

EXPLORING THE NATURE AND IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING
PERPETRATED BY SENIOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POST-
LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS, CITY
OF JOHANNESBURG

by

LEBOGANG GLADNES GAEHOSE

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the subject

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Prof. T.A. CHAUKE

DATE 19 May 2026

DECLARATION

I, Gaehose Lebogang Gladnes, declare that this research work submitted at the University of South Africa for a Master's Degree is my work and it has not been submitted previously for any degree or at any other institution. This research design and the written presentation in this project are entirely mine; the sources used are acknowledged appropriately.

SIGNATURE :

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Gladnes', enclosed within a circular scribble.

DATE: 19/05/2026

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of South Africa. A qualitative approach was adopted in this study to understand post-level 1 to 3 educators lived experience. In this study, semi-structured interviews through open-ended questions were adopted as a data collection tool. Furthermore, purposive and snowball sampling were employed to sample the participants. The research recruited 16 participants, eight females and eight males, from four public schools in the Cosmo City area. The criteria included eight post-level one educators, four post-level 2 educators, and four post-level 3 educators. Brain and Clarke's thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Ethical considerations were considered, such as informed consent, which was given to grant permission from the participants. Anonymity, voluntary consideration, and confidentiality were considered. University of South Africa granted ethical clearance to conduct the research, and further approval was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education. The major findings revealed that post-level 1 to 3 educators are subjected to a wide range of workplace bullying, such as verbal intimidation, psychological manipulation, financial exploitation and sexual abuse. The study further revealed factors contributing to workplace bullying, which consisted of contextual variables, weak policies and reporting mechanisms, lack of job opportunities, limited legal remedies and strong competition for promotional posts. The study further revealed that workplace bullying is linked to financial, physical, and psychological impacts. Power Control Theory and Organizational Justice Theory, which describe how unequal power relations and views of justice influence behaviour within organisations, serve as the study's theoretical lens. These theories stress that workplace bullying by the Senior School Management is rooted in hierarchical power imbalances and reinforced by post-level 1 to 3 educators' experiences of unfair treatment. The findings support and expand on these theories, emphasising how both the perceived injustice and power control sustain bullying in school contexts. The results show the need for more enforcement of anti-bullying regulations and focused training for Senior School Managements to foster responsibility and moral leadership. Furthermore, it is advised that education

departments should develop a zero-tolerance culture for workplace bullying in schools, increase monitoring and support systems for impacted post-level 1 to 3 educators, and establish clear reporting procedures. This study aimed to address this gap by exploring the nature and impact of bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators. The research recommended strategies that can be implemented by the Department of Education to develop efficient anti-bullying policies, the school to practice effective bullying mechanisms, and lastly, the education training institutions to establish teacher training workshops for recently hired educators to identify and deal with bullying in the workplace.

Keywords: Workplace bullying, post-level 1 to 3 educators, Senior School Management, power relations, organisational support, workplace

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Father God for His unconditional love and strength and unwavering presence throughout this milestone in my life. He has been my source of resilience and inspiration; without His presence in my life, this would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof Thulani Chauke, for his unwavering support, continuous support, encouragement, patience, and constructive criticism, which have greatly contributed positively to my master's degree process. May the Good Lord bless you abundantly. You are an asset to this education domain. I am blessed to have been guided by you.

To the University of South Africa, I appreciate the opportunity to complete my Master's Degree in the institution and the productive workshops that were provided to enhance and guide me throughout my project. To the Gauteng Department of Education, thank you for your swift response in permitting me to conduct my study.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to my participants who sacrificed their time and allowed me to collect data throughout their busy schedules. This study would not have been successful without your contribution. To all those who supported me in any way, may the mercy of God be with you.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mom, your prayers, enduring love, motivation, and care kept me strong when I felt that I was losing focus. Thank you for being my strength, and may the Good Lord protect you for me and bless you with an abundant, healthy life. To my late grandfather, Thomas Goitsemodimo Gaehose, I thank God that you left a mark on my life by teaching me the importance of education and instilling discipline and the spirit of not giving up. To my dearest partner, thank you for your patience and for the late nights you got up to support me in completing this Master's Degree. To my colleague, Mrs Netshongolwe, for your guidance and support throughout my Master's Degree process.

With much love.

Lebogang Gaehose

Table of Content

DECLARATION.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.2 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	7
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	8
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	8
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	9
1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY.....	9
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	10
1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
1.10 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY	13
1.10.1 Research paradigm.....	13
1.11 RESEARCH APPROACH	13
1.12 SAMPLING AND POPULATION	14
1.12.1 Population	14
1.12.2 Sampling.....	14
1.13 DATA COLLECTION TOOL.....	15
1.13.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	15
1.14 DATA ANALYSIS	15
1.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA.....	16
1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	16
1.17 DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS.....	17
1.17.1 Workplace bullying.....	17
1.17.2 Post-level 1 and Post-level 3.....	17
1.17.3 Secondary schools.....	18

1.17.4 Senior School Management.....	18
1.17.5 School violence.....	18
1.18 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY.....	19
1.19 CONCLUSION.....	19
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	21
2.2.1 The importance of theories in research.....	21
2.3 THEORIES DISCUSSED IN THIS STUDY.....	21
2.3.1 Power and Control Theory.....	22
2.3.1.1 Application to this study.....	22
2.3.2 Organizational Justice Theory.....	23
2.3.2.1 Application to the study.....	24
2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE THEORIES TO THE STUDY.....	26
2.5.1 Workplace bullying.....	29
2.5.2 Verbal abuse.....	31
2.5.3 Psychological bullying in schools.....	32
2.5.4 Work overload and unfair work allocation.....	33
2.5.5 Exclusion and withholding of information.....	34
2.5.6 Professional undermining.....	35
2.5.7 Unfair performance appraisals and career stagnation.....	36
2.5.8 Sexual exploitation.....	37
2.5.10 Favouritism.....	40
2.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING.....	42
2.6.1 Power imbalance.....	42
2.7 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS.....	44
2.7.1 Overcrowding.....	44
2.7.2 Lack of job opportunities.....	46
2.9 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE BULLYING.....	49
2.9.1 Promote legal remedies.....	51
2.9.2 Promote organisational justice.....	52
2.9.3 Implement multiple reporting channels.....	53
2.10 CONCLUSION.....	57
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	58

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH	58
3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM	59
3.3.1 Characteristics of the research paradigm	60
3.3.1.2 Epistemology	61
3.3.1.3 Advantages of qualitative research approach	61
3.3.1.4 Disadvantages of qualitative research	63
3.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	64
3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN	64
3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING	65
3.6.1 Population	65
3.6.2 Sampling, technique and the size	66
3.7 DATA COLLECTION	68
3.5.3 Research site and participant selection	71
3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA.....	72
3.9.1Credibility	72
3.9.2 Transferability.....	72
3.9.3 Conformability	72
3.9.4 Dependability	73
3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	73
3.10.1 Informed consent	73
3.10.2 Anonymity and confidentiality.....	74
3.10.3 Permission to conduct the research	74
3.10.4 Privacy	74
3.10.5 Voluntary participation.....	75
3.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	75
3.11.1 Limitations of the study.....	75
3.11.2 Delimitations.....	75
3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	76
CHAPTER 4.....	77
4.1 INTRODUCTION	77
4.2.1 Description of participants.....	79
4.3 MAIN FINDINGS.....	79

