A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO MANAGING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE VHEMBE DISTRICT IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

by

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DEDICATION

This minor-dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife, Virginia Rudzani, and my children, Wavhudi and Wamashudu, in appreciation of their encouragements and incessant support throughout the different steps leading to the completion of this dissertation.
EDITOR’S DECLARATION

I, Hervé Mitoumba-Tindy (qualification: MA English; positions: Post-Graduate Writing Fellow, Lecturer of Language for the Economic Sciences, and Lecturer of Communication, at the University of Johannesburg; contact: 011 559 3488 / 082 489 8108), hereby declare that I performed language editing on this research study entitled “A whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools in the Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province”.

Signature -Mitoumba H.T

Date: 03 September 2012
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My praises go to:

- The Almighty God for the manifestation of his love and benevolence.

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MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL!
SYNOPSIS

Bullying behaviour is an increasing problem in secondary schools. As such, it should not be overlooked and ignored by the school authorities and communities. The secondary school principals, educators, SMT members, as well as parents have a responsibility toward the effort to eradicate bullying behaviour in schools. Failure to eliminate bullying in secondary schools would result in high dropout rates and poor concentration on school-work among learners.

A qualitative method was used in this study because it allows an in-depth, explorative, descriptive, and contextual approach to the topic. In the particular context of this study, the qualitative method involved extensive data collection on many variables, over a period of time, as the research explored bullying behaviour in its environmental setting, from a holistic perspective. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals, educators, school management teams and learners.

The analysis of the collected data revealed the need to adopt a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools, if this problem is to be effectively addressed. Indeed, a whole-school approach aims at using positive strategies to lessen bullying and help both the bullied and the bullies. Thus, special policies for dealing with bullying behaviour in secondary schools should be instituted and, learners should be made aware of the consequences of the non-observance of the anti-bullying policies.

Findings from the research were discussed with the participants and, the researcher indicated the contribution of this study to the effort to address the problem of bullying in secondary schools.
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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background to this research study, explains the research problem, states the aims of the research study, and describes the research design, the data gathering method, the data analysis technique and the methodology. The chapter also defines the key concepts of the study.

According to Suckling and Temple (2002:7), bullying behaviour among learners in schools is a serious problem embedded in the subculture of the particular schools where bullying takes place. As a result, even the most violent and recurrent forms of bullying remain unaddressed until the victim speaks out or the impacts become apparent (Besag, 1989:10). In other words, educators, principals and school management teams seem to take no or little notice of bullying in secondary schools, while learners experience fear, humiliation and harassment (Barone, 1997:81).

The problem is compounded by the fact that, in some instances, victims of bullying fail to report this issue to educators or school principals (Byrne, 1994:12). Victims remain silent for two main reasons. The first reason is their fear of victimization. The second reason is their awareness that no action would be taken to discipline the bullies (Suckling & Temple, 2002:7-8). Unaddressed bullying may result in such painful and traumatic situations as murder, suicide and physical injuries that need hospitalization; all these effects leave a lasting, negative, emotional impact on the bullied (Olweus, 1993:10).

In light of the above, bullying is a severe problem that should be recognized and addressed by all school stakeholders (Train, 1995:26). In clearer terms, bullying should be dealt with by educators, non-teaching staff members of schools, parents, school-governing bodies, local communities and external organizations (Cowie & Jennifer,
The necessity of a holistic approach to bullying is reinforced by Tattum’s (1993:68) view that bullying is best dealt with from a whole school approach. A whole school approach consists in the use of positive strategies aimed at addressing bullying in a manner that offers support to the bullied and counseling to the bullies, as opposed to just punishing the bullies (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007:4).

However, in order for bullying to be addressed effectively, it is essential to clearly establish what bullying is and how it affects both the bullies and bullied. Hence, this research study aims to describe the nature and extent of bullying, types of bullying behaviour and consequences of bullying, before suggesting strategies for dealing with bullying behaviour from a whole-school perspective.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Research reveals that bullying is insidious and therefore difficult to manage. Hence, a whole-school approach to bullying behaviour among secondary school learners requires that all educators and education managers find an effective way of dealing with this issue. Bullying can only be dealt with effectively if the anti-bullying endeavour is supported by the education system as a whole. This means that isolated attempts to confront bullying will be fruitless (Suckling & Temple, 2002:340).

According to Rigby (1996:24), a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools consists in responding proactively to bullying behaviour so as to prevent possible devastating consequences for learners. This implies that schools have to guarantee every learner the right to learn in a school environment free of bullying. In other words, the whole school system should reach an understanding on the most appropriate way of managing bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools. The knowledge resulting from a whole-school approach to bullying should enable management to develop strategies to curb this antisocial behaviour (Oosthuizen, Rossouw, de Waal, Smith, & Huyssteen, 2008:19). Put another way, combating the scourge of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners through a whole-school
approach implies the formulation of diverse strategies and the development of a symbiotic relationship between all school actors (Suckling & Temple, 2002:34). In practical terms, to secure a learning school environment, a whole-school approach to bullying behaviour must develop a set of procedures to be followed by staff, parents and pupils alike when inquiring about bullying cases (Tattum, 1993:64).

Surprisingly, Leach (1997:2) points out that a whole-school approach to managing school bullying behaviour has not been applied in the context of South African schools. This seems to be justified by the fact that research on the role of the whole-school approach to the management of bullying behaviour in South African secondary schools is limited. Furthermore, research on the application of a whole school approach to managing bullying behaviours has focused on a positivist or deficit perspective, which tends to make causal links between the individual and an event (Tattum, 1993:80). On the contrary, bullying behaviour should be considered from a systematic perspective. Indeed, in a systematic perspective all systems in an environment are considered as interactive and, individuals are seen holistically in a particular systematic context (Olweus, 1993:45).

Bullying should not be overlooked and left to take its own course (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007:3). Bullying needs to be eradicated so that its painful and negative results may be prevented (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:12). School managers, educators, parents and learners should work together to deal with bullying behaviour (Barone, 1997:81). All stakeholders should be involved in developing policies and strategies to manage bullying from a whole-school approach (Tattum, 1993:59).

The need to develop the abovementioned strategies is particularly pressing in the Vhembe district, in the Limpopo province, where numerous cases of learners bullying each other on school premises, yet the school community has taken no action, have been reported (Limpopo Mirror Newspaper, June 6: 2009). Other reported cases relate to victims of bullying dropping out of school (Sunday Times, March 29: 2009).

This study is concerned with showing the importance of involvement of the whole school community in creating a school culture that values and practices an anti-bullying ethos.
By adopting a whole-school approach to bullying behaviour, members of the school community could develop an approach that creates a dynamic, responsive and safe environment for secondary school learners. Thus, the importance of this study resides in the fact that its findings could add value in terms of igniting secondary school managers’ interest in the use of the whole-school approach to bullying. The study will also contribute to the scholarship in terms of adding information to the existing body of knowledge on the application of a whole school approach to bullying (Suckling & Temple, 2002:1).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Bullying in secondary schools in the Vhembe district has been thus far managed in isolation. School stakeholders have failed to implement a whole school approach to managing bullying behaviour (Limpopo Mirror Newspaper, June 6: 2009). Individual approaches whereby the teacher acts in isolation to resolve bullying behaviour and its possible ramifications have been marred by short-sightedness which renders them ineffective. What is more, the rare attempts to a whole-school approach to managing bullying in secondary schools have been partially applied because some schools condone bullying behaviour.

The failure to manage bullying effectively in secondary schools is also the result of the fact that school management still believes that bullying is an essential part of growing up. In this regard, bullying is viewed as a pre-requisite for character building. Consequently, learners are left to address bullying themselves (Rigby, 1996:24). Put another way, the failure to reduce the frequency of bullying incidents in secondary schools through the implement of a whole-school approach to bullying behaviour is largely due to the lack of a pro-active, instrumental role on the part of school managers (Joubert, 2008:70).

In brief, despite the growing interest in the implementation of a whole-school approach to managing bullying in some secondary schools, the outcomes remain insignificant.
Many learners are still vulnerable to the violent acts and bullying behaviour in most secondary schools (Joubert, 2008:71).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- What does a whole-school approach to managing bullying in secondary schools in Vhembe district in Limpopo province involve?
- What strategies have been formulated and implemented to reduce bullying and control the effects thereof?
- What are the perceptions of principals, educators, and school management teams about the nature and extent of bullying in secondary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo?

1.5 THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of this study are:

- To describe a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools in the Vhembe district in the Limpopo province.
- To identify strategies for managing bullying behaviour in secondary school from a whole-school approach.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is the plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:31). Mouton
(1996:107) adds that a research design is a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

According to Babbie (2007:33), a paradigm is a model or framework for observation and understanding which shapes both what we see and how we understand it. Nieuwenhuis (2007:243) further characterises a paradigm as a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which give rise to a particular worldview and which dictate the kind of scientific work to be done and the type of theories to be used.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying my research are that reality is socially constructed and that individuals perceive reality differently. This implies that there are multiple realities (Connole, 1998:21). The goal of my research is to describe participants’ realities insofar as a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour is concerned. This will be achieved by enquiring into their varying perceptions and experiences of the whole-school approach. My research will therefore be located within an interpretive paradigm.

1.6.2 Research approach

The researcher intends to use a descriptive, interpretive research approach in his investigation of the whole-school approach to managing bullying in the secondary schools in the Vhembe district. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:278) defines interpretive as an approach which explain subjective reason and meanings that lie behind social action. It focus on the subjective understandings and experiences of individuals or groups. It treat people as though they were the origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter (2006:321). De Vos,
Strydom, Fouche and Delport, (2005:6) states that interpretive approach is based on explanation, empathetic understanding of the everyday lived experience of people in specific historical settings.

In applying the interpretive approach, the researcher will intimately connect with the phenomenon being studied. In this respect, human experiences and perceptions will be analyzed through a detailed description of the whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:322) states that the main purpose of interpretive approach is to understand participant’s experiences and perceptions.

1.6.3 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Taking into consideration the nature of the research problem, the qualitative method of data collection seems appropriate for this study. The researcher’s choice of the qualitative method is also guided by the fact that it enables an in-depth, explorative, descriptive and contextual engagement with the issue. Hence, qualitative research is defined as a multi-perspective approach (utilising different qualitative techniques and data collection methods) to social interaction. The general purpose of the qualitative method is to describe, reconstruct, interpret or make sense of the phenomenon in terms of the meaning that the experiencing subject attaches to it (De Vos, 1998:15). However, in the case of this research study, the aim of the qualitative approach is to understand the role of a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools situated in the Vhembe district in the Limpopo province.
1.7 DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews and documents analysis have been chosen as the method for gathering data on a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools in Vhembe district (Catherine & Rossman, 1999:105).

1.7.1 Interviews

Interviews are the most commonly used technique for collecting data in qualitative research. According to Cummings and Worley (2001:118), interviews allow the interviewer to amend questions and to probe surface issues. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:287) define the interview as a conversation conducted with the aim of understanding the world from a participant’s perspective, unfolding the meaning of people’s experiences and uncovering their lived world, prior to scientific explanations. In this study, semi-structured interviews with open ended questions will be used. Secondary school learners, SMTs, educators and school principals to be interviewed in Vhembe district will be purposeful selected. The interviews will be tape-recorded, with the participants’ permission, and then transcribed.

1.7.2 Document analysis

Documents analysis will be done to provide me with relevant data on the implementation of a whole-school approach in managing bullying behaviour in secondary school. Documents to be analysed include policy guidelines, books, journals, reports, discussion papers, magazines, theses, other physical materials and researcher-generated documents (Merriam, 1998:112-113). The specific purpose for generating documents is to learn more about the situation, person or event being investigated.
1.8 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Mouton (1996), quoted by Fouche and De Vos (2005:104), mentions different types of units of analysis, namely, individuals, institutions, social actions, cultural objects and events. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used individuals as the unit of analysis. Thus, in this study, the analysis focuses on educators, school principals, school management teams and learners. Babbie (2007:96) further describes a unit of analysis, in simple terms, as what or whom can be studied. The researcher’s choice of individuals as the unit of analysis in this study is motivated by the fact that they possess significant information regarding the implementation of a whole-school approach to managing bullying in secondary schools.

