm to the research subject. Honesty towards the respondents is enhanced by protecting them from physical and psychological harm, thereby ensuring that the researcher does not ask embarrassing questions that can disgust or even shock the respondents (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). The participants in the current study were not asked embarrassing questions or forced to give information, which could result in anxiety and fear.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter concentrated on the methodology used in this study. It emphasised interpretivism as a research paradigm, multiple-case study as a research design and qualitative research as an approach. The selection of participants, data collection procedures and analysis were also presented. The next chapter discusses the study's findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the methodology adopted by this study. The current chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered on the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools, with specific attention to schools in Peka, Leribe. The following research objectives guided the data collection:

- To determine teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.
- To investigate how workplace bullying affects teachers in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.
- To establish how teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.

Table 4.1 below summarises the themes that emerged from the data generated. The themes are presented according to the study's objectives.

Objective	Themes that emerged
1. To determine teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.	Teachers' workplace bullying is in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undermining of professional work</li><li>• Isolation</li><li>• gossiping</li><li>• Denying participants' opinions and participation in voluntary activities</li><li>• Setting victims up to fail</li></ul>

	Perpetrators of bullying: Principals, other teachers, learners and parents Victims of workplace bullying: Principals and teachers
2. To investigate how workplace bullying affects teachers in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor health issues</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Loss of interest and fear of assigned work</li> <li>• Thoughts of resigning</li> </ul>
3. To establish how teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignoring the situation</li> <li>• Support from friends and families</li> <li>• Reporting matters to the authorities</li> <li>• Use of school policies and regulations</li> <li>• Absenteeism</li> </ul>

**Table 4.1: Themes that emerged from the data generated**

**4.2 Teachers’ experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe**

The question that helped to generate data on teachers’ experiences of workplace bullying was: Please explain your experiences of teachers’ workplace bullying in your school. As shown in Table 4.1, the data collected revealed that teachers’ workplace bullying could be categorised into several forms, related to both the perpetrators and victims of workplace bullying. Each form is detailed below.

**4.2.1 Forms of teachers’ workplace bullying**

The collected data shows that workplace bullying takes different forms, including undermining professional work, isolation, gossiping, denying participants’ opinions and participation in voluntary activities, and setting victims up for failure. The following sections detail the forms of teachers’ workplace bullying that emerged from the data generated.

**4.2.1.1 Undermining of professional abilities**

One form of bullying revealed by the data collected is the undermining of teachers’ professional abilities. Most of the participants reported that their professional work was undermined by

principals. This is seen when a teacher felt that the principal frowned upon her teaching style regularly and criticised it using hurtful and rude words. T2S1 narrated:

*She would always come to my class and shout at me. She once asked me what a noun and a pronoun are, and then told me that I'm teaching nonsense in front of learners.*

The principal's words and actions made teachers feel like they were not trusted to teach and handle learners appropriately. T2S4 reiterated:

*I was asked not to assess my learners because she wanted to assess them herself on the basis that she wanted to check my credibility.*

These assertions indicate that bullied teachers' abilities, knowledge and capabilities are considered inferior, and this is done in front of learners and other teachers. The language used in such situations is so rude that the teachers feel it is not meant to mentor but to make them feel small.

It further appeared that bullying escalated in cases where learners failed and principals used dreadful comments against the teachers. This means that the teacher could not be trusted to handle their classes appropriately. Furthermore, they were considered to lack proper skills in classroom management. This was done to ridicule teachers instead of helping them to acquire appropriate skills. T1S2 explained: "My boss once asked me why my students fail when I claim to be a trained teacher." And T3S1 added:

*My classroom management skills are never satisfactory to my boss. I don't know what to do anymore. Beating the students, sending them out of the classroom and ignoring learners' wrong doing are wrong according to her. Yet when I ask her what I should do she starts to question my credibility instead of helping me.*

Downgrading teachers' work appeared to take the form of bullying as principals used unconstructive criticisms on teachers' classroom work. This happens when teachers' positive work is ignored while negative experiences are exaggerated. T2S4 put it in this manner:

*Most of the comments I received were negative; my strong points were not mentioned and were overshadowed by the negative comments.*

T1S3 had the same experience as she narrates:

*I was asked which teacher training institution I attended that taught me such nonsense.*

Other teachers also seemed to perpetrate undermining professional work. Participants reported that fellow teachers repeated lessons already covered with learners, showing them different methods and telling the learners that regular teachers, the victims, used incorrect approaches and that the correct approach is the one they were using. T2S1 explained:

*Whenever I wasn't around I would find my learners being taught differently from what I taught them and when I asked, the learners told me that teacher so and so said that my methods are wrong and that is not how it should be done. I would ask the teacher and justify my work by referring to learners' textbooks. She would say, 'oh!' then I will go back to learners and tell them to change back to the method you previously used.*

This implies that victims were taken to have minimal skills and lack teaching ability. Consequently, they cannot impart enlightening knowledge to learners in any way.

Teachers also conspire with parents to bully fellow teachers. One participant indicated that a teacher would complain to another teacher about her work on behalf of a parent who is sometimes a relative or a friend. They would say that the victim is not good at teaching and his learners constantly acquire lower grades. T2S5 narrated:

*I would hear from another teacher that the parent is complaining about his child's work. They said that it seems like I don't handle him well because he gets low grades meaning I don't know how to teach. I would sometimes hear from a learner that the parent said that teacher so and so reported to him that I don't know how to teach hence the child should be offered extra classes by the same teacher.*

Teachers also seemed to undermine principals' work. Some of the principals said they were bullied when they were teachers, even after they were designated to the position of principal. Their perpetrators continued to undermine their authority. P1S2 further explained that the bully

continued to disrespect her authority by not informing her when she would not be present at work and that she would refuse to carry out some duties allocated to her.

From this narrative, it looks like some teachers and parents are against a teacher who felt bullied. Any challenge the learners meet is blamed on the teacher. Other factors that could make learners score low marks are ignored while blaming the teacher. Also, some teachers continue to undermine victims even after promotion to the position of principal.

This suggests that teachers do not have other teachers' support regarding their work. Rather than helping their colleagues, they conspire with parents to belittle them and destroy their reputations.

#### **4.2.1.2 Isolation of the victims from other teachers**

Most participants reported being isolated from other teachers by the principals and some teachers. They were denied mingling with other teachers as principals believed they fed their colleagues ideas that could negatively affect the principals. T1S2 narrated:

*The principal told me not to befriend any of the teachers as they hate her and would tell me lies about her.*

T1S3 reiterated that the whole staff planned trips and did not include him. They also detained him in one classroom as they complained that the classroom was not neat. While he was assigned to teach Grade 1, they complained that the learners could not clean it and care for the property. So after that, everything changed. T1S3 unfolds:

*The principal and other teachers did not communicate with me about extramural activities, and sometimes, they would leave me behind while they took staff tours. I was also denied the opportunity to switch classrooms even when I taught a different class because they claimed that my classroom environment was in bad shape.*

Favouritism and the halo effect are reported as one of the things that principals use to divide teachers. They isolate victims from the rest of the staff by giving them extra work during resting hours so that they are kept away. T2S3 exclaimed:

*In our school, lunch hours were happy hours during the days of our old principal. We would get our food and eat together in one room, discussing ways to improve our school and learners' performances. With our current principal, things are different. He assigns work to his targets to be executed during lunch, separating them from others seated over discussions.*

This would make others stay away from the group to avoid tension resulting from keeping company with the targets. Denying teachers' socialisation denotes that the bullies want to have the victims on their palms and control them as much as they like. This also makes the victims be in the same spot for the bullies to continue to bully them. The bullies might feel empowered by cornering their victims.