4.5 WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATED BY SENIOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN OSMO CITY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG NORTH	80
4.6 THEME 1: THE NATURE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING EXPERIENCED BY POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ..	81
4.6.1 Verbal abuse encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township	81
4.6.5 Theme 1	91
4.7.1 Contextual variables contributing to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools	92
4.7.6 Theme 2	101
4.8.1 The financial impact inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators	102
4.8.2 The physical impact inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators	104
4.8.5 Theme 3	108
Table 4.5: Subthemes developed from the main theme 4	108
4.9.2 Strategies suggested to be implemented in the school context	112
4.10 CONCLUSION	114
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION	116
Table 5.1. Themes and sub-themes to be discussed in this chapter	116
5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS	117
5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	117
5.3.1.1 Verbal abuse	117
5.3.1.2 Psychological bullying	119
5.3.1.3 Sexual exploitation	120
5.3.1.4 Work overload and unfair work allocation	120
5.3.2.1 Contextual factors	121
5.3.2.2 Weak policies and reporting mechanism	123
5.3.2.3 Lack of job opportunities	123
5.3.2.4 Limitation of legal remedies	124
5.3.2.5 Strong competition for promotional posts	125
5.3.4.1 Financial impact	126
5.3.4.2 Physical impact	126
5.3.4.3 Psychological impact	127

5.3.5.1 Strategies implemented by the Department of Education	128
5.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO NEW KNOWLEDGE	130
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	130
5.5.1 Recommendations for the Department of Education	130
5.5.1.1 Develop policies that will protect educators	131
5.5.1.2 Create safe reporting channels	131
5.5.1.3 Investigate and address complaints fairly	131
5.5.1.4 Support the victim of bullying	131
5.5.1.5 A neutral representative organisation	132
5.5.2 Recommendations for the school context	132
5.5.2.1 Induction workshops and anti-bullying policies	132
5.5.2.2 Fair distribution of work	132
5.5.2.3 School Governing Body involvement	133
5.5.3 Recommendations for the education institution	133
5.5.3.1 Provide workshops as part of scholarship engagement	133
5.5.3.2. Mentoring programs	133
5.5.4 Review of the study objectives	133
5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS	134
5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS	134
REFERENCES	136
APPENDICES	162
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE – POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS	164
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE: POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS	165
APPENDIX G: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM	173

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Participants' Demographic Details	69
Table 4.1: Educators at Post-level 1 to 3: Educators' information	76
Table 4.2: Sub-themes Developed from Main Theme 1	79
Table 4.3: Subthemes Developed from Main Theme 2	89
Table 4.4: Subthemes Developed from Main theme 3	100
Table 4.5: Subthemes Developed from Main Theme 4	106
Table 5.1. Themes and Sub-themes to be Discussed in this Chapter.	115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.2: Codes Developed into Themes	79
Figure 1.9.1: Author-Developed Research Methodology Framework.....	12

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SGB	School Governing Body
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
NSVS	National School Violence Study
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Educators

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The World Health Organisation (2023) found that educators are among the group of professionals who are at a significant risk of being bullied in the workplace. However, the underlying reasons are still not understood adequately. Longobardi et al. (2018), as well as Sambo and Govender (2023), concur that this is due to the fact that the majority of the literature on bullying concentrates on bullying that learners experience from other learners or from their educators. For the same reason, authors hold opposing views regarding the research of workplace bullying among educators (De Wet & Jacobs, 2018; Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022). De Wet (2021) asserts that bullying among educators has been researched in a variety of contexts, but it remains widespread around the world. This view is supported by McMahon et al. (2024), who explain that since there is not enough empirical evidence to address the underlying causes, this widespread issue is likely to be due to the lack of data. The goal of this study is to fill that void by investigating the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools in Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa.

According to Hodgins et al. (2024), workplace bullying can generally be described as a harmful type of negative micro-political interaction that includes various aggressive interpersonal behaviours. Moreover, workplace mistreatment refers to different forms of abuse and insult that employees experience. The various types of bullying and insults that employees encounter are all included in workplace mistreatment (Ahmand et al., 2021). The literature indicates that educators at lower levels, such as Post-level 1, are, in fact, harassed by fellow educators and individuals from the Senior School Management, as well as by learners, parents and the school's support personnel. This renders educator-targeted workplace bullying more complex than other types of workplace bullying. Studies have shown that the issue is worsening (De Wet & Jacobs, 2024). In relation to this study, workplace bullying at the school level refers to the intentional misuse of power by management (post-level 4 educators) towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators.

According to the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention's (CJCP) 2012 National School Violence Study (NSVS) report, the Western Cape Province had the highest rate of workplace bullying in South Africa (8.7%), followed by Limpopo (25.2%) and the Free State (13.2%). Cakirpaloglu et al. (2018) and Mangena and Matlala (2023) reported. Research conducted from 2014 to 2018 by Kaduma (2024) revealed that 20 % of educators confirmed that their safety in the environment is not guaranteed due to a rapid increase in bullying activities. In a recent article (eNCA, 2025), a learner in Grade 8 stabbed an educator at the Hoërskool Die Burger in Randburg, according to the Department of Education. In a different instance, an educator at the Kgabareng Secondary School in Viljoenskroon, in the Free State, was stabbed by a 21-year-old learner in Grade 10.

The Trade Union's survey (NASUWT, 2023) found that 9% of educators reported that their mental health had been adversely impacted by bullying in the workplace. Accordingly, the rise in the number of educators leaving the profession is partly due to workplace bullying. Nevertheless, there may be obstacles preventing educators from obtaining legal assistance, such as financial and time constraints, a lack of legal awareness and a fear of retaliation. Adequate legal support and resources are necessary for educators to overcome these obstacles. Legal assistance services on the constitutional rights and processes are included in this process (De Wet, 2024).

Workplace bullying has been extensively documented as a major organisational challenge that adversely impacts employees' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and performance when it is committed by Senior School Management against post-level 1-3 educators in secondary schools (Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022). Research has shown that bullying in the education sector takes many different forms, such as verbal abuse, intimidation, professional undercutting, social exclusion, and overbearing school administration surveillance (Cakirpaloglu et al., 2018; Mangena & Matlala, 2023). While these studies have improved our understanding of workplace bullying in educational settings, they have mostly concentrated on its prevalence, causes, and effects, paying little attention to bullying that is specifically committed by Senior School Management against Post-level 1-3 educators in South African secondary schools.

Furthermore, little is known about how these educators perceive and understand bullying at work in the particular organisational setting of secondary schools of South Africa. Additionally, current research frequently looks at educators as a collective group, ignoring the unique weaknesses of Post-level 1-3 educators, who hold positions with little organisational control and are directly answerable to Senior School Management. As a result, there is a lack of qualitative data regarding these educators' actual experiences and the strategies needed to deal with bullying in the workplace that is encouraged by Senior School Management. By examining the experiences of Post-level 1-3 educators secondary schools of schools, this study aims to close this knowledge gap and provide context-specific data that can guide interventions, school leadership strategies, and policy aimed at fostering safer and more encouraging work environments.