1.9 SAMPLING

Purposive sampling will be used. Merriam (1998:61) define purposive sampling as one in which the sampled members are chosen with a specific purpose and objective in mind. The sample is thus intentionally selected to serve the purpose of the study (Gravette & Forzano, 2003:115). In this study the sample will be drawn from the secondary schools that have failed to effectively implement a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour. As indicated earlier, in the discussion of the unit of analysis, the sample will involve educators, school principals, learners and SMT members. The focus on these groups is justified by the fact that they have information about bullying problems and strategies to prevent bullying in schools. For the purpose of this research, one SMT member, one principal, one educator, one learner per school will be selected to participate in this inquiry. A maximum of three members per secondary school will be selected for interviewing.
1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing and contemplating the coded data, as well as reviewing raw and coded data (Neuman 1997: 426). In this study, data will be analysed by means of direct interpretations. Babbie (2007:378) stresses that the effectiveness of interpretive data analysis depends on the researcher’s style of thinking, careful consideration of the alternative interpretations thereof and adequately presentation of evidence. The suitability of the direct interpretation technique for this study is stems from the fact that data gathered from semi-structured interviews need to be carefully examined to establish the participants’ perceptions. In addition, data will be transcribed and coded into categories and themes. Henning (2004:105) observes that the categorization or grouping can only be done once the transcription is ready and codes have been assigned to different segments of the unit of meaning.

1.11 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

- A whole school approach to managing bullying behaviour implies that all school staff members, as well as the school managing bodies and community take responsibility for the behaviour of learners. Put another way, teachers, principals, parents, governors and community members should show concern about learners’ behaviour at home, within the community and at school (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007:51-52).
- A whole school approach is a notion that seeks to address school violence in a collective way. It involves all members of the school community, including children and young people, school management, teaching staff, non teaching, school nurses, lunchtime supervisors, parents and guardians, school governors, local communities and external organizations (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007:21). As it
becomes apparent, a whole-school approach is a joint effort to tackle bullying behaviour. As such, its aim should be communicated to all stakeholders (Smith & Thompson, 1991:7). In the context of this research, a whole-school approach implies a school-wide endeavour to reduce and/or prevent bullying in schools.

- Bullying can be described as the act whereby one or more individuals inflict physical, verbal, or emotional abuse on another. This includes the threat of bodily harm, intimidation by means of weapons, extortion, civil rights violations, assault and battery, gang activity, attempted murder and murder (Fried & Fried, 1996:5). In light of the above, bullying is a persistent behaviour characterized by a repeated physical, psychological, social or verbal abuse perpetrated by the powerful (including an advantage based on physical appearance) on the powerless who are fearful and physically unable to oppose any resistance (Besag, 1994:3).

- The term bullies refers to learners who bully others. Bullies are persons who use their strength or power to frighten or hurt weaker individuals. For the purposes this research the term bullies refers to learners who perpetrate and perpetuate bullying (Hornby, 1989:149).

- The term bullied refers to learners who are defenseless and therefore bullied by other learners (Michele, 1991:16). In this study, bullied designates learners who are victims of the bullying.

- The term educators refers to all persons whose work involves educating others at all education levels, in any type of education or training context. A case in point would be teachers.

- School Management Teams include heads of the schools, deputy principals and heads of departments. The role of the school management teams is to ensure an effective functioning of schools on a daily basis insofar as curriculum, discipline and administration are concerned (South African School Act, 1996:9).

- Strategic intervention refers to the designing of curriculum materials, the formulation of programmes and the implementation of campaigns aimed at preventing or managing the effects of bullying behaviour in schools (Smith & Sharp, 1994:1).
• Vhembe district is a district in the Limpopo province. The Vhembe district is situated in the northern part of South Africa, in the area formerly known as Venda. The Vhembe district borders Zimbabwe in the northern part of South Africa (Scott, 1995:6).

1.12 CONCLUSION

The failure to manage bullying through a successful implementation of a whole school approach in secondary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo province hinders learners’ academic progress. A whole-school approach implies that all staff members and the school community at large should take responsibility for the behaviour of all learners (Tattum, 1993:63).

In this chapter the research background was provided and the research problem was stated. The aims of the research were stated; and an explanation of the design, data gathering method, data analysis technique as well as unit of analysis was offered. The research questions and sampling method were stated. The key concepts of the study were defined and discussed.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature study conducted in this chapter is aimed at establishing the theoretical perspective of this research study. The theoretical framework refers to the strategies on the application of a whole-school approach to the management of bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools in Vhembe district in Limpopo province. Thus, this chapter is reviews the literature on types of bullying, the nature and extent of bullying in secondary schools, causes of bullying behaviour, consequences of bullying, strategies to prevent or reduce bullying behaviour and the establishment of anti-bullying policies in secondary schools.

2.2 DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Roberts Jr. (2006:14) defines bullying as a combination of verbal and physical aggressions and aggravations directed from an agent (the bully) towards a target (the victim). Rigby, in Lee (2004:13), defines bullying as repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful individual by a more powerful person or group of people. From their part, O’Moore and Minton (2004:72) define bullying as intentional, repeated, hurtful acts, words or other behaviours, such as name calling, threatening or shunning committed by a child or children against another child or other children. For Zeelie (2004:12) bullying is a deliberate, conscious desire to hurt, threaten and frighten someone. Bullying is further characterised by Conoley and Goldstein (2004:11) as a form of lower aggressive behaviour which is either overt or covert. However, Olweus, as cited in Lee (2004:38), suggests that bullying be viewed as a subcategory of aggressive
behaviour to be distinguished from violence, even though bullying and violence are intertwined in some cases.

In light of the above, bullying occurs when one child or group of children repeatedly hurts another child through actions or words (Sampson, 2002:29). This implies, according to Sampson (2002:3), a fight or quarrel between two persons of approximately the same physical or psychological strength cannot be regarded as bullying. Bullying entails repeated offensive acts perpetrated against an individual by someone who is perceived as physically or psychologically more powerful.

In the context of this study, bullying is construed as a repeated or persistent hurtful or violent act. This takes the form of physical, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse. The abusive act is committed by a bully or person who is more powerful than their victim who is unable to defend themselves. It seems appropriate to stress that bullying is a deliberate and intentional behaviour.

2.3 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying among secondary school learners is a secretive activity. Its detection is made more difficult by the fact that most learners do not report bullying incidents to the educators or school management, except in serious cases (Smith & Sharp, 1994:5-6). Indeed, bullying behaviour among secondary school learners often occurs in areas of the school where educators are not in sight (Barone, 1997:87).

What is more, bullying behaviour among the secondary school learners occurs in various ways that are hard to detect, namely, verbally, emotionally and psychological (Byrne, 1994:46). Nevertheless, Smith and Sharp (1994:2) emphasise that bullying behaviour amongst the secondary school learners is a wilful, conscious and purposeful activity. This means that bullying behaviour is a planned and intentional behaviour, it does not happen at random as testified by the fact that it is often repeated over a period
of time. The aim of bullying is to hurt a person or make them feel unhappy and unsafe (Squelch, 1998:4).

Various reports and studies have established that approximately 15 percent of students in schools are either bullied regularly or are initiators of bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1997:13). Of this 15 percent, 9 percent are victims, whereas the remaining 6 percent are regular bullies.

Direct bullying, which seems to increase in the junior primary years, peaks in the senior primary and junior secondary years, before declining during senior secondary years (Leach, 1997:58). However, while direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse appears to remain constant. School size, racial composition and school setting (rural, suburb, urban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007:51). Leach (1997:53) also reveals that 63% of learners indicated that they have been bullied on a weekly basis or more often, while 27% of learners simply reported to have been bullied. This clearly indicates the existence of bullying in South African schools. However, the extent of this bullying phenomenon could be higher than Leach’s findings.

2.4 TYPES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Bullying behaviour in secondary schools occurs in various forms. There is direct and indirect bullying behaviour. Direct bullying is involves relatively open attacks such as kicking, shoving, pushing, hitting and tripping up; whereas indirect bullying takes the form of social isolation or exclusion from the group (Leach, 1997:11). Similarly, Rigby, Cox and Black (1997:358) distinguish physical, emotional, social, verbal and psychological forms of bullying. In this study, five types of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners are discussed.
2.4.1 Verbal bullying behaviour among secondary school learners

Verbal bullying behaviour amongst secondary school learners involves teasing, mocking and taunting of a learner by other learners (Barone, 1997:81). Verbal bullying behaviour often involves name-calling, abusive comments and the uttering of insulting words and sounds directed to a learner, with the aim of hurting them (Smith & Sharp, 1994:6). Because of its subtlety, verbal bullying behaviour is difficult to deal with, even when reported; the bullies usually deny having perpetrated bullying in the absence of tangible evidence in the form of testimonies from witnesses or bystanders (Van Niekerk, 1993:35).

2.4.2 Psychological bullying behaviour among secondary school learners

Psychological bullying behaviour in secondary school occurs mostly in the form of indirect bullying. Victims are excluded from the group, by peers or friends, and are isolated during play and group-work activities (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:4). This characterisation of psychological bullying behaviour is reinforced by Witney and Smith (1993:11) who view it as consisting in deliberately leaving a learner out of games and social activities. They enrich their conception of bullying by including the spreading of malicious rumours and gossip about a learner as well as making a fool out of them.

2.4.3 Physical bullying behaviour among secondary school learners

According to Leach (1997:56), physical bullying behaviour is the most direct form. It involves hitting, tripping up, kicking, punching, pushing, damaging property, clapping,
other forms of assault, and taking another learner’s belongings. It is suggested that both boys and girls experience bullying behaviour (Van Niekerk, 1993:35).

Furthermore, research indicates that physical bullying behaviour among secondary school learners is most common and easiest to observe (Smith & Sharp, 1994:6). Physical bullying behaviour may also include initiation rites. Here, older learners in the school pick on the new first year learners by pushing them in corridors and stair wells, locking them in toilets, and forcing new learners to perform undesirable acts (Byrne, 1994:45).

2.4.4 Emotional bullying behaviour among secondary school learners

Emotional bullying behaviour in schools includes terrorising, extorting, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, the rating or ranking of such characteristics as race, disability, ethnicity, manipulating friendships, ostracising and peer-pressuring (Naser et al., 2003:129).

2.4.5 Social bullying behaviour among secondary school learners

Lee (2004:10) defines social bullying behaviour as the deliberate exclusion of a learner from a social group or their intimidation by the group. Coloroso (2003:17), on the other hand, calls this type relational bullying whose main characteristic is the systematic diminishment of a bullied child’s sense of self. Social bullying is difficult to detect from the outside. However, social bullying may be direct and may manifest itself through the victims’ experience of exclusion, being ignored, being isolated or shunned. Indirect forms of social bullying include the secretive exclusion of the victims who will not become aware of the conspiracy against them until they attempt to join the group but are rejected (Lee, 2004:10).
Social bullying behaviour often involves, as mentioned by Coloroso (2003:17) and O'Moore and Minton (2004:72), subtle forms such as aggressive stares, rolling of eyes, frowns, sigh, sneers and snickers. To this list, Sampson (2002:2) adds such acts as tripping, intimidation, rumour spreading, demanding of money as well as the theft of valuables.

### 2.5 FACTORS CAUSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying behaviour in secondary schools is a purposive occurrence influenced by various factors. According to Fried and Fried (1996:6-8), bullies are influenced by such factors such as the culture, community, school, family and personal issue. These five factors are best represented as five concentric circles in which every single circle represents a fundamental factor, starting with an individual learner viewed as their centre.

The five concentric circles influencing bullying, according to Fried and Fried (1996:7), are represented in figure 1.1 below:
Family Factor: A number of child-rearing styles have been found to generate children who grow up to become aggressive bullies. Lack of attention and warmth towards the child, the modelling of aggressive behaviour at home, and the poor supervision of the child are the perfect conditions for the child’s development of aggression and bullying behaviour (SAHRC, 2007:6). Modelling of aggressive behaviour includes parents’ use of physical and verbal aggression towards the child, or parents’ display of physical and verbal aggression towards each other.