#### **4.2.1.3 Gossiping about victims with other teachers**

Participants reported that perpetrators of bullying, such as principals and some teachers, gossiped about them. Sometimes, such bullies would not face the victims directly. Instead, they talked behind their back. This made the victims look bad to those who were told whatever stories about the victims. Sometimes, such gossip involves professional work that could be openly discussed instead of making it the subject of gossip. T1S3 stated that she heard the principal's comments about her decision to continue with a classroom reading competition from other teachers. The principal was furious, stating that the staff postponed the activity and that the victim herself continued with it with her learners. On the same note, T2S1 reported that she heard from some colleagues that the principal asserted that her examination questions were of low standard and unsuitable for learners. T2S1 recounted:

*The principal didn't say anything when I submitted my examination question papers to her for moderation, but later, I heard from other teachers that she said I didn't know how to construct assessment items. However, she said nothing when she returned the feedback.*

On the other hand, T1S4 expressed:

*I would hear from other teachers that my co-teacher says I do not know how to teach, and she helps me with the correct writing style every day.*

Some victims of workplace bullying reported criticism about something as inconsequential as clothing as T2S4 disclosed:

*I stopped going to lunch with coworkers because I learned they were gossiping about my dress code and would not want to be associated with me.*

Talking behind victims' backs implies non-cooperation between those involved, that is, the perpetrators and the victims, which impacts working relations. This reflects unfriendly interactions and failure to share information and knowledge.

#### **4.2.1.4 Denying participants' opinions and participation in voluntary activities**

The gathered data reflected that many participants were deprived of participation in staff meetings and other extra-mural activities. They were not allowed to say anything during staff meetings. Rather, they were expected to listen and abide by the raised views. P2S2 narrated:

*During staff meetings, I was like I should not have my ideas. All the time when I raise an opinion, she would not want it to be discussed. She would make a query.*

Some were denied to perform some activities. There were no specific activities other than teaching that the victims were allocated to do, and even when they volunteered, they were not allowed to participate. T1S1 stated:

*I wouldn't be selected for staff meetings and activities even if I volunteered or raised my hand. I would be told that other teachers had already volunteered. And even for compulsory activities like class workshops, I would be told that other teachers would go on my behalf.*

The data presented indicates that the victims were denied opportunities to participate in any of the activities, which made them vulnerable, feel less of themselves and wonder if they were lesser humans or had fewer skills. Moreover, victims' contributions were deemed unnecessary and were prohibited from participating in activities. In this case, the perpetrators seemed to be both principals and colleagues.

#### **4.2.1.5 Setting victims up to fail**

A few participants reported being set up to fail by their principals and other teachers. The principals would make commands they know will clash with victims' work and expect them to do the activities despite the clash. T1S2 related:

*Knowing that I attended school part-time, the principal started imposing rules that would make it impossible for me to attend my residential classes. She would say, "If you are absent, you leave a plan of how you will reimburse the missed lessons."*

One of the victims indicated that the principal would order her to do an activity she was not competent in, and when she failed to do it accordingly, the principal would shout and yell at her. T2S1 stated:

*She would tell me to lead learners in hymn singing at the assembly, knowing that I was not good at it. When I failed to do it correctly, she would yell at me, saying that I am not even ashamed to call myself a qualified teacher.*

Demanding a victim to do what the perpetrator knows well that he or she cannot do well implies that the bully wanted to humiliate her or him and wanted the victim to fail and appear incompetent in the eyes of people watching. They even set impossible and demeaning deadlines. For instance, one participant mentioned that their principal would tell them in the morning that by 12pm, they should have set examination papers and submitted them to their office for storage. That itself was impossible to do alongside teaching.

On the one hand, the document analysis revealed that teachers experience vicious verbal bullying. They are bullied through the use of threatening words, name-calling, using vulgar language, and belittling by other teachers. They are even denied the opportunity to participate in some activities and accessing some materials.

#### **4.2.2 Victims of workplace bullying in Peka primary schools**

In most cases, the victims of workplace bullying are teachers who suffer at the hands of the principals. Female principals and teachers seem to be the ones who experience bullying more than their male counterparts. Gender seems to play a role in workplace bullying. P1S3 revealed:

*Bullying happens just because you are a woman. Subordinate teachers, parents, funny enough, even the students will not take you seriously just because you are a woman. One male parent once told me: "ha ke na ngoana ea shapuoang ke mosali" [I do not have a child that women beat].*

Data in this study demonstrates that workplace bullying differs across genders. It was documented that females are more likely to become victims of workplace bullying compared to males. Female teachers reported more exposure to workplace bullying from all staff sources compared to male teachers. Male teachers bully female teachers, other female counterparts and principals. One principal, P1S3, bemoaned:

*Whenever I give instructions, male teachers ignore me or mumble what I do not hear, but I can see they are not satisfied. However, when a male deputy principal gives the instruction, they carry out those duties well.*

Principal P1S3's assertions point to differences in the experiences of female and male teachers. A female principal is bullied, while the male deputy principal is not bullied despite her occupying a senior position compared to the deputy principal.

Students, on the other hand, were found to bully female teachers. They were found giggling and whispering during lessons. They sometimes sat improperly, putting their feet on desks and leaning backward on their chairs. They would ignore the teacher when she reprimands them. T2S4 averred:

*I told my principal never to assign me to Grade 7. The students there laugh at me, call me granny, and say my sense of fashion is outdated. I feel depressed whenever I am in that class. I have also experienced the same mockery from my male counterparts. They asked me to direct them to the museum where I buy my shoes and wigs.*

The experience shared above shows that female teachers become reluctant to teach particular classes as the learners disrespect them and undermine their authority. Gender discrimination portrays the expectations of society about what is appropriate for women.

There was a single case where one male victim who worked in a female-dominated school reported finding it hard to socialise because he was being subjected to sarcastic remarks. Whoever he was trying to be close to other staff members, the others would make nasty comments. They would complain that he is always around and does not give them space as women. T2S3 narrated:

*Those ladies are mean; in my presence, they used language I could not hear when they wanted to talk about me. They even called me Ntili [a male person always with females] because I was the only male. It is hard because I feel lonely.*

On one hand, one participant reported being bullied by a learner she was teaching. The learner would not listen to her and did not do homework. The behavior escalated to the point where other learners were affected, and some wanted to join him. T2S5 exclaimed:

*There was this old boy in class who would take me for granted and act as if I didn't exist in the classroom. He would go up and down, disturbing other learners. When I reprimanded him, he would show disrespect by walking away, frowning, and shaking his head. Sometimes, he would refuse to serve the punishment. I think he behaved that way because I am a woman. If a male teacher taught him, he would not dare.*

Bullying acts done by learners were isolated as only one case was reported, showing that this was not prevalent. Since the victim is a woman, it is possible that the learner perceived her as weak. Women may sometimes be disregarded and perceived as weak, with no power; hence, learners, especially boys, may see no problem in undermining and disobeying their authority.