1.2 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The study's preliminary literature review focuses on how the management perpetuates workplace bullying against educators in local, continental and international contexts. Workplace bullying is a global issue. Mosito and Sitoyi (2024) state that schools in South Africa, like many other schools around the world, have not been immune to workplace bullying. The protection of educators is also a worldwide concern, where bullying was identified as the top safety concern among educators in American schools by Reisert et al. (2023). The following are discussed:

1.2.1 Workplace bullying towards educators by the management in international context

Workplace bullying is a prevalent issue beyond the borders of South Africa. In fact, it is a worldwide concern impacting employees in various countries and sectors. Langeveldt (2023) explains that although there are commonalities in the legal options accessible to those facing workplace bullying in different nations, there are also notable distinctions. Elaborating on the global perspective, two distinct studies illuminate educator workplace bullying in the Czech Republic in European countries, the initial research conducted by Čech et al.,(2018) indicated that 43.3% of educators were subjected to bullying for a duration surpassing a year and the following research (Čech et al, (2018) found that approximately thirteen educators in elementary schools

had been exposed to consistent harassment by their coworkers or seniors for a minimum of six months. A sense of danger and competition was one of the significant factors, following the deployment of a sample comprising 517 educators from Kaunas (Lithuania), which revealed that educators from thirteen secondary schools suffered from workplace bullying by Bernotaite and Malinauskiene (2017). Bullying in the workplace was common among the educators in Kaunas, with 8.3% experiencing it occasionally, with 2.9% facing severe cases, along with insufficient social support at work, which was recognised as the primary factor. In the same way, from the United States, disappointing administrative assistance was also identified as the key factor influencing workplace dissatisfaction after surveying 173 educators in both general and special education to ascertain the extent to which educators indicated experiencing workplace bullying from fellow educators and Senior School Management (Scheeler et al., 2022). Moreover, the study by Arisa-Montes et al. (2015) indicated a prevalence rate of workplace bullying at 4.4% among educational staff. The low frequencies could be deceptive since the educator workplace bullying usually remains hidden and inherently subtle, making it challenging to recognise, as stated by (Mahome et al., 2023).

Additionally, De Wet (2021) investigated the personal experiences of elementary school educators encountering harassment in the public education system across different states in the United States. The outcomes showed that all six participants in the study encountered bullying after taking medical leave because of their existing health problems. The participants believed that nepotism and favouritism acted as environmental elements leading to workplace harassment at Post-level 1 to 3 for educators. Recent studies from the Dublin Anti-Bullying Centre have discovered that more than a third of educators and upper management have experienced bullying at some point in time by fellow educators and staff, with exclusion and neglect being the most frequent experiences (Sargioti, Kuldass, Foody, Otero, Kinahan, Canning, Heaney & Norman et al., 2023). While workplace bullying is insidious and hidden in essence, the author suggests that it impacts the school as an institution significantly, as it affects educators and influences the culture of education and understanding, thereby justifying an inquiry.

Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) assert that workplace bullying is a global phenomenon with comparable characteristics and consequences across the world. As reported by

Moon et al. (2020), 80% of educators in Canada and the United States had experienced physical, psychological and verbal abuse. In a nationally representative survey of Israeli Post-level one educators, 4% stated that they had been financially exploited by their management (Maeng et al., 2020). The scenario in Taiwan is similar, with about one-third of post-level three educators engaging in verbal and/or physical aggressive behaviour against other educators (Moon et al., 2020). Furthermore, educators may experience feelings of blame, helplessness or insecurity, particularly when administrators fail to intervene and provide adequate support (Maeng et al., 2020).

1.2.2 Workplace bullying of educators by the management in a continental context

An international article (Citizen Digital, 2025) revealed that an educator in Nyamira County in Kenya was hospitalised after being assaulted by the principal for arriving late at work. Educators are reluctant to report mistreatment in the workplace as they feel that there will be no consequences taken against the perpetrator (Mosito & Sitoyi, 2024). In his study Montes et al., (2015) disclosed that educators reported a variety of abusive behaviours from school principals, such as insensitivity to personal issues, disrespect for them as individuals and professionals and disrespectful conduct not limited to yelling at educators, participating in sexual harassment and being impolite are a few instances of these behaviours. Moreover, Kaduma (2024) explains that these unethical behaviours have a negative implication on the work habits and performance of the educators. In their studies (Ko et al., 2017), it was revealed that educators reported instances of favouritism among colleagues in the workplace, which involved granting certain individuals' preferential benefits over others based on personal connections, such as family or friendships between the school manager and the educators.

1.2.3 Workplace bullying of educators by the management in a local context

Educators experience abuse from different stakeholders in the school, such as the management, learners and other educators. De Wet (2021) disclosed that educators experience bullying not just from their peers and Senior School Management, but also from learners, parents and support personnel within the school environment. This

complexity makes educator-targeted workplace bullying more intricate compared to other types of workplace bullying. Studies have shown that this issue is on the rise. According to Mollo (2024), cited in PSASP section 5.1.1.5 (DBE, 2016), principals are required to follow the applicable safety laws in order to maintain a safe, secure and disciplined school atmosphere. However, in addition, Sambo and Govender (2023) reported that principals also reportedly engaged in discriminatory changes to a victim's workload, either by assigning targeted educators a more demanding workload or by assigning them little responsibility. Although the departmental heads (Post-level 3) are responsible for assigning workloads to educators in South African public schools, in the majority of cases, their judgments are not final until the principal gives the approval, which takes away the power the departmental head has over their assigned departments. For this reason, the author asserts that the involvement of principals who, in most instances, lack subject expertise leads to conflict and stress in several departments where department leaders are intimidated into changing and implementing changes directed by the principal (Mahome et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Bernstein and Batchelor (2022) explain that, in South Africa, educators contend with highly stressful working conditions, characterised by increasing job demands and insufficient resources to meet those demands. Due to these demands and lack of resources, Post-level 1 to 3 educators' well-being is severely at risk, with workplace bullying becoming widespread among educators. Therefore, South African educators are becoming detached and suffering from severe burnout (Batchelor, 2019). Ariza-Montes et al. (2015) argue that the negative consequences of workplace bullying violate educators' rights to a work environment that upholds fundamental human rights, as well as learners' rights to receive high quality education from educators who are competent and genuinely committed to their professional responsibilities in South Africa. According to research focused on South African educators, bullying occurs in the workplace at several levels, such as between coworkers, principals, educators, and learners (De Vos, 2020). Reinforced by Bernstein and Batchelor (2022), victims of workplace bullying in South African schools have often cited the following negative behaviours: extreme workloads, professional marginalisation, exclusion, ongoing performance appraisal, perpetrators constantly criticizing victims' work, forcing them to perform tasks that lower their self-esteem, and leading to the loss of organisational support. Studies by Bryant and Wilson (2020)

show that South African educators are three times more likely than their peers to experience workplace harassment, yet there is little evidence to support this claim. According to De Wet and Jacobs (2024), reviving South Africa's failing educational system requires a dedicated and driven teaching workforce. Researching the nature and consequences of workplace bullying among educators in the South African context is therefore crucial (Gaffney et al., 2019).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