Bullying behaviour can also be fostered by a problematic family background characterised by negative attitudes between parents and children/learners (Leach, 1997). This means that children/learners whose parents are violent and abusive are more likely to become bullies. The implication of this last point is that bullying behaviour could be passed across generations (Van Niekerk, 1993:35).
In a nutshell, learners copy and display the attitudes and behaviours of their parents. Consequently, learners raised in loveless, unsupportive and disrespectful families grow to be intolerant and unable to show empathy, respect and positive attitudes towards other learners (Brown, 1997).

- **Individual factor**: The best documented individual-related factor of bullying behaviour in children is temperament. Children who are active and impulsive in temperament may be more inclined to develop into bullies. In the case of boys, the superiority in the physical strength vis-à-vis relatively younger and less strong peers may result in bullying tendencies. However, suffice it to stress that there are many physically strong adept boys who never bully others (Olweus, 1993).

- **School factor**: The social context, notably the supervision at school, plays a major part in the frequency and severity of bullying incidents. While teachers and administrators do not have control over individual and family factors, the severity of bullying incidents can be significantly reduced through appropriate supervision, intervention and the creation of an anti-bullying climate at schools (Olweus, 1993). Hence, Squelch (1998:30) stresses that schools that ignore bullying and even condone it in any form, actually contribute to the prevalence of bullying behaviours. At the same time, schools that adopt an anti-bullying strategy and empower school staff to recognise and deal with bullying are more likely to reduce the incidence of bullying and create a safe learning environment.

- **The community**: Community conditions and attitudes can also contribute to the promotion or discouragement of bullying behaviour. Children who grow up in a community where violence is common tend to become bullies. This is because they are exposed to or witness aggressive behaviour, and are subjected to the abuse of power. As a result, they learn to settle differences through the use of violent and aggressive means. Children from violent communities are also more likely to develop patterns of bullying behaviour that are carried into the schools and onto the playgrounds (Fried & Fried, 1996:7).
• **Culture**: Culture at large is an important factor in the development of bullying behaviour. Cultures that display an attitude of indifferent toward violence, sexism and racism negatively influence a child’s behaviour and attitudes towards others. For instance, some cultures/people hold the view that the only way to solve conflicts is by means of violence (Fried & Fried 1996:8).

2.6 MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

There are statements carrying views, opinions and comments about bullying which are indeed mere myths. However, they contribute to the occurrence of bullying incident in that they cause the overlooking or ignorance of bullying behaviour in schools. In light of the last point above, such statements should not be condoned (Brown, 1997:12). Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:4) have identified the following myths about bullying:

- Bullying is just a normal part of the growing process.
- Bullying is a rite of passage.
- Learners will outgrow bullying as time goes on.
- Bullying is a form of training for real life.
- One has to stand on one’s own two feet and defend oneself when bullied.
- If bullying is ignored it will eventually stop.
- Bullying strengthens the learner’s character.

Having discussed the nature and extent of bullying, the researcher shall turn now to the discussion of the consequences of bullying for learners.
2.7 CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying has the potential to disrupt the process of instruction and learning in schools. De Wet (2006:61) notes that bullying can have negative consequences for the school as it infringes the rights of learners and educators to a safe teaching and learning environment.

Bullying behaviour has negative long-lasting consequences for the bullied (Leach, 1997: 54). The demonstrations of power forming the basis of bullying among learners affect the bullied’s sense of safety and their desire to learn (Byrne, 1994:14). The negative consequences of bullying are further highlighted by Train (1995:26) who observes that bullying impedes the whole personal development of the learner. Bullying behaviour results in pain and distress for the victim (Train, 1995:26). Interestingly, bullying does not affect the bullied alone, it also impacts the bully, bystanders, witnesses as well as family and friends of the victim (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:11). The following are some of the consequences of bullying on the bullied, the bully and bystanders.

2.7.1 Consequences for the bullied

Learners who are bullied experience painful physical, emotional, social and educational consequences (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:10).

2.7.1.1 Physical consequences

According to Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:10), the bullied often suffer from the following physical conditions:
- Headaches
- Loss of appetite
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Nail biting
- Bedwetting, and
- stomach ailments

In this regard, Barone (1997:80) observes that some severe instances of bullying may lead to physical injuries that need hospitalisation or even the death of the bullied or the bully. Indeed, suicide has been identified as one of the most likely outcomes of excessive bullying. It is important to note here that the bullied sometimes go to the extent of killing their peers in the process of defending themselves or retaliating to the bully’s attacks (Roland & Munthe, 1987:4).

2.7.1.2 Emotional consequences

The emotional effects of bullying for the bullied may include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fearfulness
- Frustration, and
- Hopelessness (Krije, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:10).

The bullied learner may also have suicidal thoughts and, their interest in such activities as sports may decline (Byrne, 1994:18). The bullied learner may also develop low self-esteem and a poor self-perception. Byrne (1994:13) adds that if a bullied learner becomes constantly angry, resentful and spiteful their or she may develop uncontrollable behaviours and turn disruptive.
2.7.1.3 Social consequences

Bullying may affect the bullied learner’s social interactions. Social withdrawal in a bullied learner is manifested through:

- Isolation and loneliness
- Aversion for friendships
- Loss of desire to mix with others, and
- Shyness (Thamm, 1997:54).

2.7.1.4 Educational consequences

Bullying has a serious impact on the bullied learner’s school performance. Bullied learners display the following:

- Withdrawal from school activities
- Inability to summon the courage to ask questions
- Inability to concentrate on school work
- Underachievement which makes them appear less clever, and
- Tendency to hide their lack of understanding of instructions for fear of being teased (Byrne, 1994:28).

In short, bullied learners often fear school as they regard it as an unsafe environment that causes them unhappiness. Bullying leads to the bullied learner experiencing depression and low self-esteem. These problems can be carried into adulthood (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).
2.8 Consequences for the bully

Despite the pain and harassment the bully causes to the victim, bullying also has a negative effect on the bully (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:10). Bullies display ill-discipline and other disruptive behaviours in the school (Van Niekerk, 1993:35). They often display anti-social behaviours that affect both their future careers and adulthood (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:11).

Bullying can serve as a forerunner of criminal behaviour, and alcohol and drug abuse (Garrrett, 2003:74). Bullying, which thrives among adults, is copied by young learners (Brown, 1997:19). Indeed, bully husbands/fathers often abuse and punish their spouses and children through the infliction of harsh physical discipline (Fried & Fried, 1996:91).

2.9 Consequences for the bystanders

Bullying also affects bystanders or witnesses. Whereas parents feel annoyed and frustrated by their inability to protect their child or children against bullying, bystanders feel ashamed and guilty for failing to intervene (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:11). However, according to Rigby (1996:64), various bystanders are differently affected by their constantly witnessing of bullying incidents. Some are amused or sad as they imagine themselves as the bullied. Others, who are paralysed by fear, feel angry, ashamed and guilty for not intervening. Yet others, who do not care, choose not to intervene by distancing themselves from the scene they are witnessing (Rigby, 1996:65).

Interestingly, in some cases, bystanders who are afraid of becoming the next victim, deliberately side with the bullies. This is manifested through bystanders’ cheering of the bullies’ actions. Although such bystanders may be safe from bullying, they still experience feelings of shame and guilt (Coloroso, 2003:70).
As it becomes apparent from the above discussion, a great deal has been written about the nature and extent of bullying as well as its effects on the bullied learners. Therefore, it becomes essential, at this stage, to turn to a discussion of strategies that would help in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour in secondary schools.

2.10 A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO MANAGING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

In the above section, the researcher discussed the nature, extent and consequences of bullying for learners. The discussion of the consequences of bullying, in particular, indicated that bullying has devastating effects on learners. Bullying scares the victim’s personality for life and, in extreme cases, contributes to suicidal tendencies (Garrett, 2003:39). This is a clear indication that bullying needs to be managed in order to prevent its negative effects on learners.

Dowling v Diocesan College and Others (1999:849) is a perfect illustration of the replications of bullying for the school. In this case, a learner experienced severe bullying and, the court held that the school is liable and responsible. The school was ordered to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of learners through effective supervision, and the enforcement of discipline and good behaviour amongst learners in school. This is a clear indication that the school manager must continuously monitor the performance and behaviour of learners in secondary schools. Learners are guaranteed certain fundamental rights, such as the right to feel safe and secure in school, the right to have their dignity respected and protected (South Council for Educators (SACE), 1994:2).

In light of the above, bullying is a violation of learners right to dignity. Bullying leaves the learner feeling degraded, humiliated and insulted. The bullied learners also endure pain, suffering and discomfort. The aforementioned case thus suggests that school principals and educators should be held accountable for the damages incurred by learners as a result of bullying. This is because they are regarded as having failed to provide proper care for the victims by failing to take reasonable steps to prevent bullying. According to
South African Council for Educators (SACE) (1994: 3), learners also have the following fundamental rights:

- The right to privacy: Learners’ right to privacy implies that they should not be deprived of their possessions. Consequently, acts of bullying where a learner’s belongings are seized by his bully or bullies constitute a gross violation of the bullied learner’s right to privacy (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:5).

- Freedom of expression: every learner has the right to the freedom of expression, be it verbal, physical or in any other form. Thus, the fact that a learner is bullied though names-calling and taunting is not only cruel and inhumane, but constitutes a violation of the bullied learner’s right.

As it becomes apparent, bullying infringes all the above-mentioned rights of the learner. Therefore, it is incumbent upon school management, educators, school governors and parents to deal with bullying so that learners rights are protected at all times. Accordingly to South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 3 of 2000, a learner may be suspended if they victimise, bully or intimidate other learners.

The failure of school managers, educators and school governors to intervene timeously in order to protect learners against abuse and harm represents a violation of the bullied learners’ rights to a safe and secure environment. As such, these school authorities should be held responsible and liable for the damages incurred by the bullied learners (Dowling v Diocesan College Others, 1999:850). Squelch (1998:4) stresses that management should create a safe haven for learners in the school. This will spare learners constant harassment and repeated humiliation associated with bullying. According to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (1994:2-3), the constitutional rights of learners should be respected and, educators should protect the learners from any form of humiliation and abuse whether physical or psychological.

In line with South African Council for Educators (SACE) (1994:4) above-mentioned guidelines, Coloroso (2003:17) recommends that school governing bodies adopt a code of conduct for learners. This will foster the creation of a disciplined and purposeful school environment. This can only be effective through a concerted effort on the part of
educators, learners and parents, learners. The ideal school environment characterised above should be grounded on moral values, norms and principles that the school as a whole should uphold. But most importantly, for an effective prevention of bullying, such an idyllic school should make provisions of due processes aimed at safeguarding the interests of the learners and the other parties involved in disciplinary procedures.

It becomes clear that bullying is a problem that is best dealt with through a holistic approach, namely, a whole school approach (Tattum, 1993:63-64). As indicated earlier, elsewhere, a whole-school approach implies that educators, learners, school governors and parents all have a role to play in dealing with bullying. The main aim of a whole-school approach is to elaborate anticipatory or proactive strategies and practices that would assist in the effort to reduce the incidence of bullying in school communities (Tattum, 1993: 64). Tattum’s argument about the necessity of a whole school approach to bullying is supported by Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart (2000:12). Indeed, Krige et al. insist that bullying should be approach in a collaborative way and on various levels to reduce or stop its occurrence. This means that a whole-school approach requires the commitment and active participation of school stakeholders (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:12). The discussion shall turn now to an exploration of the ways in which bullying can be managed from a whole-school approach.

2.10.1 Managing bullying behaviour

Bullying could result in long-term problems such as unhappiness and loss of self-esteem (Smith & Sharp, 1994:7). Although managing bullying is primarily the responsibility of school managers, it would be more effective through a whole-school approach. Given bullied learners’ tendency to commit suicide or drop out due to stress, educators and school managers need to take bullying seriously (Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan, 2004:20). In other words, schools should respond proactively to bullying behaviour to prevent its traumatic consequences (Smith, 2003:27).
School management should launch sensitisation campaigns or programmes aimed at raising awareness about the undesirable consequences of bullying. Secondary school managers and educators should actively involve learners and other school community members in the endeavour to reduce bullying so that the latter can identify with the aims of the institution (Olweus, 1997: 5).