### **4.3 Effects of workplace bullying on teachers and principals**

The data collected pointed to the adverse effects of workplace bullying, particularly for teachers who were victims. The following themes emerged: health problems, low self-esteem, loss of interest in work, thoughts of resigning and deterioration of working relations and teamwork.

#### **4.3.1 Poor health**

Participants in this study revealed that workplace bullying is associated with certain health problems. Data revealed that bullying can have adverse effects on a victim's health, as half of the participants reported experiencing health problems such as headaches, fainting and low blood pressure. In some cases, these illnesses resulted in hospitalisation. These participants asserted that they had never experienced those illnesses before they were bullied. They indicated that since being bullied, they were preoccupied with thoughts of their experiences of bullying, and these

negatively affected their health. Some participants mentioned that they cried because being bullied hurt a lot, and consequently, they became ill. T1S1 reported:

*I experienced excessive headaches that did not go away even after medication. I remember one time failing to control myself and crying silently in the presence of learners.*

In the same breath, T2S1 narrated: “*Each day, I was leaving work with a heavy heart and sometimes crying profusely.*” T2S1 further stated that she would feel chest pains, and when she went to consult a doctor, she was diagnosed with low blood pressure, which she suspects was because of her experience of bullying at work. P1S2 stated that she started to faint due to bullying, and she was later diagnosed with low blood pressure. She was hospitalised for about a month to stabilise her blood pressure.

Some participants reported adverse weight loss as a result of the lack of rest brought about by bullying. Their life routines seemed interrupted, and eating and sleeping were reduced tremendously. T2S2 reported:

*I was always thinking about my ordeal. I could not eat well and sleep properly at night. I noticed that I lost weight because my clothes no longer fit well like they always did.*

T1S4 added:

*I lost appetite with the continuation of the bullying experience. Sometimes, I would end a day without eating a proper meal, and sometimes, I would have one meal. My friends and family commented that I had lost a lot of weight and that I would also feel it.*

This implies that as a result of workplace bullying, victims’ health could deteriorates as exemplified by these participants. It poses much negativity that results in sicknesses, disorders and even hospitalisation of victims.

#### **4.3.2 Low self-esteem**

Low self-esteem was reported by most of the participants who were bullied. They reported that they perceived themselves as not knowledgeable and adequately experienced in teaching despite being trained teachers and having experience in teaching. T1S1 stated:

*I usually felt anxious and nervous because the bullying was done during my teaching in front of learners. I felt like I do not know how to teach and that maybe teaching is not meant for me.*

In the same breath, T2S1 narrated:

*I lost confidence in my work because even when I felt like I did my best, the principal would criticise me and claim that I didn't do my work well. I always felt inadequate at teaching, that I was always wrong, and that I did not know how to teach.*

Bullying that happens at school does not only affect victims and perpetrators. The superiors also seem to be affected. This was reported by one principal who leads the school where teachers bully one another. The principal stated that leading the school where teachers bully one another affects one's esteem as the overseer. P1S3 averred:

*When bullying happens at this school, it negatively affects my esteem, especially among teachers I expect to lead learners by example. It makes me feel like someone who fails to exercise her authority appropriately. I feel like I do not do things well.*

Participants reported feeling weak in their spirits whenever they thought of work. T2S3 averred that for her to feel satisfied with her work, she would always ask other teachers and friends to check it and confirm that it was correct. She no longer trusted herself to do her work properly.

### **4.3.3 Thoughts of resigning**

Half of the participants conveyed that the bullying experience compelled them to consider resigning and leaving their current schools. At the same time, five of them said they thought of leaving the profession as a whole, hoping that in other professions, bullying is not as rampant as in teaching. P1S2 stated that she opted to file transfer forms to another school, which was cut short due to the death of the then-principal helping her with document filing. P1S2:

*My then principal was helping me transfer to another school before he could retire as he was aware of my predicament. Unfortunately, he died before he could do more about it. I wanted to leave the school badly.*

On the same note, T2S4 exclaimed:

*I thought of leaving the school and swapping with another teacher because now I was hired by the Teaching Service Commission against my will. I felt overwhelmed by the situation and even thought of leaving the profession altogether, but then I realised that it wasn't easy to get a job, so I had to persevere and work.*

Thoughts of victims leaving their positions or the profession as a whole denote that they are disheartened and have experienced the excruciating pain of workplace bullying in their lives. They had resigning thoughts as their best option.

#### **4.3.4 Loss of interest and fear of assigned work**

More than half of the participants stated that the experience of bullying made them feel detached from their work and have less interest in doing it. They further claimed they continued their work because they had no other option but to do it. T2S1 narrated that she no longer had any interest in her work. She was doing it just because she was hired and she received a salary. T2S4:

*I ended up doing work just for the sake of doing it. I even refrained from doing daily preparations and students' markings as I was ready to be attacked at any time. I felt it was no use doing my best and still being criticised.*

On one hand T1S2 narrated:

*I would sometimes excuse myself from work to avoid meeting the bullies every day.*

Losing interest in work signifies that imparting knowledge to learners will be defective. The victims are no longer dedicated to their work and, as a result, do not give themselves time to research in preparation for their lessons. Consequently, children suffer because of bullying by adults.

#### **4.3.5 Deterioration of working relations**

Employee relations are essential because they boost morale and workplace efficiency. Contrarily, poor employee relations have adverse effects. In line with this assertion, all the participants reported that due to workplace bullying, their work relations seem to be negatively affected.

Victims no longer want to get involved with the bullies and avoid sharing work or interacting with bullies. This results in work deterioration, as T1S1 narrated:

*I ensured that I didn't get into conversations with any bullies because they made themselves appear to be good people. Even if there was a textbook that I needed in a bully's classroom, I wouldn't ask; I would instead ask another teacher in another school through messaging.*

As a result of poor working relations, teachers ended up not helping one another, as shown by P1S2 assertions:

*It became very tense because no one stepped in for another in their absence; hence, the learners of the absent teacher would make noise and loiter around. This led to parents taking their children to other schools, and the number of learners was reduced, which damaged the school's image.*

The study's findings also suggest that bullying seriously undermined the potential for teamwork; not only at the individual level but also in terms of overall school culture. T1S4 mentioned:

*Given any chance, I stay away from my bully. Even when we are in a meeting, I keep quiet and avoid sharing space with them. I stay in my car during school day breaks and avoid chatting with them.*

The strained relations at work result in negative consequences such as becoming distracted from work, loss of security and communication breakdown. This denotes that victims may distance themselves to avoid further torment from their bullies.

#### **4.4 Management of teachers' workplace bullying**

The following data responds to the question: How do teachers manage workplace bullying in Peka primary schools? The following themes emerged: ignoring the situation, reporting matters to the authorities, support from friends and family, absenteeism and using school policies and regulations. Each of these themes is detailed below.