While there is increasing recognition of workplace bullying in educational settings, most of the focus has been on instances of aggression from learners towards educators or the external difficulties that educators encounter. Nevertheless, bullying perpetrated by Senior School Managements, the principals in this regard, continues to be an overlooked topic in scholarly inquiry, particularly in mainstream public educational institutions (Subedi, 2020). Due to its detrimental impact on Post-level 1 to 3 educators' psychological health, job happiness, and effectiveness, workplace bullying is becoming more widely acknowledged as a significant problem in educational contexts (Van Wyk, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2019). However, bullying committed by learners to educators or learners to their peers has received more attention in the literature than bullying committed by Senior School Management, especially principals in mainstream public secondary schools (Arhuis-Inca et al., 2022).

As a result, little is known about the ways in which Senior School Management-perpetrated workplace bullying affects Post-level 1 to 3 educators in South African secondary schools, as well as the circumstances that lead to it. Studies have shown the negative effects of workplace bullying, but they have mostly paid little attention to the experiences Post-level 1 to 3 educators, who frequently hold less powerful positions within school hierarchies and may be especially susceptible to bullying by management (Venketsamy, 2023; Burger et al., 2022 & Scheeler et al., 2022). The creation of successful policies and interventions targeted at curbing workplace bullying and assisting impacted educators is hampered by the absence of context-specific evidence (Baxen, 2021). Bullying at work has been linked to stress, absenteeism, lower job satisfaction, poor mental health, and educators quitting their jobs in South Africa (Burger et al., 2022; Këiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021; Van Wyk, 2023). These

repercussions have an impact on Post-level 1 to 3 educators as well as their performance at work which affects teaching and learning process. Despite these implications, little qualitative study has been done on the experiences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are abused by Senior School Management in public secondary schools, especially in Cosmo City. Therefore, by investigating workplace bullying committed by Senior School Management against Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary schools, this study aims to close this information gap. The study intends to produce context-specific evidence that can guide school policies and practices to build safer and more supportive working environments by looking at educators' experiences, the nature and impact of bullying, and the strategies to address it.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of South Africa. Importantly, this study identified the forms of bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of South Africa. Furthermore, it highlighted its negative impact on their social, psychological, emotional, financial and overall well-being.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the nature of workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools, perpetrated by Senior School Management in Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa
- To identify the factors contributing to workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- To examine the impact of workplace bullying by Senior School Management on the day-to-day lives of Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- To develop strategies for addressing workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the nature of workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools, perpetrated by Senior School Management in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa?
- What are the factors contributing to workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa?
- How does the workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators affect their day-to-day lives?
- How can workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa, be addressed?

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Workplace bullying of educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in secondary schools has not been explored yet. Previous studies conducted in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa, such as those by Matemane and Chauke (2025), primarily focused on the general experiences of violence perpetrated by learners and the Senior School Management on early career educators. However, their study did not specifically address the issue of workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in schools. Similarly, Langeveldt's (2023) study explored workplace bullying targeting educators in schools but did not distinguish between the experiences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators. This highlights a significant gap in the literature, as the unique challenges and forms of workplace bullying faced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators remain underexplored in the existing research. Therefore, this study will endeavour to shed light on the extent of bullying and its impact on the well-being of Post-level 1 to 3 educators and the performance of the school overall. Furthermore, the study intends to grant educators at Post-level 1 to 3 an opportunity to stand their ground against bullying and find their voices to eradicate their mistreatment in the workplace (Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022). In turn, Coetzee and Steyn (2017) assert that educators from different geographical areas, such as private schools and public schools (in townships and rural areas), have different experiences regarding workplace bullying, as it is found in many different

forms. It is of paramount importance to conduct this study to elucidate the impact of workplace bullying on Post-level 1 to 3 educators and find a resolution to minimise the number of educators leaving the profession and those admitted to mental institutions due to uncondusive working environments.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important because it examines bullying by school administration against Post-level 1 to 3 educators, adding to the expanding body of evidence on workplace bullying in educational settings. Few qualitative studies have examined the lived experiences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are bullied by especially in South African secondary schools, whereas prior research has mostly concentrated on the prevalence, causes, and effects of workplace bullying among educators (Rajalingam et al., 2021 ; Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022). This study can enhance our knowledge of workplace bullying in schools caused by Senior School Management in Cosmo City secondary schools.

By producing empirical data that could strengthen, improve, or broaden the application of the Power and Control Theory and Organizational Justice Theory in comprehending workplace bullying within the school environment (Mahome et al., 2023). The study also advances theory. The results may improve knowledge of how beliefs of justice and organizational power dynamics affect bullying behaviours in schools (Sambo & Govender, 2023). From a policy standpoint, the results of this study could help the Department of Basic Education, Senior School Management, and School Governing Bodies to improve rules and guidelines meant to prevent and manage workplace bullying. The findings may also influence the creation of leadership development initiatives, staff support systems, and reporting protocols that foster safe working environment.

Practically speaking, the results could assist policy makers to identify the types and repercussions of workplace bullying caused by Senior School Management and putting preventative measures in place. The study may also help to improve job satisfaction, reduce absenteeism and foster effective teaching and learning, improve organizational climates, and enhance educator well-being. Lastly, by highlighting areas that need more research, such as workplace bullying in various educational

contexts and among other categories of educators, the study lays the groundwork for future studies.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

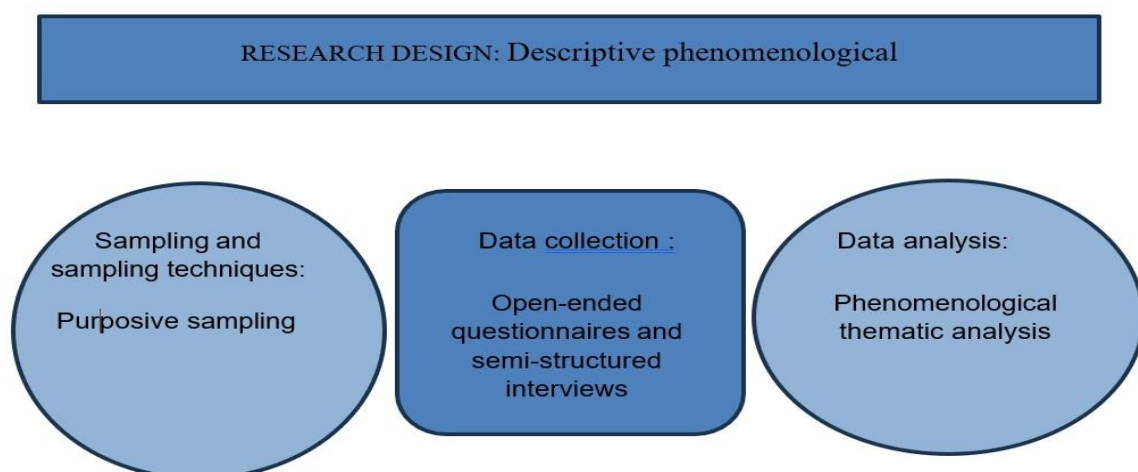
This research is founded on two complementary theories: the Power and Control Theory and the Organizational Justice Theory, which together offer a comprehensive perspective for examining the systemic misuse of power within school leadership frameworks (Kristen, 2025). According to Khanam et al. (2024), the Power and Control Theory is based on the concept that bullying frequently represents a conscious exertion of power to dominate or control. Within the school environment, this might materialise as principals or senior leaders employing their positional authority to intimidate, isolate, or undermine educators, especially those in lower roles. The authors (Khanam et al., 2024) further elucidate that power and control theory explain how hierarchical structures in educational settings can facilitate and sustain abusive behaviours in the absence of oversight or accountability.