2.10.2 A whole-school approach

A school should function as a system to combat bullying. The understanding of a system is of an orderly approach to achieve organisational goals. In this regard, the procedures, decision processes, functional operations and information flow of the organisation should be seen as components of a whole that should work together in order to achieve a particular goal (Davis, Alderman & Robinson, 1990:4). Similarly, Loock, Grobler and Mestry (2006:2) define a system as a whole that consists of a set of two or more parts. Each part affects the behaviour of the whole based on its interaction with other parts of the system. Buckley and Lightner (1973:60) add that a system could be construed as an approach by which to observe and solve problems. This is achieved by exploring all feasible alternatives in order to select the most appropriate solution. In short, a system is a functioning medium through which issues are solved. In a similar way, a whole-school approach to bullying in secondary schools seeks to combat this phenomenon through the elaboration and implementation of innovative strategies based on a symbiotic functioning of all stakeholders. Suffice it to note that the term approach here refers to the manner in which a problem is addressed (Thomson, 1996:35).

According to Cowie and Jennifer (2007:24), a whole-school approach should emphasise the involvement of external agencies through the creation of partnerships aimed at reducing and preventing bullying in schools. In other words, a whole-school approach to managing bullying encourages the involvement and participation of external agencies alongside learners, educators, governors, non-academic staff and parents. As such, a
whole-school approach becomes a concerted effort of both the school and the community to eradicate all forms of bullying in schools.

A whole-school approach counters the views that bullying is part of the growth process and challenges educators’ and learners’ attitudes towards bullying behaviour (Tattum, 1993:63). A whole-school approach opens up discussions at all levels. It is collaborative in nature and, moves beyond a crisis management approach which only applies to critical cases. A whole-school approach creates a supportive ethos and puts an end to the culture of secrecy.

In brief, a whole-school response to bullying implies raising awareness about bullying, increasing knowledge about bullying, developing methods to reducing bullying, identifying bullying areas, forming anti-bullying partnerships with parents and other schools, and creating informative contacts with support agencies (Randall, 1996:6).

2.10.3 Whole-school approach strategies to prevent bullying

Countering bullying behaviour and its consequences is a broad, complex and multidimensional endeavour (Tattum, 1993:66). According to Cowie and Jennifer (2007:24) various strategies can be developed to combat bullying within the whole-school approach. However, to yield successful results, these strategies should be sustained. This point is reinforced by Batsche and Knoff (1994:170) who stress the need to develop and maintain an integrated and systematic strategy to combat bullying in secondary schools.

2.10.3.1 Anti-bullying policies

It is essential for every school to have a written anti-bully policy known to all members of the school community (Garrett, 2003:94). This means that school management has the responsibility to develop an anti-bullying policy in conjunction with other stakeholders. In
this regard, Train (1995:160) insists that all members of a school community should cooperate to provide a systematic, comprehensive and sustainable anti-bullying policy. He further argues that, when developing an ant-bullying policy, educators need to assess the situation to establish the kind of bullying taking place, its extent, and its location and, identify both the perpetrator and victim (Train, 1995:164). However, to be effective, an anti-bullying policy should take into consideration the culture of the given school. The main aims of an anti-bullying policy are to deter bullying tendencies and create a sense of trust in the school (Parsons, 2005:67). In addition to elaborating context-specific anti-bullying policies, managements of schools also should ensure that these policies are implemented so that they effectively provide adequate support to victims of bullying and school staff when dealing with bullying incidents (Batsche & Knoff, 1994:171). As Parsons (2005:68) notes, an anti-bullying policy is aimed at establishing a secure and safe environment through the provision of rules and procedures that enable the effective managing of bullying. But, most importantly, the eradication of bullying requires the active, practical involvement of all members of a school community in the effort to address bullying incidents (Pellegrim, 2002:160).

Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:19) provide the following guidelines for developing an anti-bullying policy:

- Awareness raising
- Information gathering and consultation
- Preparing a draft policy
- Circulating the draft for comments
- Revision of the draft
- Adoption of the policy; and
- Implementation of the policy

Garrett (2003:98) further indicates that an anti-bullying policy should be based on the principle that bullying is not tolerated. The anti-bullying policy should also indicate the
school’s expectations in terms of behaviour, the aims of the policy, a clear definition of bullying, basic rules and procedures for the reporting and investigation of bullying, the responsibilities of the learners, disciplinary measures and procedures for disciplinary hearings. According to Roland and Munthe (1989:129) the policy should be drawn by representatives of all stakeholders and must be fully communicated to the entire school community. This means that codes of conduct for learners, parents and educators should also be discussed when a policy meeting is held (Train, 1995:166).

In light of the above it becomes evident that secondary schools can intervene effectively to reduce bullying by developing a safe and supportive school climate. Du Plessis and Conley (2007:47) suggest the following prevention and intervention strategies to deal with bullying behaviour in schools:

- Information about the problem and possible ways of dealing with it should be made available to the learners by means of regular awareness programmes. Learners, school personnel and parents should be actively involved in such awareness programmes. The latter should include information sessions, as well as focus-group discussions or a conference aimed at identifying possible solutions to bullying.

- Every school needs to have an anti-bullying policy that is understood by all members of the school community. The policy should define bullying, explain its different forms or categories and list examples of each. The policy should place the forms of bullying under the relevant categories of misconduct (from the least serious to the most serious). The possible sanctions applicable to each form should be indicated. Finally, a contact-person responsible for handling and keeping records or complaints should be designated.

- Victims and concerned parties should be encouraged to report bullying behaviour so that the bullies could be made aware of the inappropriateness of their actions.

- Learners should be adequately supervised by educators during breaks and lunch hours.

- The school policy should clearly stipulate the immediate consequences of aggressive behaviour.
• Other strategies in the whole-school approach include generous praise for pro-social and helpful behaviour by learners, specific class rules against bullying behaviour, class meetings about bullying, the implementation of some co-operative learning activities in the school, teaching social skills, and the formation of a council of educators and principals to lead the implementation of the above strategies.

2.10.3.2 Code of conduct

A code of conduct is essential in managing the legal aspects of discipline and the intervention thereof. It outlines the procedures for maintaining supportive and safe environments that cater for all learners (Tattum & Herbert, 1994:30). But, of the utmost importance for the prevention and management of bullying, a school’s code of conduct should include anti-bullying principles and post-bullying procedures (South African Council for Educators (SACE), 1994:3). All policies involving discipline need to be formulated in accordance with the school’s code of conduct and, should comply with national legislation and the Constitution.

2.10.3.3 Using the curriculum

The curriculum is a vehicle for developing learners’ attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour (Tattum, 1993:71). As such, it should provide a better understanding of bullying as well as academic skills that help reduce aggressive behaviour. The curriculum should also provide social skills that would assist in raising issues about bullying, in assemblies, meetings and class discussions (Barone, 1997:82). Another way of developing skills that assist in responding effectively to bullying is reading texts and getting involved in dramas and role-plays on anti-bullying (Tattum, 1993:72). Train (1995:177) stresses the need for in-service training for school staff to raise their
awareness on the potential of bullying in their teaching styles. However, it is important to note that the playground may also be used as a learning environment for the fostering of social and personal skills that are essential for smooth and effective interactions with other learners (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:19).

Smith and Sharp (1994:84) argue that a curriculum that is based on co-operative values can create a context where bullying is unlikely to flourish. This is because it helps to raise awareness and facilitates the understanding of shared social procedures. The curriculum enables educators to initiate discussions with their learners on the nature of the bullying. Such discussions also allow them to gain insight into the types of bullying behaviour that learners experience in school (Smith & Sharp, 1994:107). In this connection, Train (1995:173) stresses the need for schools to integrate bullying as an issue in its own right within the syllabus. He further emphasises that the curriculum should not solely provide for the teaching of facts, figures and techniques; it should also promote an awareness of feelings or an appreciation of the sensitivities and viewpoints of others (Train, 1995:173).

2.10.3.4 Transition

Learners who transfer or change from primary to the secondary school should be assisted or integrated into the social atmosphere of their new school (Tattum, 1993:67). According to Train (1995:165), more bullying occurs when children start a new school. Therefore, learners, educators, principals and parents should attend induction meetings in which learners can familiarise themselves with the surroundings of the school, in addition to being made aware of school procedures and expectations (Train, 1995:165).

Secondary schools should also develop a programme that prohibits initiation rituals (Tattum, 1993:67). In addition, pastoral and counselling programmes that encourage learners to report bullying should be developed and implemented (Michele, 1991:17). According to Besag (1989:118), schools should run a programme that helps the new
learners to settle, find their way around the school, and become familiar with staff. Learners need to be allocated a teacher with whom they feel confident and comfortable.

2.10.3.5 Playground supervision

Secondary schools’ playgrounds are some of the areas where bullying occur. Therefore, learners should be monitored and supervised during breaks and playtimes (Tattum, 1993:72). Play areas should be safe, creative and constructive. Social and physical environments may be separated in terms of young and old learners or smooth and rough games. This will not only help reduce bullying on young learners, but will also protect their rights, notably the right to be cared for in a nurturing environment (Smith & Sharp, 1994:107). Therefore, educators can be held responsible if the learner is injured in the school due to a lack of supervision. This means that secondary school educators should be able to foresee any potential problems that might arise from an accumulation of learners on the playground and, they should encourage learners to play constructively (Train, 1995:172). The school staff should carefully plan activities and monitor school facilities, especially during playtimes, rather than promote problematic behaviour by sitting in the staff-room chatting or drinking tea (Train, 1995:172).

Besag (1989:113) emphasises that adequate supervision is one of the most efficient and economical preventative strategies to combat bullying in schools. As a result, educators should focus their attention not only on the quantity of supervision but also on the quality; firm and yet friendly supervision or authoritative and rigorous supervision may reflect the ethos of the school (Michele, 1991:39). Educators should not just be present during playtimes but must be able to intervene quickly and decisively in bullying situations (Olweus, 1993:71).
2.10.3.6 Role of stakeholders in managing bullying

Secondary school learners need to belong, be with their peers and have friends (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000:12). Therefore, parents, educators and other learners can assist bullying victims to create a friendship with role-players who will take care and stand up for the victims. The responsibility of the role-players can be fulfilled across grade levels in that senior learners are assigned to junior learners (Batsche & Knoff, 1994:165).

According to Smith and Sharp (1994:90-91), learners may also be encouraged to form groups of five to six learners who meet on a regular basis to identify problems that they face, analyse them, suggest possible solutions to management or adults in the school community. This partnership can defuse bullying and improve peer respect (Van Niekerk, 1993:59). The quality-circle groups give the participants or learners the opportunity to acquire skills which facilitate a problem-solving approach to social life and actively discourage domineering or destructive behaviour among group members (Smith & Sharp, 1994:91).

2.10.3.7 The role of parents

According to Van Niekerk (1993:35-36), parents of secondary school learners should establish and implement clear family rules that limit their children’s aggressive behaviour. In conjunction with educators, parents should set up an intervention programme to aid both bullies and victims and to curb bullying behaviour. When a learner obeys at home it is easier for them to obey at school (Besag, 1987:70).

Parents should show immediate approval when the child follows the rules and use non-physical punishment, like loss of privileges, when the child breaks the rules. Parents should encourage the child to seek out spare-time activities, like sports. But, most
importantly, parents should share activities with their children. Parents should encourage a child to interact with others; for example, by allowing the child to invite a friend for a meal (Rogers, 2000:181).

Van Niekerk (1993:6) states that parents should avoid being overprotective of their children but support their efforts to be more independent. Parents should monitor the whereabouts of their children closely and encourage positive social behaviour in their children (Besag, 1989:71). Besag further indicates that children should be trained in problem-solving techniques; and parents should maintain firm, consistent and fair discipline in an atmosphere of warmth and positive involvement. In cases where bullying is severe and goes beyond the control of parents, they may notify the police or seek legal advice (Besag, 1989:154). However, it is essential to involve pupils in such procedures.

2.10.3.8 The role of learners

Lee (2004:84) states that peer involvement in the prevention and response to bullying forms a natural part of a school in that learners are given the opportunity to contribute to decision-making at various levels, including teaching and learning issues and policy formulation. De Lara (2006:343) adds to Lee’s view by stating that learners have very important contributions to make in the prevention not only of bullying, but also of other forms of school violence. The researcher is of the opinion that, due to the learners’ involvement in the problem by being either a bully, a bystander or a victim, it would be essential to include them in the remedial process.