#### **4.4.1 Ignoring the situation**

It emerged from the data collected that to avoid escalation of bullying, it is wise to ignore the situation and behave as if nothing is happening. A few participants reported overlooking any actions from their tormentors to keep their sanity as responding in whichever way may cause further escalation and attract further bullying. P1S1 reported that she continued her work despite her colleagues being against it. Their rejection did not make her stop doing her responsibilities. T2S2 reiterated:

*I now ignore her and do not react to any of her evilness anymore. She is just a statue, something that does not exist.*

Ignoring the situation means the bully is no longer taken seriously, and even when things are to be considered, they will only be overlooked. This is a survival mechanism that some of the victims have adopted.

#### **4.4.2 Support from family and friends**

Family, colleagues and friends appeared to play a significant role in comforting the victims. This also keeps them on alert regarding their bullying experience. Almost all the participants reported having people to talk to about their ordeal. Words of advice from friends and family soothed victims' emotions and helped them to see beyond their predicament. They reported talking to their family members, friends, and colleagues who helped them to keep going in their unfortunate situations. T2S1 reported that:

*I told my colleague about my situation, and she advised me to ignore the person and do my work, as we are all employees. My husband also comforted me, saying that it happens in work environments and that I should only focus on what brings me to school, which is work.*

P1S2 added:

*Talking to my brother and my mother about my bullying experience was very crucial because they supported me and were there for me.*

Venting about a personal situation conveys that it is overwhelming, and that one cannot deal with it alone and should seek emotional help. Having this kind of emotional support helps the victims to endure the difficulties at their workplaces.

#### **4.4.3 Reporting the matter to the authorities**

Most participants stated that they would report the matter to the authorities of the school, the principal, and the Department of Education offices. Such participants wanted someone to mediate and come to their rescue. T2S2 reported to the principal, who mediated between the bully and the victim, helping them discuss things. P1S3 stated:

*I would call them both and show them how important it is to be at peace and work together as we will yield the best results and our school environment will be a happy place for all of us.*

Reporting matters to the authorities seems vital as actions should be taken to address the matter with the hope of getting positive results. The bullying situations changed positively because victims were no longer experiencing destructive behaviours.

One of the participants said that reporting to the Department of Education office was the only option as the bully was the principal, and even the board members could not help as they associated with the principal. T2S5 narrated:

*By merely looking, board members listen and agree to whatever the principal says. So, I had to report to the Education Office because I felt the situation was out of hand and I could suffer consequences as the principal abused his power.*

Reporting to the Education Office was helpful as the Education Officers intervened and made an effort to stop the bullying. After reaching a consensus, the bullying resolution helped put both victims and bullies in their rightful places. On one hand, reporting matters to the authorities brought a positive change. The bully and victim got along after the mediation session. T2S2 stated: “*After the mediation session, the situation changed and now we work together peacefully.*”

Reporting matters to other people could fuel and escalate the problem. This is evidenced by T2S5 who reported that the situation did not stop. The bully would always talk about fearing to delegate the victim because he does not want to be reported to the Education Office and jeopardise his work. T2S5 further explained:

*Whenever there was something he wanted me to do he would say, you may confirm with the Office if that is correct for you to do. I don't want to get into trouble. This made me feel bad.*

Some teachers kept the bullying situation to themselves, not reporting to the authorities. They thought keeping their experience to themselves might reduce bullying and create peace between them and the bullies. In addition, they believed that reporting might also get bullies angry and escalate the bullying. This was revealed by the document analysis that victims fail to report their bullying experiences. They deal with the situations themselves. Their principals noticed the problems when the victims failed to do their duties. Instead of standing in for their absent colleagues, they did not, and learners were seen loitering and making noise.

#### **4.4.4 Use of school policies and regulations**

Two participants reported using school rules and regulations to deal with issues between teachers in the schools. P1S3 stated that the mediating between the bully and the victims was done using what was already known regarding school rules and regulations. The rules state as follows-

- No teacher at school has a right to torment and violate other teachers' rights;
- Individuals are liable to be held responsible for their conduct if it causes harm to another person;
- It is our responsibility to ensure a healthy and peaceful working environment.

Creating school rules and regulations makes employees feel secure and protected. This makes it easier for teachers and the authorities to deal with whatever dispute they face. P1S3 explained:

*The rules and regulations seemed to work perfectly because after reminding teachers - the bully and the victim - about them, the atmosphere between the two changed and showed a positive attitude.*

#### **4.4.5 Absenteeism**

Participants reported resorting to absenteeism as a coping mechanism, which may enhance the desire of targets to leave the organisation as soon as possible. They asserted that they apply for compassionate leave, and when those are exhausted, they apply for sick leave. T2S5 stated:

*I know this is wrong, but I have my doctor who is always ready to offer me sick leave whenever I feel overwhelmed by bullying at my workplace.*

On the one hand, T2S3 lamented:

*Being at home, away from her, made me feel lively. On Fridays, I would go home, which is far from work. On Monday morning, I would send her a message to be excused from work, indicating that my five-month-old child was not well. This backfired because she ended up telling me that I could not be absent because my relative was sick. I am the only one who would consider my sickness with proof.*

This implies that victims feel any place outside their workplaces is a safer place, so they would do anything to be out of the workplace. However, the authorities end up realising that some of the excuses given may not be true and refuse to allow such teachers to be absent from school. Some are just waiting to get alternative employment somewhere else before immediately tendering their resignation.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The current chapter presented the data which was also analysed and interpreted. The next chapter discusses the findings, conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

this study aimed to explore the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe. The previous chapter highlighted the data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The current chapter discusses the findings and draws conclusions and recommendations of the study. Furthermore, the discussion of the findings is guided by the research questions and the themes that emerged from the data.

#### 5.2 Discussion

This section discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter. The discussion uses the theory and related literature discussed in Chapter 2. The study's objectives also guide the discussions, beginning with teachers' experiences of workplace bullying.

##### 5.2.1 Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying

The findings in this study revealed that teachers experience bullying behaviours such as undermining professional work, isolation, gossiping, denying participants' opinions as well as participation in voluntary activities, and setting victims up to fail. Participants reported that both principals and colleagues undermined their work. The principals regularly use hurtful words regarding their teaching styles and classroom management. The victims were labelled as incompetent. On the one hand, colleagues undermined victims' work by repeating lessons taught to learners using different methods and indicating that the victim's methods were incorrect. De Wet (2011) reported similar findings, noting that principals and other teachers can bully their victims by questioning their professional competence. Such bullies also excessively monitored and criticised victims' work. In another study, De Wet and Jacobs (2013) explained that some teachers are bullied by ensuring mistakes are found in their work. In addition, victims' performance was constantly evaluated as they were given more work than they could manage. On the one hand, Mollema (2018) found that principals threatened victims when they were not pleased with the subject matter of the victims' examination papers. The principal made reference to destroying the

victims' careers, adding that they would have nowhere to go. This bullying reveals that the perpetrators take an opportunity to unnecessarily find mistakes in the victim's work and torment them instead of providing support. This is in line with the Recognition Theory, which states that recognition has an important role in improving individual motivation and performance. Additionally, recognising contributions and achievements in different organisations plays an essential role in developing satisfaction, loyalty and increased productivity whether in schools, workplaces or communities (Rachmad, 2022b).