Several authors, such as De Cieri, Sheehan, Donohue, Shea and Cooper et al. (2019), revealed that it is initially linked to criminology and domestic abuse. De Cieri et al. (2019) further elucidate that the Power and Control Theory has been extended to workplace environments to analyse how those in authority assert their dominance over subordinate staff. In turn, Mbanga (2023) contends that within the educational sphere, this theory clarifies how principals might utilise their positional power to dominate, intimidate or marginalise educators at Post-level 1 to 3. Bryant and Wilson (2020) assert that bullying tactics, such as threats of verbal abuse, exclusion from decision making processes, and arbitrary evaluations of performance, can be interpreted as control strategies that reinforce a hierarchy and suppress disagreement. This theory is especially significant for recognising the susceptibility of Post-level 1 to 3 educators, who frequently possess limited institutional power or avenues to oppose such behaviour. According to Kristen (2025), the development of organizational justice as both a theoretical concept and a practical issue illustrates the significant workplace transformation over the last few decades. This concurs with the research by De Cieri (2019) and Subedi (2020), who explain that the Organizational Justice Theory concentrates on fairness in the workplace and examines how perceptions of injustice, whether related to decision-making (procedural justice), treatment by leaders

(interactional justice), or the allocation of resources (distributive justice), can result in dissatisfaction and diminished morale.

Salawu, Salawu and Shamsuddin (2023) assert that this theory is particularly pertinent for understanding educators' experiences of being treated unjustly, excluded from decision-making processes, or publicly reprimanded without appropriate procedures. Neall and Tuckey (2021) further elucidate that in an educational environment, when Post-level 1 to 3 educators feel that management is treating them unjustly, whether through unfair task allocations, a lack of clarity in decision-making, or disrespectful communications, it can lead to feelings of victimisation and injustice. According to Nielsen et al. (2022), this theory provides a useful lens for examining how perceptions of unfairness within an organisation may give rise to, or exacerbate, bullying behaviours, particularly in the absence of effective institutional systems for accountability or grievance resolution. By employing both theories, the research not only tackles individual instances of bullying but also examines the institutional frameworks that allow such actions to continue (Nielsen et al., 2022), contends. These frameworks will inform both the creation of research questions and the analysis of data (De Cieri et al., 2019). Utilising these theories, the research can investigate more effectively how systemic dynamics in schools located in Cosmo City, in Johannesburg, influence the occurrences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are victims of bullying. The following depicts the research design of the study.

Figure 1.9.1 : Author-Developed Research Methodology Framework



1.10 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm, research approach, population and sampling strategy, data collection and analysis will all be presented in this section.

1.10.1 Research paradigm

Research paradigms are collections of theories, concepts, or presumptions that serve as the foundation for concepts like 'identity' or 'organisations' (like religion), according to Turin et al. (2024). There are a variety of paradigms that a researcher can use in their studies. In this study, interpretivism was used. Turin et al. (2024) explains that interpretivism is a method of seeing things, a set of thoughts, standards, viewpoints, or anything else that influences how we view and comprehend the world all around us. Interpretivism denotes the idea that reality is subjective and shaped socially by people through their experiences and social interactions (Turin et al., 2024). This is further reinforced by Pulla and Carter (2018), who state that the interpretivist perspective encourages the researcher to investigate the significance behind the understanding of human behaviour, interactions and society; consequently, this entails the researcher striving to create a profound subjective insight into individuals' lives.

Additionally, interpretivism denotes the idea that reality is subjective and shaped socially by people through their experiences and social interactions (Turin et al., 2024). This research concentrated on various lived experiences as perceived by different educators across different schools. Bullying is experienced through various forms by different people. Experiences of bullying between educators are not uniform; a behaviour one educator perceives as bullying may not be interpreted in the same way by another educator. The central emphasis of interpretivist research in this study was to investigate how educators understand their experiences and interactions.

1.11 RESEARCH APPROACH

The main goal of qualitative research, which is often conducted in narrative form, was to uncover ideas that could lead to testable assumptions, as stated by Egwe and Ese (2023), who say that qualitative research emphasises emotions, concepts, or experiences. In qualitative research, we attempt to comprehend how individuals perceive their surroundings. This research aimed to examine the effects of bullying at

work on the well-being of educators and the effect it has on the school's performance, notably in Cosmo City secondary schools. The researcher's objective was to identify the most effective strategies for addressing workplace bullying and reducing the number of educators at Post-level 1 to 3 who leave the field. Qualitative research in this study is used because it assisted the researcher to learn about the perceptions of individual educators about workplace bullying and how it affects their work performance at Post-level 1 to 3.

1.12 SAMPLING AND POPULATION

1.12.1 Population

Willie (2023) explains that the population in research is the whole group of people or events that are being studied, and something they have in common. It contains all the elements the researcher intends to examine and from which conclusions can be drawn (Maeng et al., 2019). Stratton (2024) simplifies this by stating that a population is the entire collection of items, such as people or objects, that have a common characteristic defined by the sampling criteria used by the researcher. In this study, the population comprised all educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in the township of Cosmo City in the Further Education and Training Phase in the Province of Gauteng.

1.12.2 Sampling

Sampling is the process of choosing a sample from large population or from an individual for particular research (Pooja ,2019). As explained by (Stratton,2024) purposive sampling can be defined as a method of selecting participants from a population where the researcher chooses individuals based on specific traits, experiences, or other relevant factors related to the population of interest. In this study, suitable participants were post-level 1 to 3 educators of Cosmo City secondary schools in Johannesburg. Campbell et al. (2020) assert that to choose participants who are most likely to provide relevant and helpful information, purposive sampling is employed. The sampling criteria were determined by their availability for the scheduled interviews, their desire to disclose their experiences, and whether they had been subjected to workplace bullying in the institution. The sample size of the participants

in this study included 16 people, both males and females. From the managerial point, principals were excluded from the interview process as it might compromise the study.