Furthermore, peer support should be used in schools where learners are bullied. In secondary schools, peer-counselling-based interventions can be adopted (Lee, 2004:86). However, it is essential that learners forming part of the peer support system be trained and supervised; and, the persons who provide the training should be experienced counsellors themselves (Sharp & Cowie, 1994:117).
The researcher mentioned earlier that, in many instances, bullying incidents remain unreported because the victim is reluctant to tell an adult. However, when a peer forms part of the support system, they victims seem more willing to share their story (Lee, 2004:87). Peer counselling works on two levels: the first aims at changing the pupil’s response to bullying; whereas the second seeks to change the victim’s condoning of bullying into viewing it as unacceptable. Although the support programme should ensure confidentiality so that learners feel secure in this service, the school still has a responsibility to address the problems faced by learners (Sharp & Cowie, 1994:116). Sullivan (2004:97) has particularly found that senior students can be useful in anti-bullying initiatives.

2.10.3.9 The role of school managers

Secondary school managers should educate the staff about bullying; this could also be achieved by inviting a speaker who is familiar with the problem of bullying. In addition, the literature on bullying in schools should be made available in the school (Rigby, 1996:80). Secondary school managers should appoint enough adult supervisors to monitor learners during breaks and convene regular meetings on bullying issues (Van Niekerk, 1993:36).

Furthermore, the school management should regulate the behaviour of learners by means of rules and regulations. Such rules should be respected by learners, thus these rules and regulations should be formulated in a language that is accessible to learners and, applied firmly and consistently (South African Council for Educators (SACE), 1994:3). Combatting bullying also requires the active participation of teachers.
2.10.3.10 The role of teachers

It is important for the teachers to intervene in bullying situations that occur on the playground and in the classroom where learners spend most of their school day. As it becomes evident, the teacher is at the forefront of any effort to manage bullying successfully (Goldstein, Apter & Horootunian, 1984:16). Galloway and Roland (2004: 37) mention that bullying is likely to be influenced by the quality of the social and educational climate in the classroom in particular and the school in general. This climate, as mentioned by Pepler et al. (2004:311), is one that discourages bullying and supports peer processes that help vulnerable children. Teachers are therefore seen to play a key role in the problem of bullying, not only on the school playground but also in their classrooms. According to Garrett (2003:96), in the classroom, the teachers can implement the following:

- Involve learners when setting rules about bullying. This establishes a responsibility for each student to conform to those rules.

- Make learners aware of the negative and positive consequences of the behaviour they display in the classroom setting. The negative consequences should be appropriate for the displayed behaviour.

- Hold regular classroom meetings which help develop and clarify anti-bullying rules.

- Schedule meetings with parents to inform them of the anti-bullying rules made.
2.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the nature and extent of bullying was explained. The effects and consequences of bullying for learners were stated and discussed in relation to a whole-approach to this problem. Bullying and associated concepts such as abuse, torture, harassment form part of aggressive behaviour. They are meant to hurt the recipient and can occur in physical and non-physical forms (Smith & Thompson, 1991:1). According to Smith and Thompson (1991:1), bullying is a recurrent, hurtful, and unprovoked aggressive action. The bully is perceived as stronger than the victim who often is defenceless.

Bullying behaviour is influenced by various factors, such as the self, the family, the school and the society (Fried & Fried, 1996:7); Smith & Thompson, 1991:8). Bullying has implications for both the bullied and the bully. Bullying has painful effects on the bullied learner who eventually loses confidence and self-esteem. Conversely, the bully who has developed an anti-social behaviour may face disciplinary action (Smith & Thompson, 1991:7).

A whole school approach is a joint effort, by all members of the school community, integrates various strategies in order to control bullying. As such, it can only be effective if its aims are clearly communicated to all stakeholders. Some of the anti-bullying strategies include the use of the curriculum, management initiatives, playground supervision, an anti-bullying policy, and an induction programme during the transition phase (Tattum, 1993:63).

The role of educators, school managers, learners, and parents in the implementation of strategies aimed at addressing bullying was also discussed. The next chapter focuses on an explanation of both the research design and the instruments used to collect data, as well as a discussion the data analysis method.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The concern over bullying behaviour in secondary schools is increasing. Bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that requires a whole-school intervention (Tattum, 1993:64). This chapter explains the research design and the methods used to gather data on the management of bullying behavior in secondary school in Vhembe district.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is the plan for the study. It provides the overall framework for collecting data, it outlines the detailed steps in the study and provides guidelines for systematic data gathering (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:179). Thus, according to Mouton (1996:107), a research design is a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing a research problem. Babbie (2007:86) adds that a research design refers to the planning of a scientific inquiry, the designing a strategy to explore, describe and explain a phenomenon.

There are two broad approaches that are usually adopted by a researcher to gather data, namely, qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this research, a descriptive qualitative approach will be used to describe a whole-school approach in managing bullying behaviour in secondary school learners, knowledge of the implementation of the anti-bullying policy and effectiveness of the intervention strategies or programmes.
3.2.1 Qualitative research

According to De Vos (1998:240), qualitative research is a multi-perspective approach to social interaction. It is aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meaning that the subject attaches to it. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:12) describe qualitative research as an approach that enables researchers to learn first-hand about the social world they are investigating. This is achieved by means of involvement and participation in that world through a focus on what individual actors say and do.

Berg (1995:7) broadly defines qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings which are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of qualification.

The choice of a qualitative approach in this study is motivated by its suitability to the situation in which the researcher is involved. Indeed, the researcher does not distance himself from participants and situations that were being studied. Both the researcher and participants engaged in deep interactions and forged a strong relationship. This facilitated the collection of qualitative data on the nature and extent of bullying behavior, as well as strategies to prevent or combat bullying among secondary school learners.

3.2.2 Characteristics of the qualitative approach

The qualitative approach is characterised by the use of texts or written words to document variables and do an inductive analysis of the collected information (Hittleman & Simon, 1997:42). According to Creswell (1994:145), qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry that studies people, things and events in their natural settings.
The purpose of qualitative research is to describe, interpret, and evaluate the collected data. It seems appropriate, here, for the researcher to explain these concepts in order to show their relevance in this study.

a) Describe

The researcher gathers data from the school management and learners about bullying behaviour in school, and existing intervention programmes and prevention strategies. The purpose of describing is to observe a situation in order to understand what is happening.

b) Interpret

The researcher provides inputs and insights that might prompt secondary school learners to change their views and attitudes towards bullying. Interpretation also assists with the formulation and implementation of anti-bullying policies and school-wide intervention programmes aimed at decreasing the extent of bullying in secondary schools.

c) Evaluate

The researcher provides relevant and purposeful judgments about policies and intervention strategies that will decrease the extent of bullying in secondary schools. For example, the introduction of safe school programmes.

3.2.3 Sample

According to Babbie (2007:179), a sample is a smaller number of people drawn from a population and, used in a specific study to represent the target population. Differently put, a sample is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population. Similarly, Merriam (1998:60) views sample as the process of selecting
a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected.

This research employs a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as Gay (1996:241) succinctly indicates, is a rich source of data of interest. Furthermore, purposive sampling is when the investigator selects the elements to be included in the sample on the basis of their special characteristics.

In keeping with the principles of purposive sampling, the researcher intends to select learners, educators, principals, as well as SMT members who have a wealth of information that will serve the purpose of this particular inquiry (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:378). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, participants were chosen to enrich the study by giving invaluable information on the management of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners. This enables the formulation and implementation of anti-bullying strategies.

Thus, the researcher selected five school learners, five school management teams, educators and principals as sample for this research. All five school sites are located in Limpopo province in Vhembe district. Three of the schools are situated in town and the other two are located in the rural area. The SMT of school A is made up of three members: the principal, who is male, and two female heads of departments (HODs). School B has five SMT members: the female principal, three female HODs, and one male. School C has five SMT members: the male principal, one deputy principal, and three female HODs. School D also has five SMT members: the male principal, three male heads of department, and one female HOD. School E has four SMT members: the female principal, three male HODs.

The criteria used for the selection of these five schools as sample for this study are:

- Status of school management teams as the unit of analysis.
- Their location in Vhembe district in Limpopo province.
3.3 DATA COLLECTION

In this study, data was collected by way of interviews conducted with secondary schools principals, educators, SMT members and learners, as well as through documents analysis.

3.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were chosen as data gathering strategy because qualitative research is interpretive by nature. This means that its focus is on gaining meaning, understanding and building concepts and theories (Heck, 2006:407). Furthermore, interviews provide the researcher with leverage to gain meaning and understanding of the effectiveness of a whole-school approach in managing bullying behaviour among secondary school learners.

3.3.2 Definition of an interview

According to Mouly (1970:263), an interview is a research technique in which a conversation is carried out with the definite purpose of obtaining specific information. Creswell (2007:87) defines an interview as a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. Mykut and Morehouse (1994:79) also view an interview as a conversation with purpose.

3.3.3 Types of interviews

In this study, the whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour among secondary school learners will be investigated using semi-structured interviews.
Semi-structured interviews are defined as purposeful conversations (Mykut & Morehouse, 1994:104).

Semi-structured interviews allow for the emergence of new ideas on the topic. I will use open-ended questions to allow in-depth probing. The interviews will be tape-recorded with the participants’ consent. According to Patton (1987:381), the tape-recorder is indispensable as it captures data more accurately than handwritten notes. The recorded interviews are then transcribed from the tapes through creative thinking and note-taking.

### 3.3.4 Conducting and recording of interviews

According to Merriam (1998:84), the following five issues should be addressed at the beginning of every interview:

- The investigator’s motives and intentions, and the inquiry’s purpose.
- The protection of respondents through the use of pseudonyms.
- Deciding who has the final say over the study’s content.
- Logistics with regard to time, place and number of interviews to be scheduled.

When conducting an interview, the researcher should be neutral and, strive to establish a rapport with the respondents. Thus, as the investigator, one should avoid arguing, debating or otherwise expressing one’s personal views (Merriam, 1998:84). Shivambu (2006:49) offers the following guidelines to be observed during the interview:

- Listen more and talk less
- Avoid leading questions
- Pay attention to what the participants say
- Ask questions when you do not understand
• Ask open-ended question
• Avoid interrupting the interviewee
• Use an interview guide continuously
• Ask participants to talk to you.

Five school principals, five learners, and five SMT members from five different schools were interviewed for this study. It took five days to complete the interviews. The setting for the interviews, in each school, was the principal’s office.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, each participant was assigned a letter of the alphabet as a pseudonym. All interviews were tape-recorded, then transcribed by hand and, subsequently typed.

3.3.5 The interview schedule

The interview schedule is basically a list of questions that a researcher intends to ask in an interview. The interviewer can make use of hypothetical devil’s advocate, ideal position and interpretive questions. Multiple questions, leading questions and questions that require yes or no answers should be avoided (Merriam, 1998:84). Participants in this study were asked the following questions during the interview:

• What do you understand by the concept of a whole-school approach?
• What do you understand by the concept bullying behaviour?
• How can bullying among learners can be managed?

These questions and the participant’s responses to them were tape-recorded. During the interview, minimal probes were used to elicit more information from the respondents.
3.3.6 Documents analysis

Documents are readily-available sources of data that are easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator. Four types of documents are available for use by qualitative researchers, namely, public records, personal documents, physical materials, and researcher-generated documents (Merriam, 1998: 122-113).

In this study, researcher-generated documents will be used to capture and analyse data on the salient aspects of the whole-school approach in managing bullying behaviour among secondary school learners. Differently put, researcher-generated documents are documents prepared by the researcher or for the researcher by participants after the study has begun. The specific purpose for generating documents is to learn more about the situation, person or event being investigated (Merriam, 1998:119).

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Neuman (1997:426), data analysis involves examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising and contemplating the coded data, as well as reviewing raw and recorded data. For Creswell (1994:153), qualitative data analysis involves sorting the information into categories, presenting the information in the form of a picture and actually writing the qualitative text. This means that the researcher first establishes the broad outlines of the phenomenon being studied, assembles chunks of data, and then fits those pieces into a coherent whole.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen to use the categorising strategy to assist with data analysis. This strategy involves the coding of the data fracture and its rearrangements into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:134). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:135) conceive this approach as the constant comparative method to analysing data. They characterise this method as a combination of an inductive
category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained across categories.