Perpetrators were also reported in the current study to have abused their power to bully victims by setting them up to fail. The bullies gave victims activities that clashed with their work and demanded that victims do the activities despite the observed conflict. The work schedule would be altered, and the victims would be expected to submit at a stipulated time. In other cases, victims are ordered to perform activities that are beyond their capabilities. As such, they fail and find themselves yelled at by the principals. Intending to see victims fail, the principals create difficult situations and conceal information. A similar bullying experience was revealed by De Wet (2013) in a study carried out in South Africa, which found that some principals bully teachers by assigning them learning areas that they were not conversant with. This means that bullies did not consider any damage caused by their bullying actions, especially in teaching and learning where learners would not get adequate teaching.

Moreover, some victims were not allowed to participate in anything other than teaching. They were denied airing their views in staff meetings; they were even denied opportunities to attend workshops and such workshops were shifted to the principal's favourites. Batchelor's (2019) study revealed similar findings that victims are deliberately disdained and disregarded by bullies during meetings, even in spontaneous dialogues, by ignoring their views and taking them for granted. In agreement, Lyons (2015) proclaims that at the expense of victims, opportunities to attend training and workshops were given to others who were the principals' favourites. This demonstrates that bullies, especially principals, have their favourites and give them opportunities at the expense of the victims.

Learners have been found to bully teachers during lessons. They undermine their authority in classes. They whisper during lessons, talk about victims' dress codes, laugh at them and abandon homework. This appeared to have badly and poorly affected other learners. The findings resonate with those of Kauppi and Porhola (2012b), who indicate that learners put teachers through behaviours such as harming signals, making fun of, and mimicking their features in some way. Teachers face upsetting actions by students, including distracting their work, negating to cooperate, brutality and ignoring the teachers. With a similar view, Woudstra, Van Rensburg, Visser, and Jordaan (2018) posit that learners usually bully teachers during teaching and learning. Teacher bullying by learners regularly occurs during class time in the confined space of the classroom. On the one hand, Kauppi and Porhola (2012a) discovered that learners tend to lie, evade teachers, arrive late, and make unreasonable comments regarding teachers' professional skills. Distracting teachers during their essential work time indicates that learners perceive teaching and learning as a joke and lack discipline.

Victims are also found to be exposed to personal isolation by principals and other teachers. Some information is concealed, so they are left behind, especially during staff tours. Perpetrators keep all the information to themselves, such as the time of departure, so that they can leave victims behind. Also, classroom resources such as classroom spaces, buckets, and brooms are denied to victims. They are prevented from mingling with other teachers for fear that they might be taught the disturbing characteristics of their bullies. Fahie (2014) corroborates these findings by stating that bullies exclude victims from a school's facets of life by suppressing and diminishing resources. This indicates unfair rules in this situation, resulting in decreased school productivity.

Parents bully teachers, especially female teachers. They harass teachers when they take measures to discipline learners, claiming that females cannot whip their kids, as some of the participants' responses showed in the previous chapter. Sometimes, parents conspire with other teachers to destroy the victims' dignity in their professional work. Instead of facing victims about learners' work, parents submit their grievances to other teachers in the school who help to undermine victims' work and authority. In Billet, Folgelgarn and Burns's (2019) study, parents were found to verbally abuse teachers by shouting and advocating on behalf of their children. Furthermore, teachers were sometimes attacked by parents physically by imposing and raiding their personal

space. Parents also lie about and organise other people against teachers through social media remarks, phone calls and text messages (Billet, Fogelgarn, & Burns, 2019). Kucuksuleymanoglu (2019), on the one hand, found that parents bully teachers through the use of the Internet. They send teachers harassing and threatening messages. With all that said, parents seem to lack cooperation with teachers regarding their children's work. They go all out to destroy teachers' dignity and professionalism instead of helping them to mould learners for a better future.

Gossiping about victims was also found to be one of the methods that bullies used. Teachers and principals spread stories about victims' work and personal matters among themselves. Male victims are given names such as Ntili when they try to socialise with female colleagues. They are also labelled incompetent. Bullies talk behind victims' backs, indicating that they do not know how to teach and that their examination items are of a low standard. According to Pheko (2018), perpetrators use gossip for reasons such as maintaining dominance and social control, jealousy manifestation and social dejection to demean victims in an effort to widen the power gap. The reasons depend on subjects, purposes, standpoints, and perspectives. Participants reported discovering misinformation through corridor talks that the perpetrators disseminated to obstruct their improvement and advancements. This finding resonates with what Hsing-Ming et al. (2016) found, that gossip negatively influences job performance, destroys personal status and pride, and creates stress. This implies that cooperation and working relationships become complex, and employees' morale is depleted. Instead of using energy for valuable activities, bullies waste it on gossip. In the Peka area, physical and emotional bullying is standard, while cyberbullying is prevalent in other countries, contrary to what happens in those countries.

According to the Recognition Theory, acts of bullying, such as gossiping about victims and labelling, are seen as disrespectful and a way of denying victims their rights. Contrary to human rights assertions that each individual deserves respect and should delight in it, victims find themselves short of such respect in numerous ways. Victims do not feel free to mingle with their colleagues to avoid being called names such as "Ntili." Denied rights limit people their independence and the joy of belonging (White, 2019).

### **5.2.2 Effects of workplace bullying on teachers**

Bullying appeared to impact negatively on victims' health. Some experienced low blood pressure, extreme headaches, chest pains and fainting. Others ended up being hospitalised. The victims were lost in an ocean of thoughts because of their predicament. Bullying also caused the victims to weep regularly. All of those shake their health and result in illnesses. De Vos and Kirsten (2015) indicate that bullying can be linked with ill health. Teachers who were bullied suffered from certain illnesses. Victims in the current study also experienced disturbed eating and sleeping patterns, which resulted in them losing weight. Fahie's (2014) study reported that thoughts of facing perpetrators resulted in victims having stomach knots. They also experience intense troubled sleeping and are identified and medicated for depression. However, from the forgoing, one realised that the health problems experienced by participants in the current study differ from those experienced in De Vos and Kirsten (2015) and Fahie's (2014) study. This could be because people react to stressors in different ways, hence their symptoms would be different. Concerning the Recognition Theory, Iser (2019) indicates that individuals who fail to experience adequate recognition depicted negatively by the surrounding others devalue their own self-worth. Iser (2019) further states that, in this manner, misrecognition hampers persons' positive affiliation to their selves.

Moreover, the current study revealed that as a result of workplace bullying, victims experienced low self-esteem. Despite their training in the teaching profession, victims judge themselves as incapable of doing their work. On any occasion victims think about work, and they become incapacitated. As part of schools' staff, principals also endure low self-esteem. They cross-examined their jurisdiction and found that they are distracted from managing the schools and do less if teachers torment one another. Batchelor (2019) reports that victims' realisation of their teaching expertise was affected on account of the bullying experience. The participants described themselves as incompetent and unfit to be in a teaching-learning occupation. In agreement, De Wet (2011) avers that victims suffer as they suspect their aptitude and lose self-confidence. They are unable to sustain their work and relations with colleagues and learners. This indicates that talents and capabilities that might be important to schools are hidden as victims suspect their abilities. Also, effort to do better is lessened. Recognition Theory further describes that disrespect

jeopardises individuals' self-determination and optimistic consideration about themselves. Failing to be recognised positively makes a person feel incomplete in their existence (Leopold, 2019).