1.13 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Data collection is the process of gathering more information with the aim of gaining insights about the topic (Hameed, Bashir, Zahid, & Raja, 2023). This research employed a qualitative approach and gathered information utilising two primary methods: open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. Initially, the participants answered the open-ended questions aimed at collecting preliminary insights regarding their experiences with bullying by Senior School Management. These questions prompted participants to think about their personal experiences, viewpoints, and emotions, enabling the researcher to identify recurring themes and aspects that warrant further investigation. The open-ended nature allowed participants to express themselves in the language of communication (English), which is coherent with the study's interpretive framework.

1.13.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview, according to Magaldi and Berler (2020). They go on say that the semi-structured interview is usually centred on the primary subject that offers a general pattern and is based on a guide. Furthermore, Dawadi (2020) contend semi-structured interview allows a researcher to delve deeply for a finding even though topical trajectories are given before the session. The primary purpose of the interview is to learn more about an individual's or a group's life story (Magaldi & Berler ,2020).

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Hameed et al. (2023), data analysis involves turning collected data into useful information. Dawadi (2020) unfolded that to enhance the overall depth of the analysis, both deductive and inductive methodologies can be employed. According to Garg (2016), a deductive methodology can serve as the initial point, which facilitates the examination of data concerning the themes that have surfaced from the literature review conducted for the study. The qualitative information collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions were analysed thematically during

the study. Thematic analysis is appropriate for recognising, examining and evaluating recurring patterns within qualitative data. (Mahat et al.,2024).The thematic six steps are later detailed in 3.8.

1.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA

The study employed qualitative research; therefore, trustworthiness will be emphasised in this regard. In turn, this increased the research's credibility by recording every interview. To achieve transferability participants were granted a copy of their own transcribed interview to maintain and confirm the accuracy of the interview. An opportunity was granted to comment on the interpretations of the interviews for confirmation of the accuracy of the information. Throughout the interviews, the same questions were asked in order to prevent bias to achieve credibility of the study. Importantly, the researcher ensured that their personal experiences did not shape or influence the perspectives of the participating educators for confirmability

1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023), it is acceptable and appropriate for researchers to consider the numerous ethical theories that support their values as they anticipate evidence in order to establish what is right and what is wrong. To ensure that the study conforms with the academic and ethical norms on informed consent, confidentiality, and participant welfare, ethical approval was sought from the University's Research Ethics Committee. I also sought permission from the Johannesburg North Education District to conduct research in public schools located in the Johannesburg North district. An official application was submitted in accordance with the Gauteng Department of Education research application procedures, which included information about the study, the documentation of ethical clearance, and measures to protect participants.

Written approval was obtained from the principals of the selected schools. The researcher held meetings with the principals to clarify the study's purpose, reassure them regarding the confidentiality of the data, and gain access to the staff. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants before they took part.

The goals of the study, their rights (including the ability to withdraw at any time), and how their data were used and protected were explained fully to participants. To safeguard the identity of individuals and schools, all the data were kept confidential, and anonymity was preserved in all the reports. In addition to ensuring that the participants did not suffer any harm and continue to be accountable and transparent, the researcher secured their identities by not disclosing their names or the names of their schools (for instance, participant number one from School A was used).

Last, but not least, the researcher upheld the participants' rights and dignity and guaranteed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. No one was coerced into taking part in the interview. I followed the correct ethical principles during the interview process. In agreement, Barnes and Forde (2021) state that confidentiality and anonymity procedures are used to safeguard the privacy of human participants in research while gathering, evaluating, and analysing the participant data.

1.17 DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

1.17.1 Workplace bullying

Workplace bullying is defined as a detrimental form of negative micro-political interaction that encompasses a range of hostile interpersonal behaviours Hodgins et al. (2024). In this study it is the intentional abuse of authority by the school manager against Post-level 1 to 3 educators, these behaviours might include verbal abuse, hostile environment and unfair workload distribution.

1.17.2 Post-level 1 and Post-level 3

Uwaezouke, (2022) defines Post-level 1 to 3 educators as professionally qualified educators working in the public education system who hold a variety of teaching and school-based leadership positions are referred to as Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Post-level 1 educators are classroom based, Post-level 2 educators are Heads of Department (HOD's) and Post-level 3 educators are Deputy Principals furthermore, these educators are in charge of teaching and learning and learner evaluation (Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998). In this study, Post-level 1 to 3 educators refers to educators who are permanently employed and work in public secondary schools in

the chosen study area. This includes classroom educators (Post-level 1), Heads of Department (Post-level 2) and Deputy Principals (Post-level 3) who report to the principal and may be included in the study because they may have experienced workplace bullying at the hands of school principal.

1.17.3 Secondary schools

A secondary school is an institution where learners often further their education after finishing primary school, it prepares learners for higher education and has its roots in the middle-ages, is the educational institution that comes after primary (Uwaezuoke,2022). For the purpose of this study, a secondary school is defined as a public secondary school located in a selected study region the employs educators at Post-level 1 to 3, where the interactions between educators and the school manager may result in incidences of workplace bullying.

1.17.4 Senior School Management

Orunbon (2023) explain the Senior school Management as the leader who fosters a professional learning and has a huge impact on school culture and promote goods standards for both the educator and the learner. In this study, the Senior School Management refers to the principal as the head of a public school who has total responsibility for the management and supervision of Post-level 1 to 3 educators, the principal may be identified by participants as an alleged offender of bullying in the workplace.

1.17.5 School violence

According to Tian et al. (2023), school violence is defined as any purposeful act of physical, psychological, sexual, verbal or emotional aggression that take place within school setting and results in a potential harm of educators, leaners or members of the school community. It might involve the Senior School Management, parents, leaners or any other people connected to the school. Within the study's context, school violence is defined as any sort of violence that may have an impact on educators' working conditions and general welfare. However, the main subject of this study is bullying in the workplace committed by the school manager (principal) against Post-

level 1 to 3 educators and does not involve learners or any members of the school community.

1.18 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 includes an introduction and the study's background. The problem statement, the study's goals and objectives, and its applicability are all described by the researcher. Additionally, the key operational principles used in the study are clearly outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 2

In order to provide a strong conceptual and theoretical basis for the topic under investigation, Chapter 2 includes an extensive assessment of the literature.

Chapter 3

The research approach used in the procedure is examined in Chapter 3 of the current study. The research approach, research design, study site, population and sample, data collection and analysis tools, and ethical considerations are all included in the methodology.

Chapter 4

As described in Chapter 1, the objectives and aims of the study are reconsidered during the process of data presentation and analysis in this chapter.

Chapter 5

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the investigation's findings and concludes the study by making additional suggestions for further research on the same subject.

1.19 CONCLUSION

This chapter gives background, problem statement, rationale of the study, significance of the study, an insight into what the research entailed, the methods that were used to

gather data, and how the data were collected. Factors contributing to workplace bullying and forms of workplace bullying are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's rationale and significance were discussed in the preceding chapter of the research, along with a thorough explanation of the issue statement, the study's aim, the research questions and objectives, and the study's background. The literature pertaining to the research issue, sub-questions and ideas connected to the topic on both an international and national level is covered in this chapter. The literature review provided a more in-depth understanding of the subject, positively impacting the study by discussing various types of workplaces bullying worldwide, which offered valuable insights. Additionally, the literature examined diverse perspectives from researchers around the globe and the study's implications. This chapter will examine the theoretical framework behind workplace bullying, addressing its relevance to the topic and its methods of implementation.