3.4.1 Assembling and organising data

In this study data were assembled by conducting semi-structure, non-probabilistic interviews. Five different samples consisting of four members of the school management team and one learner were interviewed. For anonymity and confidentiality purposes, sample groups were given alphabetical codes i.e. A, B, C, D, and E. The same coding was applied to individual participants in the same sample group, namely, SMT members and learners. A tape-recorder or voice-recorder was used to capture the participants' responses.

3.4.2 Method of data analysis

In qualitative research, four major strategies can be used to analyse data: ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998:156). However, data analysis can also be done by constructing categories or themes. These categories or themes are devised intuitively but, in a systematic process informed by the purpose of the study and the investigator's orientation and knowledge. Units of data are then grouped into meaningful segments (Merriam, 1998:179).

For the purposes of this study the constant comparative method will be used. This method allows for a constant comparison of the narration of bullying incidents gained from the interviews with field notes or documents. These comparisons then lead to tentative categories that are also compared to each other (Merriam, 1998:184).
3.4.3 Reporting findings

The findings in this study will be reported by making use of general description and interpretive commentary (Merriam, 1998:235). The researcher will quote the participants to support his findings and interpretations. The findings from the interviews will also be juxtaposed to the literature review that was conducted in Chapter Two.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Merriam (1998:201) maintains that trustworthiness in an inquiry, it imperative that the researchers and others have confidence in the conduct of the investigation as well as in the results of any particular study. In order to maintain trustworthiness in this study, data will be verified according to Guba and Lincoln’s model of trustworthiness which includes the criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:391), alludes to the degree to which the explanations of the phenomena match the realities of the world. In other words, credibility is the degree to which interpretations and concepts have similar meanings for the participants and the researcher. Credibility needs to be established with individuals who will supply data for the inquiry. In the context of this research study, secondary school principals, educators, learners and SMT members will provide the researcher with valuable information regarding their understanding of a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour.

3.5.2 Transferability

Within the interpretive perspective, the concept of transferability shifts the inquirer’s responsibility from one of demonstrating generalisability to one of providing sufficient
description of the particular context studied, so that others may adequately judge the applicability or fit of the inquiry findings to their own context (Merriam, 1998:202).

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, it should yield the same results. Dependability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results (Merriam, 1998:114). Guba and Lincoln (1988:120) assert that a reliable human inquirer’s work could be verified in much the same way that scientific laboratory work is verified, by multiple observations of the same phenomenon or replica. Two reasonably competent observers of the same situation ought to hear the same things in the same interview and two document analysers ought to categorise the documents in about the same way.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Tuckman (1978:104), the matter of ethics is an important one for educational researchers because their subject of study is the learning and behaviour of human beings. As such, the nature of such research may embarrass, hurt, frighten, impose on or, otherwise, negatively affect the lives of people who are making the research possible through their participation. To deal with the issue of ethics, the researcher considered the following résumé of a professional code of ethics (Leedy, 1985:110):

- The researcher must maintain scientific objectivity.
- Every person has the right to privacy and dignity of treatment.
- The participants can withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- The research should avoid causing personal harm to its subjects.
• Confidential information provided by the subjects must be held in strict confidentiality by the researcher.
• Research findings should be presented honestly, without distortion.
• The researcher must not use his prerogative as a researcher to obtain information other than for professional purposes.
• The researcher must acknowledge all assistance, collaboration of others, or sources from which information was borrowed.
• The findings and recommendations will be discussed with the participants.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were explained. Semi-structured interviews were identified as the major instrument for the collection of data in this study. The methodology of this research was explained to provide an understanding of the procedures that were followed in the collection of data. Furthermore, ethical considerations were highlighted.

Finally, a brief discussion of reliability and validity was provided and, the data analysis steps were indicated. In short, this chapter provided a step-by-step account of the procedures which were followed in conducting this research. In the next chapter, data will be analysed and interpreted.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the collected data are analysed and interpreted. The collected data are categorised and summarised in order to get answers to the research questions. The central aim of this chapter is to present, analyse and interpret data in the context of a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools.

The data that has been collected and analyzed was obtained from semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals, learners and SMT members from five secondary schools in the Vhembe District in Limpopo Province. Hence, this chapter presents data analysis and provides a discussion on the perceptions of principals, learners, and SMTs vis-à-vis a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour, the nature of bullying in secondary schools, the extent of bullying at this level, the implementation of anti-bullying policies, as well as the effectiveness of the intervention strategies.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA

A whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour among secondary school learners was investigated. The analysis of the data collected focused on the following:

- The views of principals, SMTs, educators and learners about the nature and extent of bullying in secondary schools;
- The effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation;
Strategies and intervention programmes aimed at combating bullying behaviour in secondary schools.

Causes of bullying among secondary school learners

4.2.1 Analysis of interviews

4.2.1.1 Bullying behaviour

The question asked to the school principals, learners and SMTs was “What do you understand by the term bullying behaviour in schools?

As indicated earlier, bullying behaviour can be described as an incident where one or more individuals inflict physical, verbal or emotional abuse on another. This includes the threat of bodily harm, the possession of weapons, extortion, civil rights violations, assault and battery, gang activity, attempted murder and murder (Fried and Fried, 1996:5). Bullying is a repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of people (Rigby, 1996:3).

Based on the interviews, principals, learners and SMT members expressed similar views and confirmed the perception of bullying as a hurtful behaviour on a weaker person by one who is stronger. As a matter of fact, the Principal in school A described bullying as “… when a stronger child hurts or frightens a smaller or weaker child on purpose again and again.” Similarly, a learner from school A referred to bullying as “… a boy hurting your body and leaving marks.” The subtle, psychological dimension of bullying is captured by an SMT member from school A, who viewed bullying as “… the bigger children throwing their weight around by teasing and making life unpleasant for other school learners.” Both the physical and psychological aspects of bullying mentioned above are brought together by the Principal of school B who described bullying as “… acts of physical, psychological and verbal behaviour by bigger, stronger
and superior children who, intentionally, hurt and negatively affect the smaller, weaker and inferior children.” Pondering the reasons for bullying, a learner in school B mentioned that “… some children want to look good in front of their friends, so they pick on the easy child to look in control. They bully the child by saying ugly things to him, teasing and often they hurt him by tripping and hitting”. Another cause of bullying is provided by an SMT member from school C who characterises bullying as when “… a person who has problem with himself, hurts somebody else to get attention or a reaction.”

Thus, the Principal of school D described bullying as a “… cruel, repeated and unacceptable behaviour, which is intentional and deliberate. The purpose is to hurt or distress the other person and is often an abuse of power.” Contrasting bullying among boys to bullying among girls, an educator from school E emphasised that “Bullying by girls is by words, whereas the boys use their fists to show power and hurt others”.

- Boys bullying is easy to identify since boys are mostly involved with physical bullying where the victim may sustain visible injuries, unlike girls’ bullying which is mostly verbal and takes such forms as of name calling and teasing.

The Principal in school A highlighted that bullying among boys “… is mainly physical i.e. punching, kicking, hitting and, is less psychological; while girls use words which often do more damage in the long run.” Similarly, an SMT member in school C indicated that “Boys hit and push each other around and it’s over quickly, but the girls are nastier. They say ugly things all the time and make you feel really unhappy.”

Bullying behaviour is therefore not limited to one gender. In other words, it has been established that both boys and girls bully. What needs to be established is when and where bullying occurs.

Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:120) state that bullying behaviour is a problem that often goes unnoticed because it is not highly visible. Principals, learners and SMTs alike indicated that bullying is a common occurrence and it happens out of sight, at times of the day when there is little supervision.
According to the participants’ responses, bullying behaviour is a reality and, is a common feature of everyday life in secondary schools today. It hurts and impacts negatively on all concerned parties.

4.2.1.2 Whole-school strategies to counter bullying among secondary school learners

In order to reduce bullying behaviour among secondary school learners, it is important for the school to provide various support structures and develop strategies that will assist both bullies and victims. For the effort to be successful, these structures and strategies must be known to everyone. Below are the insights gained from the interviews conducted with secondary school principals regarding the whole-school strategies to counter bullying behaviour.

The Principal of school A stated that “To manage bullying from a whole-school approach, the entire school community needs to accept responsibility for the behaviour of learners; this will help to reduce bullying.” This finding is in line with the argument made by Michele (1991:17) who states that the school community should unite and accept responsibility for the behaviour of all learners to combat bullying. What is more, the Principal of school B indicated that “To manage bullying behaviour from a whole-school approach, an anti bullying policy should be formulated and clearly communicated to all stakeholders at school in order to reduce bullying behaviour. In the same vein, the Principal of school C emphasized that, “Schools need to have an anti-bullying programme that should help to reduce bullying behaviour in secondary schools”. This response is supported by Train (1995:164) who states that bullying can be stopped if all people involved in a school can work together to provide a systematic, comprehensive, and sustainable anti-bullying programme.

The Principal of school D indicated that “To manage bullying behaviour effectively in secondary school, our educators frequently monitor hot spots at the school where
bullying frequently occurs in order to combat the problem.” This response is in total agreement with Tattum’s (1993:72) conclusion that the reduction of bullying behaviour in schools requires the monitoring and supervision of areas where bullying occurs.

The Principal and educators of school indicated that to manage bullying from a whole-school approach, issues on how to deal with bullying should be raised in meetings of all stakeholders. This would help reduce bullying among secondary school learners.

It is evident from the above responses that a whole-school approach, which comprises intervention strategies and support structures, is very essential for the alleviation of bullying and the enhancement of the school environment.

4.2.1.3 Implementation of anti-bullying policies

An anti-bullying policy constitutes the first of support that schools need to give their pupils. Learners have the right to a safe and secure learning environment; one which is free of fear, intimidation, violence and abuse. In other words, to combat bullying, schools need to create an environment where the rights of learners are recognised and protected. Thus, the purpose of an anti-bullying policy is not only to curb bullying, but also to enforce respect for others, because everybody has the right to enjoy their time at school (Besag, 1989:113).

The responses from the schools surveyed indicated that, in general, these schools do have different approaches to the communication of anti-bullying policies. This point is illustrated in the following responses:

“…We mention bullying in the school’s code of conduct” (Principal of school A).

“Our school deals with bullying in the newsletters and it is written in the rules” (SMT member from school B).
“…formulating a separate bullying policy to stop bullying has not been discussed” (Principal in school C).

“I am not sure. I think there is some sort of policy, I do not really know” (Learner from school E).

“Yes, we do have one, but it’s very brief” (Principal of school D).

“We were told at assembly that bullying will not be tolerated and it is most serious offence” (Learner in school D).

“My school follows the code of conduct that is set up in accordance with government laws that regulate discipline” (Principal of school B).

Considering the above responses, some participating schools rely on their code of conduct to assist them to deal with bullying behaviour. Another participant indicated that a policy to combat bullying has never been discussed, while others use newsletters and assemblies to get the message across.

“No, no I am certain, I have never seen an anti-bullying policy, but it is discussed” (Learner in school D).

“A policy of this nature is not necessary because our pupils know what their expected behaviour is and what the consequences are” (SMT member in school C).

The above responses indicate that these secondary schools do deal with bullying. Although it is clear that that learners’ misconduct or misbehaviour is taken seriously and is not tolerated, little attention is paid to guidelines to managing bullying behaviour.

Developing and implementing an anti-bullying policy, which sends out a clear message that bullying will not be tolerated and that the school is a bully free zone, will contribute to the establishment of a safe environment as well as a climate that is conducive to effective learning. The purpose of an anti-bullying policy is to provide for an integrated and positive response to bullying. An anti-bullying policy helps to establish a safe environment by providing clear rules and procedures for dealing with bullying on a regular, consistent and ongoing basis (Squelch et-al, 2000).
Thus, secondary schools need to formulate a separate bullying policy to stop bullying behaviour. The effective implementation of a no-bullying policy may influence the creation of an environment which is conducive to teaching and learning.