Victims in the current study considered making transfers to other schools or quitting the teaching occupation. They believed that there was no bullying in other schools and occupations, and thought it was safer for them. Batchelor's (2019) study had similar results, which indicate that bullied teachers are determined to withdraw from the schools as they experience bullying. To escape their predicament, some victims count on the best way to leave their present professions (Shaw, 2017). This shows that the bullying is too overwhelming for victims to the extent that they think leaving the schools or the entire profession is the best option for them to be free from the experience.

The participants of the current study reported being disconnected from their work. Daily work activities such as marking and lesson preparations were inadequately done. They had lost devotion towards their work and had grown to hate it. According to Tolentino (2016), the bullying experience makes victims grumpy and fed up. This makes them lose focus on whatever they are doing. Treurnich (2014) adds that teachers' expressiveness gets affected due to bullying, manifesting in clear negative consequences for the teaching profession. When teachers are unhappy at work, they put in less effort, which results in poor performance. This might also negatively impact the retention of teachers as they would want to leave the profession. De Wet (2014) indicates that victims of workplace bullying in the school experience escalating disengagement and discouragement. Bullying leaves victims deflated and lacking the confidence to return to the workforce. White (2019) indicates that recognition, as vital as it is, improves individuals' self-perceptions, whereas misrecognition results in a loss of self-esteem in individuals, hence doubting their capabilities.

In the current study, working relations and teamwork were also negatively affected by workplace bullying. Victims dodged working together with their bullies. Each teacher worked independently without asking for help from other teachers. Fahie (2014) agrees with this finding as it indicates that bullying creates negative concerns on relational associations, which result in victims being hesitant to work together with bullies towards a common goal. Teachers are affected in their sense of self, profession, and personalities, which impact them at both personal and work levels. Fahie

(2014) further indicates that victims became hesitant to participate in important school activities due to the bullying. The findings from Fahie's (2014) study further show that bullying practices around the school enormously dent teamwork between the perpetrator and the victim and school culture. In agreement, Pye (2016) opines that victims may display evasion and withdraw their involvement in work-related matters. Bullying leads to poor relations and a lack of teamwork. Employees do not work collaboratively towards a common goal, hence the decline in schools outcomes.

### **5.2.3 Management of teachers' workplace bullying**

Victims of workplace bullying in the current study seemed to have used different strategies to manage and ease the overwhelming experience. According to Fitzpatrick (2020), bullying targets' reactions to bullying may be reviewed as hidden, seeking intimate partner's assistance, talking to family and friends, and taking notes.

Data collected in the current study shows that victims of bullying ignored the situation as a means of avoiding further abuse. They disregarded any actions from their tormentors to avoid triggering further bullying, as they feel that responding in any form may escalate the abuse. Upton (2010) sees neglecting acts of bullying as endorsing it and making the situation less alluring for the bully. This seems an effective coping strategy to diminish the bully's devotion to the target. De Wet (2010b) reiterates that most targets decided not to estrange their oppressing leaders by keeping a low profile and remaining silent to protect themselves from further abuse. In agreement, Killoren (2014) indicates that even if victims feel oppressed, they have to be silent in fear of being dismissed by their bully bosses. This implies that victims are aware of bullying. Still, they lack appropriate coping mechanisms and resort to ignoring the situation while they continue to be bullied. In line with the Recognition Theory, victims of bullying with low self-confidence become defenceless and at the mercy of others. They need approval and acceptance of themselves and their actions from others as norms guide how each member of a society should live (White (2019). There is the danger that the resulting injury may damage that person's identity to the point of a total breakdown.

The current study further found that victims had family and friends' support in their predicament. They received uplifting and consoling words, which assisted them to endure the problem and carry

on with their work. This also helps victims to seek support to ease their bullying experience. This is in line with Kauppi and Porhola's (2012b) findings, which state that victims of workplace bullying moderated their stress by getting solace from members of their work community. Victims shared their experiences, which helped them deal with their negative experiences. D'Cruz, Noronha and Mendonca (2021) also found similar results that victims received support from their families, friends and the lesbian, gay and bisexual society (LGBS) as part of their coping strategy. This points to the importance of sharing personal problems with loved ones and other organisations that protect the welfare of employees.

Reporting the matter to the authorities is one of the mechanisms some of the victims in the current study mainly used when the perpetrator is a principal. Victims believed that principals abused their power hence, they reported their ordeal to the Education Office, which helped with mediation and rights protection and kept the peace. However, to some victims, the bullying escalated as they were no longer delegated to activities. Sorrell's (2015) study reported that victims relied on the assistance of the teachers' union when principals bullied them, although the union was not helpful. The union pointed out that it could not prove that victims were bullied; hence, they decided not to get involved. Kleinheksel and Geisel's (2019) study indicated that victims' bullying reports were often ignored. To some who attended, bullies were disciplined and fired. This shows that reporting to authorities depends on the authority of the office where the reporting was made, as some offices were not adequately capacitated to intervene.

Some principals became productive in managing teachers' bullying. They put school policies into practice to combat bullying and bring control among teachers. Irish Primary Principals' Network (2021) provided similar findings that schools' anti-bullying policies were successfully used to curb bullying behaviours. Langeveldt (2023) reiterated that in South Africa, some policies and laws provide victims with authentic compensation. This shows that creating bullying policies and correctly putting them into practice is very important for a safe and conducive working environment for all employees.

Victims in the current study utilised absenteeism as a coping mechanism. Absenteeism enabled victims to be away from their workplace bullies. They usually applied for leave as they felt that

being far from the perpetrators gave them peace. Casimir et al. (2012) indicate that the targets may adopt avoidance strategies, such as absenteeism, as they withdraw emotionally and physically from social and professional activities to avoid further mistreatment. This implies that victims find their work environment extremely stressful and therefore resort to making unplanned excuses from work to alleviate stress.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The current study explored the prevalence of workplace bullying among teachers in Lesotho primary schools in Peka, Leribe. This section draws conclusions based on the research findings guided by the research objectives.

#### **5.3.1 Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying**

When investigating teachers' experiences of workplace bullying, the study concludes that forms of bullying such as undermining professional work, isolation, gossiping, denying participants' opinions, as well as participation in voluntary activities, and setting victims up to fail appear to be the ones that teachers face at their workplaces.

Teachers reported that their professional work was undermined primarily by principals who frowned at and shouted at them regarding their teaching styles. The bullies used rude language, which led the victims to perceive themselves as not knowledgeable enough to perform their duties. Victims reported that this made them feel small and unworthy to be teachers. When learners perform poorly, principals make disparaging comments about teachers and demonstrate inadequate management skills. Other teachers also appeared to undermine the victims' professional work by revising previously covered lessons and providing learners with an alternative route, which is primarily incorrect. Victims reported that they substantiated their arguments on the correctness of the methods they used by referring to textbooks, so that their perpetrators would see that they were correct in the first place.