2.2.1 The importance of theories in research

According to Kivunja (2018), a theoretical framework offers a blueprint for identifying key aspects in the data, guides your thoughts on how the observed elements relate to each other, and aids in presenting your findings more effectively, considering existing theories. It facilitates the linking of abstract concepts with the tangible elements present in your data. Mahabeer (2020) asserts that theories aid researchers in defining their area of study and its significance, making it logical and meaningful. Maeng et al. (2019) contend that utilising a theoretical perspective enables the researcher to ground the study in existing knowledge, preventing ambiguous or disjointed methodologies.

2.3 THEORIES DISCUSSED IN THIS STUDY

To create a strong theoretical foundation for this study, relevant theories are explored so that one might grasp the dynamics of workplace bullying better. This management strategy is aimed at addressing the bullying perpetrated by secondary school managers against Post-level 1 to 3 educators. These concepts help one to view the sources, features and consequences of bullying behaviour in academic contexts as well as its consequences for educators' personal and professional welfare. It is important to note that the Power and Control Theory and the Organisational Justice

Theory underpin this study. This section examines the relevance and application of these ideas to the research. The study hopes to use these theoretical perspectives to examine how power, control, justice, and social contact patterns affect bullying experiences in the workplace. The following section discusses the primary theories underlying this study.

2.3.1 Power and Control Theory

The Power and Control Theory was developed by John Hagan in the 1980s. The theory was created in conjunction with his study on coercive control in relationships and workplace contexts. The theory stems from the observation that power inequalities frequently result in control-oriented behaviours, where those in positions of authority employ their power to subjugate, manipulate, or oppress others (Salin, 2021). This theory clarifies how managers or people in more senior positions might abuse their power to frighten, degrade, or bully in the context of the workplace, subordinates, therefore maintaining control and reinforcing hierarchical domination (Hayes & Keyser, 2022).

Importantly, the Power and Control Theory adopted in this research provides a theoretical interpretation of how the abuse of authority by the Senior School Management causes bullying in the workplace against Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Petrova (2024) contends that this theory offers a framework for grasping the processes of control, coercion, and subjugation that define bullying behaviours, stressing how bureaucratic power structures can sustain injustice and psychological damage among educators. This theory indicates how managers in hierarchical organisations, like schools, may use their positional power to intimidate, undermine, or isolate their subordinates (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016)

2.3.1.1 Application to this study

This theory is pertinent to this study because it shows the imbalance of power between the Senior School Management and the Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Principals and senior managers at Cosmo City secondary schools have considerable power in making decisions, which may be utilised either properly or improperly. Educators at the Post-level 1–3, who have little power, may be more susceptible to manipulative control and retaliatory conduct by their supervisors (Petrova,2024)

According to Williamson and Lester (2024), although the Power and Control Theory offers insightful ideas on how authority and dominance can be used to oppress others, it has come under criticism due to a number of flaws. According to Hodgins et al. (2020), one of the main criticisms is that the theory sometimes neglects other elements, including the organisational culture, personality differences, and interpersonal conflict, by highlighting structural power and authority, which might also help to explain the bullying behaviour. While Mokgolo and Chigo (2024) concur with the above viewpoint, they argue that by concentrating mostly on power inequalities, the hypothesis might miss the intricacy of workplace interactions wherein bullying might happen even among peers of the same rank.

Another objection raised by Lin et al. (2022) is that the theory frequently depicts victims as passive, failing to appreciate their resilience adequately in handling bullying incidents or coping techniques. Hashish, Alsayed, Alnajjar and Bakar (2024) assert that critics also contend that the Power and Control Theory is used more frequently in domestic violence situations and may not always explain the professional and institutional dynamics evident in school-like work environments. Still very pertinent to this study, the theory draws attention to the abuse of managerial power and the systemic character of control in schools (Chauke, 2024). This offers a strong lens to investigate how management might use position to bully or silence Post-level 1 to 3 educators, therefore maintaining an environment of fear and oppression.

2.3.2 Organizational Justice Theory

The Organizational Justice Theory was originally formulated by Greenberg (1987). The theory explains how employees' perceptions of fairness inside a firm impact their attitudes, motivation and behaviour (Neall & Tuckey, 2021). Consistent with this argument, Hendra et al. (2022) explain that three primary components of justice are highlighted by the theory: distributive justice, which concerns the fairness of outcomes like incentives or task distribution; procedural justice, which refers to interactional justice, which highlights the respect and fairness demonstrated in interpersonal communication, as well as the fairness of decision-making processes. In agreement with this, Neall and Tuckey (2021) further assert that Organizational Justice Theory sheds light on the structural imbalance that allows management to bully Post-level 1 to 3 educators, while Power and Control Theory explains how this abuse of authority

results in workplace perceptions of unfairness, disrespect and inequality. In support of this view, William (2024) concludes that together, these hypotheses offer a complete picture of the causes and effects of workplace bullying in schools. He further explains that this viewpoint is complemented by organisational justice theory in the workplace, which emphasises how employees see the exercise of authority in terms of fairness and equity (William, 2024).

Neall and Tuckey (2021) assert that bullying actions are not only acts of dominance but also breaches of justice standards, such as distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. According to Martinko et al. (2018), these behaviours are frequently perceived as unfair when the management abuses authority to regulate educators, which exacerbates the detrimental effects of bullying. This link is explained by the theory in the context of Cosmo City's secondary schools, which highlights that management's abuse of authority not only encourages bullying but also diminishes educators' feelings of justice, self-worth and faith in their profession (William, 2024).

2.3.2.1 Application to the study

This theory is applicable to this study because the Organizational Theory offers a useful perspective for comprehending how workplace hierarchies, structures and cultures promote bullying behaviour. In secondary schools, the management has the official authority over educators at the Post-level 1 to 3, deciding how choices are made, duties are assigned, and regulations are enforced (Hendra et al., 2022). This structural power is susceptible to abuse, which can lead to exclusion, intimidation, or unfair treatment. Furthermore, if management favours specific educators, makes arbitrary decisions, or ignores well-established standards, educators in post-level 1 to 3 schools may see these actions as unjust. These ideas may lead to mistrust, anxiety and psychological anguish, which may be seen as bullying or abuse.

Although the Organizational Justice Theory offers a firm framework for appreciating attitudes of fairness in the workplace, it has come under fire for some of its shortcomings. One of the main criticisms is that the theory usually emphasises workers' perspectives of justice rather than the real structural or systematic reasons for inequality (Hayes & Keyser, 2022). This implies it could miss more general organisational problems, including the institutional culture, hierarchical power

dynamics and the leadership style that directly support bullying behaviour (Lin et al., 2022)

Hayes and Keyser (2022) further assert that the assumption that staff members evaluate fairness logically is another restriction; however, emotional and social elements often shape how people interpret managerial choices. For instance, prior events, personal convictions, or professional connections may all affect how educators see bullying, which the theory does not explain sufficiently. Critics also claim that the theory undervalues power dynamics, thereby rendering it less successful in elucidating circumstances in which managerial mistreatment causes bullying from power rather than just procedural injustice (Lin et al., 2022) argue:

Notwithstanding these constraints, the Organisational Justice Theory is still relevant for this research as it helps to explain how seen unfairness, prejudiced decision-making, and rude communication from Senior School Management support Post-level 1 to 3 educators' bullying behaviour at work. It highlights the need for justice, transparency and equality in Senior School Management practices to foster a respectful and caring work environment.