4.2.1.4 Perceptions of whole-school intervention strategies

A whole-school approach to bullying opens up discussions at all levels; it is collaborative in identifying and condemning bullying; it moves beyond a crisis management approach which only reacts to critical cases; it creates a supportive ethos, and breaks down the culture of secrecy. A whole-school approach develops a set of procedures for staff, parents and pupils to follow when inquiring about bullying cases. It also creates a safe and secure learning environment (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch & Swart, 2000: 20).

In order to effectively reduce and manage bullying behaviour in secondary schools, it is important for the school to provide various support structures and to develop strategies that will assist both the bullies and victims of bullying. These support structures and strategies should be accessible to all the parties. The following transpired from the interviews conducted with the secondary schools principals, SMT members, and learners regarding these support structures and strategies.

Learner in school A indicated that “We have been told to go to the educators and tell them if there is bullying or if we have been bullied, that is all.” The Principal of school C stated, “I expect my staff to know what to do if a bullying incident occurs”. However, an educator in school D stated that, “We do not really know what to do. There is no a guideline or advice that we can follow”. Similarly, an educator in school C lamented, “I wish there were structures in place. We need them badly.” Recognizing the urgency of the situation, an SMT member in school E concluded that, “We need to put these support structures in place but have never knuckled down to it. It is important that we do it soon for the benefit of everybody.”
According to the responses from the principals, learners and SMT members, support structures and strategies to combat bullying are very important. These strategies and support structures are clearly non-existent in most of the selected schools. This fact seriously needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Attitudes towards bullying play an important part in the lack of and/or non-use of support structures and intervention strategies in certain schools. Principal in school D stated that, “I do not think that anything can be done because bullying is human nature, there is always bullying wherever.” Whereas an SMT member in school A indicated that a lot of learners are scared to report bullying be it as witness or victim: “They are scared that they won’t have protection.” It is evident from the above responses that support structures and intervention strategies are lacking in these schools, despite the presence of bullying. However, it is also evident from the responses of most principals, learners, and SMT members that there is an urgent need for these support structures and intervention strategies. Thus, secondary schools in the Vhembe district need to realise the necessity of a whole-school approach to the alleviation of bullying behaviour among the secondary school learners.

4.2.1.5 A whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour

According to Tattum (1993:64), the effectiveness of whole-school intervention strategies depends on schools’ ability to raise awareness about bullying, to increase knowledge about bullying, to develop methods of reducing bullying behaviour, to identify bullying areas, and to form anti-bullying partnership with all stakeholders.

The following transpired from interviews held with school managers, learners and SMT members in regard to a whole-school approach in managing bullying behavior. The Principal of school A indicated that the advantage of “… a whole school approach in managing bullying in secondary school is that good learner discipline helps to reduce
bullying in school''. This finding agrees with Besag’s (1989:113) view that good and adequate discipline can help to reduce bullying incidents in secondary schools.

The SMT member in school B, responding on the role of support structures, states that, “We establish a bullying support team consisting of educators, parents, learners and guidance counselors to provide assistance in dealing with bullying behaviour in our school”. This response concurs with the findings of Randall (1996:2) which indicate that a whole-school response to bullying implies forming anti-bullying partnerships with parents and creating informative contacts with support agencies.

Principal in school C indicates that, in an attempt at “… managing bullying in school, we encourage learners to create friendships with one another in school as a strategy to minimise bullying”. Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:20) also point out that parents, educators, and learners could assist the victims by creating friendships with individuals who can stand up for and take care of bullying victims.

Principal in school D indicated that, “… the school management team take bullying seriously”. Barone (1997:80) supports this response by stressing the need for bullying to be taken seriously by educators and school management to prevent learners from dropping out of school due to the stress resulting from being bullied.

Principal in school E indicated that “… learners are encouraged to report bullying incidents to educators for the purpose of reducing bullying behaviour in school.” This response confirms Besag’s (1989:114) view that reporting bullying to educators can lessen bullying behaviour in schools.

The impetus to address bullying should come from the high levels. This is evident in the the Principal of school C’s statement that, “the school governing body should recommend possible disciplinary measures on how to deal with bullying behavior among the secondary school learners.”

The SMT member in school E reinforces the view that, “… bullying is a problem that needs to be managed from a whole-school approach”. This statement is in line with Tattum’s (1993:63-64) view that bullying is a problem that is best dealt with in a holistic
manner and, from a whole-school approach. Thus, the Principal in school D insisted that, “… educators and the entire school management team create awareness amongst learners regarding bullying issues by raising them in class debates and discussions”.

For this reason, the Principal of school A stresses that, “… in-service programmes for educators should include training educators on how to deal with bullying behaviour.” He further stated that “the school curriculum should provide guidelines on how to combat bullying in schools.”

Clearly, bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed using a whole-school approach. Consequently, schools should establish a bullying support team including educators, parents, learners, and guidance counselor to provide assistance in dealing with bullying behaviour.

4.3 Causes of bullying among secondary school learners

Bullying behaviour occurs for various reasons and, anyone can become the target of bullying (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007:22). Some learners bully to hide their sense of inadequacy, others bully to feel powerful and seek attention, yet others bully because of jealousy. For a number of learners bullying is a cry for help. Thus, according to Fried and Fried (1996:7), factors such as individual traits, family, school environment, community and culture influence one to bully. Participants’ perceptions on the reasons for bullying identified the following factors as primary sources of bullying:

- Family background
- Poor academic achievements
- Peer pressure
4.3.1 Family background

Families differ in the style of parenting used: some parents are democratic, whereas others are authoritative, or negligent. Families with high incidences of violence contribute to the bullying behaviour as learners from such families copy their parents' violent behaviour. This clearly indicates that what parents do in the presence of their children has an effect on the latter. In this regard, Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart, (2000:6) states that children who grew up in a family where there is little love, respect and support, often lack empathy, tolerance and respect for others. Similarly, an over-punitive and authoritarian rather than authoritative style of family discipline could result in the child becoming hostile and aggressive (Besag, 1994:62). An educator from school B identified the effect of parents’ divorce as one of the reasons some learners bully others. An SMT member from school C concurs with the view of the home as possible source of bullying. This is evident he says that “… actually the problems like if the child is under a lot of stress at home; like the middle child, parents tend to prefer the last and the first born, then the middle child gets frustrated and start to take out his or her stress by bullying the younger one.” A learner in school B also indicated that some learners bully because of “… the problem at home, like a father is beating up a mother”.

The above responses reveal that there are situations within the family that contribute to the bullying behaviour displayed by some learners. In practical learners who grew up in violent circumstances learn to settle their differences by means of violence.

4.3.2 Poor academic achievements

Academic achievements seem to also play a role in bullying. A learner who is performing well in class might become a victim of those who are performing poorly. The Principal of school D confirms this when he says that, “A lack of achievement makes someone to be a bully. Again a learner who is underperforming is also likely to be either
a victim or a bully.” Hence, some learners bully because they cannot excel in class, they look for something that will make them popular. This is confirmed by educators from schools A, B and C. Educators from schools A and B, respectively, state that, “... sometimes the bullies are just trying to be recognised by other learners”, and that, “... bullies bully because they want to mask their insecurity or prove themselves by inflicting pain to others to seek admiration.” From these quotes, it is clear that some learners bully for recognition and others do it because of their sense of insecurity. Suffice it to note that both the desire to gain respect and the urge to control others are more reasons for bullying. Thus, an educator from school C affirms, “I think they (bullies) bully just to get respect from other people for the powerful look.”

The view that academic performance may be source of bullying is supported by the Principal of school A who declared that “Children bully because they don’t have good academic result”. An SMT member from school D stated that, “learners become bullies and victims because of some situations, and those situations might eventually affect them, especially their performance at school.”

According to Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:7), children may become bullies who present learning problems and do not succeed at school. Learners who experience difficulties with their studies do sometimes resort to bullying as a means of shielding their poor performance at school. Bullies are looking for something that will make them feel good about themselves, unaware that bullying is just not the right thing to make themselves famous for.

However, the Principal of school A emphasizes that while academic achievements might account for some bullying incidents, some learners bully others just to show that they are in control: “The bullies bully because they want to be in control, they want to show everyone that they are the big bosses.”
4.3.3 Peer pressure

Peer pressure also seems to be a factor that contributes to bullying. One of the learners in school C said about a bully that “The person is trying to please others around them, maybe they want to gain popularity.” This is concurred by a learner from school D who affirms that “Some bully to fit in with the friends, because their friends also bully then they think they must also pick on somebody.” Another learner from school B supported the above learners when said that “Some bully to be in the group, everybody is doing it, why can’t I do it.”

These findings suggest that some bullies bully to relieve themselves from the stress they have from their friends and peers. Young people usually think that if you want to fit in or belong to a group, you need to do what the members of the group are doing. Peer pressure thus plays a big role in making certain learners do things that they really do not want to do, things that they only do to please or impress their peers. Family background, academic achievements, as well as peer pressure do contribute to bullying behaviour. According to Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:12), one of the greatest psychological needs a child has is to belong to and to be part of a group. However, belonging and being part of a group requires commitment. This means that one should do what is required by the group.

4.4 CONCLUSION

It is evident that bullying behaviour among secondary school learners is a matter of increasing concern. It poses a real challenge to school authorities as it interferes with the school code of conduct or guidelines on discipline. Therefore, it is essential that schools adopt a policy aimed at countering the problem of bullying among learners. Principals and educators from the surveyed schools believe that everybody should be
involved in the effort to reduce or stop bullying in schools. In other words, all education stakeholders should work together to draw and implement an anti-bullying policy.

School principals and educators should try mobilise their efforts to prevent and stop bullying by availing themselves to learners, encouraging learners to report bullying, talking about bullying in the classrooms, using guidance periods effectively and, by being punctual. Support strategies should be the joint responsibility of school principals, school managing bodies, educators, learners and parents.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research was aimed at explaining and discussing the intervention strategies that form part of a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo province. Chapter four provided an analysis and interpretation of data. This chapter, firstly, provides an overview of the research. Secondly, it briefly summarises the findings discussed in chapters 2 and 4. Thirdly, it makes recommendations that will assist in reducing bullying behaviour in the secondary schools located in Vhembe District in Limpopo province, in connection to the implementation of a whole-school approach. Lastly, the chapter makes suggestions for further research.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter One stated the general aim of this research which was to investigate the perceptions of the whole-school approach as a collaborative strategy to counter bullying behaviour among the secondary school learners. Then, it explained the research methodology and defined the key concepts of the study.

Chapter Two provided a discussion of the literature on a whole-school approach in managing bullying behaviour. The discussion focused on the nature and extent of bullying, anti-bullying policies, factors causing bullying behaviour, myths about bullying, the consequences of bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies to prevent bullying through the use of a whole-school approach.
Chapter Three described and explained the research design and the methodology used, from the collection to the interpretation of data.

Chapter Four concentrated on the actual analysis and interpretation of data.

Chapter Five, the current chapter, provides a brief summary of the findings of this research; makes recommendations concerning the use of a whole-school approach to decrease the incidence of bullying in the secondary schools in Vhembe district in Limpopo province.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The literature study, which includes information obtained from various sources on a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour in secondary school as well as the data obtained through questionnaires and interviews conducted with the principals, educators and learners from the selected schools, revealed that bullying behaviour is caused by various factors and, that it has a negative effect on secondary school learners. Attempts to address bullying behaviour in secondary schools need to be holistic in approach. Findings were divided into two categories, namely, findings based on the existing literature and findings based on semi-structured interviews.

5.3.1 Findings from the literature review

The following are findings obtained from the literature review.
5.3.1.1 A whole-school approach

The literature on a whole-school approach reveals that for this strategy to be effective, all members of the school community should unite and take responsibility for the behaviour of all learners. Combatting bullying behaviour in schools requires an all-inclusive, holistic approach. Thus, all members of the school community should monitor learners’ behaviour at home, at school and within the community.

In light of the above, a whole-school approach is a combined effort, which mobilises both the school and the community, to fight all forms of bullying. It involves a multi-level approach that involves various people and a variety of strategies. A whole-school approach to bullying also involves raising awareness about bullying, being knowledgeable about bullying, developing strategies to combat bullying, and creating anti-bullying partnerships between parents, learners, educators, support agencies and other schools (Tattum, 1993:64).

A whole-school approach is an anti-bullying strategy whose effectiveness depends on the concerted effort of the entire school community. This approach includes anti-bullying policies and programmes to assist all stakeholders.