Furthermore, parents seem to be part of the bullying process by not approving female teachers' work, especially when trying to reprimand learners. Parents also conspire with other teachers to diminish victims' dignity. Instead of talking to victims about their kids' work, they would rather

talk to a different teacher who would help torment the victim. The bullies would claim that the victim does not know how to teach.

It seems that not only teachers but also principals face the same challenge of professional degradation. For some, the experience began before promotion to principal and continued even after promotion. Their authority is undermined when teachers are absent without informing their principals and sometimes refuse to perform assigned activities.

Moreover, teachers experience gossip about their work and personal lives that is fabricated. Victims reported that bullies would talk behind their backs about their work instead of facing them, discussing the issues and providing help. This made the victims appear incompetent and bad in the eyes of the listeners. They further reported that colleagues had informed them that the principal was dissatisfied with their examination questions. Also, co-teachers would spread the rumours that the victim does not know the correct writing on the board and that the same teacher helps them.

Teachers are also bullied by being isolated from other teachers, and principals are sometimes involved. Principals believe that having victims mingle with other teachers would provide an opportunity to reinforce ideas that could be detrimental to the principals. They would instead isolate victims by assigning them duties that kept them away from others most of the time. Sometimes, victims are secluded by the whole staff during tours. Such victims would be left uninformed. At times, the principal complains about classroom allocation, stating that the victim should remain in the same room because the classroom is untidy and looks terrible. Even with different grades, victims could not change the room.

Victims were also denied opportunities to express their views and to participate in voluntary activities. During staff meetings, victims were not permitted to express their views. Only those whom the principal favoured were allowed to express their ideas and were heard. Sometimes, victims were not delegated to any activities. Even if they volunteered, they would be denied the opportunity. Essential occurrences such as workshops and training were only reserved for the favourites at the expense of the victims' chances.

Furthermore, victims were set up to fail. Principals would command, knowing very well that the scheduled time would clash with the victims' work. At times, they would deny victims resources and withhold information from them, only to make them appear incompetent. They would even be assigned activities about which they were uncertain and lacked knowledge. If the work was inappropriately done, the principal would shout at the victim. Demeaning and unreasonable deadlines for completing and submitting work were further documented as experiences of victims.

### **5.3.2 Examining ways in which workplace bullying affects teachers in Lesotho primary schools**

Examining ways in which workplace bullying affects teachers revealed that victims experience poor health, low self-esteem, loss of interest in work and thoughts of resigning. Participants reported experiencing health problems such as excessive headache, fainting and low blood pressure after being bullied. Some even reported being hospitalised. Their health problems were new, which suggested that they were a result of bullying. They reported consistently crying due to the overwhelming experience and feelings of hurt. They further reported feeling chest pains, which led to the diagnosis of low blood pressure when they consulted the doctors. Victims further reported that bullying seemed to cause them to experience weight loss as they lacked proper rest and appetite. Their life routines changed, so they adopted irregular eating habits and sleep patterns. This resulted in the victims discovering that their clothes were no longer fitting, which could only mean weight loss.

Moreover, workplace bullying resulted in victims experiencing low self-esteem. Due to the bullying acts they were subjected to, they ended up perceiving themselves as unskilled and constantly questioning their capabilities despite being qualified teachers. The work they do is constantly scrutinised and is not approved by the bullies, who would always have something bad and negative to say about the victims' work. Victims further reported perceiving their capabilities as inadequate. Whenever they think of work, they experience weak feelings in their spirits. They stated looking for approval from friends and colleagues about their work. On one hand, principals as superiors also experienced low self-esteem because they felt like they lacked management skills as teachers bully one another on their watch and authority.

Participants reported having thoughts of resigning due to bullying experiences. They believed that leaving their current schools might bring them peace and a better work experience. They wanted to transfer to other schools. They sometimes believe that the entire profession is covered with bullying, so they should leave the entire profession, hoping that in other professions, bullying is less or not there.

Furthermore, victims lost interest and feared doing assigned work. They reported feeling disconnected from their work, which resulted in them ditching and neglecting some activities. Their work dedication was negatively affected by the bullying experiences. They stopped regular lesson planning and marking of learners' work. They worked just to earn money because they were employees and teaching was their source of income.

Lastly, work relations and teamwork deteriorated as bullying escalated among teachers. Participants reported avoiding and dodging to work with bullies. They no longer want to get involved with them. They stopped sharing and interacting in school to get away from bullies. If need be, they preferred to inquire about information from other school teachers. Teachers ended up not assisting one another. Furthermore, teamwork is reportedly undermined as teachers were alone in doing their work. There was no longer working together for a common goal. The teachers no longer shared ideas and innovations that could develop the schools. Each kept whatever he or she had to him or herself.

### **5.3.3 Establish how teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools**

Teachers who experienced workplace bullying at school use different management strategies to curb bullying. They ignored the situation, received support from family and friends, reported the matter to the authorities, used school policies and regulations, while some resorted to absenteeism.

Participants reported avoiding bullying escalation by ignoring the situation. They neglected any bullying actions directed at them. They thought responding would progress the bullying and preferred their sanity over reacting. The bullying experiences did not affect the victims' continuation of work activities and duties. They took their tormentors as non-existent and acted as if nothing was happening. They further reported coping through support from their family

members, friends, and colleagues. They were comforted with soothing and encouraging advice to keep them going with their work and make peace with their situation.

Participants further stated that they would report the matter to the authorities. They needed mediation to settle the dispute they had with bullies. Principals helped to mediate between the bully and the victim. In some cases, they reported to the Department of Education, especially when bullies were principals and held higher positions in the school. They thought board members could not help them as they were often in alliance with the principal. Measures were taken to address the matter with the hope of getting positive results. Positive change after mediation was reported as the bullying behaviours meant for victims were reduced. However, some reported escalation after mediation as bullies refrained from delegating some activities and duties to them, claiming to fear being reported back to the Department of Education. On the other hand, some victims decided not to report their experience as they feared provoking the bullies, hence the escalation of bullying. They dealt with it themselves with the hope that it would build peace.

In addition, principals helped to control bullying among teachers through the use of school policies and regulations. They would bring the bully and victim together to work things through and make peace. Everyone was reminded of their rights and that the policies should be implemented to protect the bully and the victim. Hence, no one has to violate the rights of others and the peace at school. This is likely to create an environment where employees are free.

Lastly, participants used absenteeism as a strategy to get away from bullies and cope with the bullying. They would apply for a leave and report fake illnesses just to be away. They preferred places other than their work environment, assuming they would be at peace. Victims would do anything to be far from their workplaces because they perceive other places to be safer. Some seek other job alternatives so that they can leave their current jobs.

This study provides insights into the prevalence of workplace bullying, its forms and severity among teachers. It also identifies issues that are contributing factors and their impact on victims.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made regarding the study's findings and conclusions on the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka, Leribe.

The findings show that teachers are bullied by principals, teachers, parents and learners, which puts pressure on them. So, through its departments, the Ministry of Education should create specific laws that protect teachers against bullying and ensure that they are forcefully implemented.

Only one of the five schools investigated had policies and regulations to protect teachers against workplace bullying. This creates a safe environment where teachers can discuss any issues they may have openly, which indicates significant steps taken to address bullying prevalence and its potential impact on work effectiveness. Schools must create clear, comprehensive policies and regulations outlining the accountability of those engaging in bullying behaviours. Anti-bullying programmes should be developed to educate teachers about bullying incidents, enabling them to recognise and report them. Intervention and prevention strategies should be prioritised for teachers' safety. Furthermore, schools should foster a safe environment where teachers can openly discuss issues.

Workplace bullying seemed to negatively impact teachers' well-being and work performance. Therefore, the study recommends that teachers be provided with counselling sessions to help them deal with bullying. This would discourage them from resorting to alternatives such as absenteeism and loss of interest in doing work. This would help to prevent loss of productivity and staff turnover in schools, as victims have thoughts of leaving schools and the teaching profession.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for further research**

The study focused only on primary teachers in Peka Leribe; hence, the findings cannot be generalised to the whole country. The prevalence of bullying nationwide is also unclear. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted across different regions of the country and at different levels of education, such as secondary schools and higher education institutions, to compare findings.

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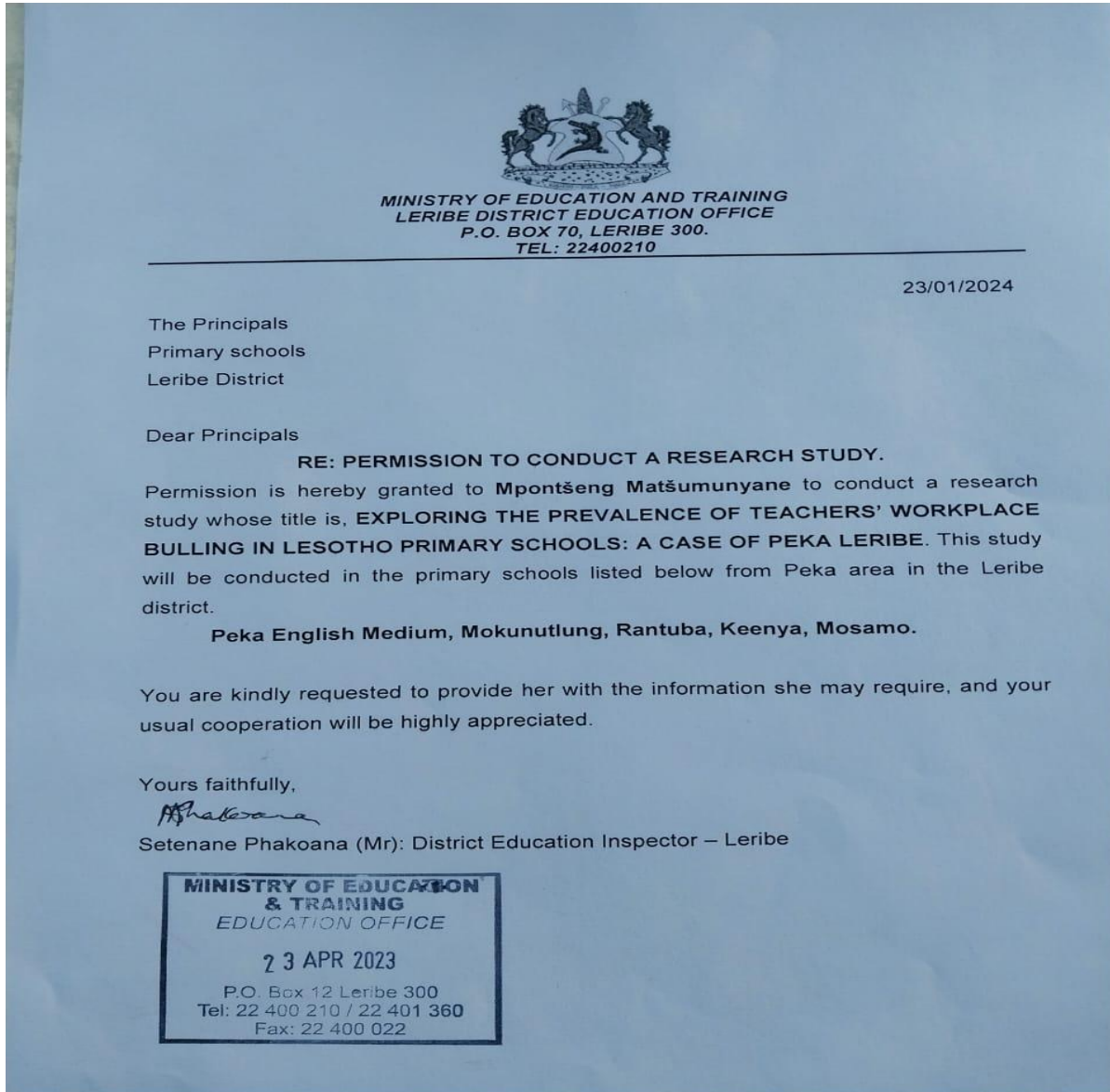
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING





### Appendix 3: CONSENT FORM TO BE FILLED BY TEACHERS

Dear Sir/Madam

#### Re: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I, **Mpotseng Matsumunyane**, am a Master's student at the National University of Lesotho. One of the requirements of my studies is to complete a dissertation on topical issues in education. In line with this requirement, I am conducting a study on **Exploring the prevalence of teachers' workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools: A case of Peka Leribe**. A request to collect data for this study was approved by the District Education Manager (Leribe) as well as the Principal of this school. I, therefore, request you to voluntarily participate in this study. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only, and your name and that of your school will be kept anonymous. Descriptions will also be done in a manner that will not reveal your identity or that of your school.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign in the spaces provided below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mpotseng Matsumunyane

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE**

### **Principals' questions**

- 1. What are teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
  - Please explain your experiences of teachers' bullying in your school (to include perpetrator, victim and the acts of bullying).
- 2. How does workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
  - How does the teacher's bullying at work affect you as a principal?
  - In the cases about bullying you handled, how were the victims affected?
- 3. How do teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
  - How do the victims of workplace bullying cope?
  - Please explain the effectiveness of the coping strategies used by the victims of bullying in your school.
  - Please describe the school policies that protect teachers against bullying in your school (to include: are the teachers aware of the policies, are the policies implemented, and how effective are the policies?)
- 4. How does workplace bullying affect the working relations in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
  - Please explain the working relations that prevail in your school after the bullying experiences.

### **Interview questions for teachers**

- 1. What are teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
  - Please explain your experiences of teachers' bullying in your school (to include perpetrators, victims and acts of bullying)
- 2. How does workplace bullying affect teachers in Lesotho Primary Schools in Peka Leribe?**

- How did bullying affect you or targeted teachers?
- 3. How do teachers manage workplace bullying in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
- How did you or the victims cope with the bullying?
  - Please tell me about the policies that protect teachers against bullying in this school?
- 4. How does teachers' workplace bullying affect working relations in Lesotho primary schools in Peka Leribe?**
- In your view, how does workplace bullying affect working relations in your school?