5.4 WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH STRATEGIES

- Anti-bullying policies and programmes

Anti-bullying policies should be developed and fully communicated to all stakeholders in the school. This means that bullying among secondary school learners can be stopped if all people involved in a school work together to provide systematic, comprehensive and sustainable anti-bullying programmes. The development of anti-bullying policies and programmes entails consultations, gathering information, raising bullying
awareness, and providing feedback. In addition, schools need to develop a curriculum which promotes communication, friendship and assertive skills. But, most importantly, communication between school administrators, teachers, parents and learners should be improved.

- **Supervision**

The secondary schools where bullying occurs frequently need to be supervised and closely monitored in order to reduce bullying. A whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour includes identifying bullying areas. Adequate supervision is one of the most efficient anti-bullying strategies. Consequently, secondary school principals should appoint sufficient adult supervisors to monitor school breaks as well as the hot spots where bullying usually occurs.

- **Build a school-wide foundation**

It was further found that many secondary school principals develop a code of conduct to reduce bullying actions. Some secondary school principals build learners’ sense of responsibility toward the school community. In addition, some try to train school personnel, increase adult supervision and conduct school-wide bullying prevention activities.

- **Provide individual interventions**

Participants mentioned that a protocol for intervening in or investigating a bullying behaviour can reduce bullying incidents at school. It also emerged that working with parents in addressing off-campus bullying actions can play a vital role in minimising bullying actions. This can also be achieved by reinforcing alternative behaviour.

### 5.5 CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING ON LEARNERS

It emerged from the data collected that bullying behaviour has negative, painful consequences for the bullied secondary school learners.
• **Physical consequences**

Bullied learners often suffer from unexplained aches and pain, headaches, nail-biting urges, loss of appetite, bedwetting, stomach ailments and physical injuries that require hospitalization.

• **Emotional and social consequences**

Bullied learners may be emotionally affected. They experience depression, anxiety, fearfulness, frustration and hopelessness. In so far as social consequences are concerned, the bullied learners have a negative experience of peer-relations. Consequently, they withdraw from group activities and become lonely and shy as they no longer enjoy the company of their peers.

• **Educational consequences**

The bullied learners often have below-average school attainments as they tend to withdraw from school activities.

5.6 FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

The findings of this research have been categorised under bullying behaviour, whole-school strategies to counter bullying, implementation of anti-bullying policies, effectiveness of whole-school intervention strategies; a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour, and causes of bullying among secondary school learners.

5.6.1 Bullying behaviour

The perceptions of the principals, educators, SMT members, and learners confirm that bulling behaviour is a physical, verbal and psychological abusive practice which is usually performed by a stronger individual on a weaker one. It includes, among other aspects, the threat of bodily harm, assault, battery and gang activity.
Bullying behaviour in the secondary schools is a daily occurrence. Bullying incidents occur predominantly on the playground, during playtime. The main perpetrators of bullying are boys. This means that girls feature to a lesser extent and, bullying among girls takes the form of verbal and psychological bullying. Verbal and physical forms of bullying were identified as the most recurrent and most serious in the secondary schools. Identifying when and where bullying occurs is not an easy task. However, the interviews conducted with school principals and educators indicated that bullying mainly occurs before and after school; particularly during unsupervised hours.

Policy formulation and implementation are essential to reducing bullying behaviour in secondary schools. The following is a summary of the findings in that category.

5.6.2 Policy formulation and implementation

Policy formulation and implementation is essential to managing bullying behaviour so as to reduce its extent. The majority of secondary school principals indicated that they had some form of bullying policy (included in the code of conduct of the school, for many). However, they were generally not confident about its formulation and implementation. In addition, it was discovered that not all stakeholders are involved in the policy formulation stage. But, it remains that policy formulation and implementation is an important part of the strategic intervention to combating bullying.

5.6.3 Support strategies to reduce bullying behaviour

It emerged from the interviews that the educators’ knowledge of their learners is one of the tools that can assist in reducing bullying behaviour in secondary schools. The knowledge of the learners implies understanding their backgrounds. This is achieved by talking to them about their challenges and problems in order to offer them the necessary support.
5.6.4 A whole-school approach

In regard to the data collected through interviews, the majority of the participants agreed that all members of the school community should be involved in checking learners' behaviour in order to reduce bullying actions. Collected data further indicated that bullying behaviour in secondary schools needed to be managed from a whole-school approach.

5.6.5 Intervention strategy

This research established that the non-implementation of policies in the secondary schools has a direct bearing on learners' unawareness of the proper recourse when they are bullied or witness bullying. It also emerged from the research that the response to bullying in secondary schools is characterized by both a lack of a sense of urgency and a casual approach. However, one secondary school principal indicated that educators are adequately equipped to deal bullying incidents. In other words, they do not need another policy to direct them. Suffice it to reiterate that the management of bullying behaviour in secondary schools is important and should not be ignored, as it has the potential to change the lives of learners profoundly.

5.6.6 Causes of bullying among secondary school learners

The interview data confirmed that learners bully for different reasons.

- Family background was perceived as one of the reasons some secondary school learners bully others. It was also discovered that some learners bully because they are or were bullied by the adult at home. Participants also indicated that some learners practice bullying because it is an observable daily occurrence at
their homes. For instance, the constant violent fighting between parents suggest to children that violence is acceptable; hence, they want to apply on other learners at school.

- Poor academic achievements were also perceived as a factor contributing to bullying in secondary schools. It was revealed that the victim of bullying is usually a learner whose achievements are good, whereas the bully is a learner with poor academic achievements. In this instance, the bully is fighting for recognition, since they cannot excel academically.

- Peer pressure was also identified as one of the reasons that prompt some learners to bully others. Learners who belong to peer-groups feel the need to do things that will make them accepted by the groups. This means that if one belongs to a group of bullies, they will be forced to bully as well in order to fit in or be a full member.

Recommendations to assist secondary schools principals, educators, governors and school communities in addressing bullying among secondary school learners follow.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Although much research has been conducted on the issue of managing bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools in various countries, little has been done in this area, in South Africa. Given the high levels of bullying incidents in secondary schools in South Africa, a whole-school approach should be used as a strategy to counter bullying in schools. Based on the literature review and the findings of the present study, the researcher makes the recommendations that follow.

- A whole school approach, which involves all school community members and uses various strategies, should be used in secondary schools in order to deal with bullying behaviour. This approach is further recommended because it also involves raising awareness about bullying, increasing knowledge about bullying,
and forming anti-bullying partnership with parents, learners, educators, non-teaching personnel and support agencies.

- Schools should develop anti-bullying policies in order to deal with bullying. The formulated policy should be fully communicated to all people involved in the school. Parents should be involved in the drafting of the anti-bullying policy. Such a policy should clearly express the school’s principles, expectations in terms of discipline, and the consequences for anyone who breaches the terms of this policy.

- In addition, when developing the policy, a collaborative process needs to be followed, that is, there should be awareness raising, consultation, information gathering, drafting of the policy and its circulation for comments, revision of the draft, adoption of the policy and its implementation. Finally, the anti-bullying policy should be used as one of the whole school strategies to deal with bullying behaviour in schools.

- School principals should appoint enough educators to supervise and monitor bullying hot spots during learners’ playtime. In other words, regular and adequate supervision is recommended as one of the whole-school strategies to deal with bullying incidences. Once educators take supervision duty seriously, learners will not have a chance to bully each other.

- It is essential that educators act on cases of bullying reported to them by learners. They should be actively involved in solving the problem and not just reporting it to the school management team.

- Furthermore, educators need to be encouraged and empowered by equipping them with more knowledge on the nature of bullying. Educators’ active participation in dealing with bullying problems will help reduce bullying behaviour in secondary schools.
• Secondary school educators of all age groups should be trained to deal with bullying. Furthermore, bullying awareness should be raised in all secondary school that experience bullying behaviour.

• In addition, secondary school educators should be empowered in terms of the practical aspects of whole-school strategies to manage bullying behaviour.

• Workshops on the identification and management of bullying behaviour in secondary schools need to be organised. Subsequently, secondary school managers and educators need to formulate and implement an anti-bullying policy.

• School managers should call meetings with parents to share information them about the school’s anti-bullying action plan. Furthermore, school educators should establish a positive, friendly and trusting relationship with the class as well as with each individual child.

• Secondary school managers need to improve supervision of the outdoor environment by providing an adequate number of adults during breaks and playtime to enable a quick intervention.

• Learners need to be taught to be more responsible for their lives and be motivated to report bullying behaviour to their educators who must be able to adequately respond to learners’ reporting of bullying incidents.

• Finally, educators should be empowered in terms of the identification of the indicators of bullying and the implementation of whole-school strategies to manage bullying, through workshops.
5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In completing this study, the following topics for further research emerged:

- Secondary schools and all stakeholders are actively involved in developing a school-wide or whole-school approach to combat bullying behaviour. No emphasis was placed on the role that the circuit and district offices, as well as the province can play in decreasing the extent of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners. This is an area that can be investigated further.

- While this research study included principals, learners and SMT members on the extent of bullying, policy implementation, anti-bullying policy, and intervention strategies, it would be valuable to get the inputs of the educators, school governing bodies and parents on these issues, since they are also involved in the lives of the learners.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The researcher used both the literature review and the data collected through interviews to generate findings on the perceptions of a whole school approach in the management of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners. The study found that for the secondary schools to establish strategies to counter bullying behaviour, it is imperative to approach bullying actions from a holistic perspective and through a whole school approach. Put differently, the multidimensional nature of bullying behaviour among secondary school learners suggested the need for the use of a holistic approach in any attempt to solve and address bullying. Thus, a whole-school approach to bullying becomes an essential strategy for the enhancement of good behaviour among secondary school learners which will possibly help eradicate bullying behaviour.
As stated in the previous chapters, a whole-school approach to managing bullying behaviour requires that all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, and the entire school community take responsibility for the behaviour of all learners (Tattum, 1993:63).

Bullying behaviour among secondary school learners should be dealt with in a collaborative way. This is because, as revealed by the researcher in Chapter Two, bullying takes various forms. Consequently, it was suggested that further scientific research be concluded on each manifestation, if secondary schools are to succeed in the management of bullying behaviour amongst learners.

The management structures of schools need to take bullying seriously. Secondary schools need to be proactive in the elaboration and implementation of anti-bullying policies and the creation of support programmes. This will help minimise the extent of bullying. Ultimately, South Africa will benefit from the emergence of less aggressive future generations of youth.
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Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Request for permission to conduct educational research at secondary schools within the Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province

I Lidzhegu Muvhoni Edward, a registered second year student in M Ed (specialising in Education Management, Law and Policy System) at the University of Johannesburg with the student number 200818616, hereby apply for permission to conduct research under the topic “A whole school approach to managing bullying behaviour among learners in secondary schools in the Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province”.

The purpose of my research is to explain and investigate a whole school approach to managing bullying behavior in secondary schools in the Vhembe District in the Limpopo province.

The research will be conducted only in the secondary schools situated in Vhembe District, with the intention of solving the problem of bullying among secondary school learners. Data gathered will be treated as highly confidentiality.
I hope that my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully,

M.E LIDZHEGU (UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG MED STUDENT)
REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: YOURSELF

1. Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct a research at secondary schools.
2. We strongly advice that the research process should not interrupt the normal learning and teaching time.
3. We further would like to advice that the research should be conducted with the concert of both the circuit managers and the principals of the schools.
4. Wishing you all the best.

DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

DATE

12-08-2011
APPENDIX C

To: The secondary school principal

Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: RESEARCH WORK

This letter serves to advise you that your school was selected to be part of a research study entitled: “A whole school approach to managing bullying behaviours among learners in secondary schools in the Vhembe District in the Limpopo province”.

Although the Limpopo Department of Education does not necessarily force your school to be involved, it is to the school's benefit to do voluntary work to realize the findings of the research.

The results of the study will help address the growing problems pertaining to the safety of learners within the confines of the school environments.

We hope that you find the above in order.

Yours faithfully,

Lidzhegu M.E (MEd student)         Supervisor: Prof. Pierre Du Plessis
Teachers need help with bullies
Many don’t have the skills to detect bullying and counsel perpetrators.