In the context of this research, management bullying behaviours might be seen as transgressions against all of these justice areas. For instance, educators experience distributive injustice when promotions, workload assignments, or resources are allocated unfairly or based on favouritism. Elucidated by Martinko et al. (2018), procedural injustice is experienced when educators are excluded from decision-making procedures or when they are not transparent. Lastly, educators experience interactional injustice when the Senior School Management uses a harsh, dismissive, or disrespectful tone (William, 2024). This viewpoint is supported by Hashish et al. (2024); these instances of inequity are a major factor in the emotional anguish, professional unhappiness, and low morale that are linked to workplace bullying. As a result, the study is able to go beyond merely recognising bullying behaviours and rather focus on how these behaviours are seen as violations of fairness standards. Hodgins, MacCurtain, and McNamara (2020) contend that this viewpoint is helpful in understanding why workplace bullying has such a significant impact on educators' health and job performance. The study is well-positioned to emphasise the value of

fairness, dignity and respect in preventing bullying and fostering a positive school atmosphere by basing its analysis on organizational justice (Hodgins et al., 2020)

The Power and Control Theory, along with the Organizational Theory, helps to explain how power is used in schools. According to the Power and Control Theory, bullying occurs when people in positions of authority use their power to dominate or control others. However, the organisational theory persists, emphasising that structural systems, policies, and cultural conventions can enable or even normalise abusive conduct (Hashish et al., 2024). For instance, bullying may be tolerated or hidden in environments fostered by authoritarian leadership approaches, weak grievance procedures and cultures of silence (William, 2024). Thus, incorporating organisational theory into this research enables a more complete examination of workplace bullying as a result of both individual power abuse and organisational structure. By placing the experiences of educators at Post-level 1 to 3 within the larger organisational framework of schools, it demonstrates that bullying is maintained not through interpersonal dynamics but by systemic and structural factors ingrained in educational administration.

2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE THEORIES TO THE STUDY

Based on both the Power and Control Theory and the Organizational Justice Theory, this study looked at the nature, consequences, and potential of the Organizational Justice Theory. Workplace bullying countermeasures implemented by the administration against educators at Post-level 1 to 3. By highlighting the misuse of authority and control in management's bullying conduct, the research showed how and why it occurs. The Theory of Dominance and Power in hierarchical structures (Hashish et al., 2024) offered a lens through which to view instances of educator intimidation, humiliation, and domination as instances of the abuse of power (Hodgins et al., 2020).

This study employed this framework to identify the causes of the problem and was able to answer questions about the nature of workplace bullying, demonstrating that it commonly begins when managers misuse their position of power over Post-level 1 to 3 educators in order to maintain control over their staff and put an end to insubordination. It also helped to comprehend the psychological and professional repercussions of such authority, such as demoralised post-level three educators. On

the other hand, the Organizational Justice Theory addresses research topics pertaining to the causes of workplace fear and emotional exhaustion, bullying and possible solutions. The analysis of educators' views on fairness, equity and respect in their classrooms was based on this idea (Alhassan et al., 2023).

Post-level 1 to 3 educators feel a sense of unfairness when principals fail to treat them fairly, distribute their duties fairly, or engage in courteous behaviour, which, according to the emphasis, promotes a harmful work environment. (Hashish et al., 2024). Moreover, the plan provided advice on how to enhance school principals' skills by fostering fairness, transparency and moral leadership, all of which are critical for preventing workplace bullying.

As stated by Juan et al. (2018), the Power and Control Theory explains the power dynamics and behaviours behind bullying, while the Organizational Theory provides a complementary perspective as a whole. Furthermore, their combined use elucidated the dynamics of power and behaviour at the heart of bullying and illuminated workplace bullying, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding (Orunbun, 2023). It provides a thorough and complex grasp of the topic, covering the underlying psychological and institutional causes of such behaviour in secondary schools, as well as concrete approaches for dealing with it.

2.5 FORMS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING EXPERIENCED BY EDUCATORS

Workplace bullying in schools is a multifaceted issue that includes members of the Senior School Management as well as coworkers. De Wet and Jacobs (2018) argue that bullying in the educational sector is more complicated than in many other professional settings due to the fact that Post-level 1 to 3 educators are frequently victimised by their peers as well as by school managers. The expectation that schools should be secure environments that foster teaching, learning and professional development only adds to this complexity (Hashish et al., 2024).

Contrary to this expectation, the data reveal that South African schools, even those in Cosmo City, are still having trouble in making sure that educators are safe and well-cared for (Mahabeer, 2020; Sambo & Govender, 2023; Mokano & Letuma, 2025). Both the government and SMT have failed to establish favourable working conditions that

protect educators' emotional and mental well-being, as argued by Mosito and Sitoyi (2024). In addition, persistent claims of educator victimisation and bullying in public schools show that very little headway has been made in dealing with the problem (Mokonyane et al., 2024).

Many academics have emphasised the necessity of shielding educators from harmful behaviours because of their essential contribution in maintaining the educational system (Mokonyane et al., 2024; Sambo & Govender, 2023; Mokano & Letuma, 2025). According to De Wet and Jacobs (2021), educators are essential to national development and, as a result, need robust institutional protection against workplace harassment. However, a variety of forms of workplace bullying persist, such as name-calling, teasing, mockery, spreading rumours, threats, inappropriate sexual comments and purposeful exclusion (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021). Long-term exposure to such behaviours can have major psychological repercussions, such as trauma, anxiety, depression, and, in extreme cases, suicidal thoughts or self-harm (Özer & Escartín, 2023).

The frequency of bullying in schools is exacerbated by systemic causes. According to De Wet and Jacobs (2021), educators in some secondary, township and rural schools are more susceptible to harassment. Previous flaws in educators' screening procedures exacerbate this vulnerability. Prior to 2019, for instance, the lack of required criminal background checks made it more likely that people with a history of violence, sexual misbehaviour, or other offences would be recruited (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017). Nurhasanah et al. (2024) warn that those in management roles may be more likely to engage in bullying behaviour as a result of this, making Post-level 1 to 3 educators more susceptible to workplace aggression.

For this reason, a secure school environment is crucial for both the well-being of educators and the accomplishment of the school's objectives. When educators feel intimidated or unsupported, their trust in the system deteriorates, their drive wanes, and their overall academic performance suffers. Özer and Escartín (2023) emphasise that safeguarding educators is essential for fostering positive teaching and learning outcomes. In this scenario, educators in Post-level 1 to 3 are often the victims of various forms of bullying, particularly from members of the SMT, highlighting the

pressing need for strengthened protective procedures and targeted interventions inside school systems (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021).

The reviewed literature indicates that, in the context of this study, bullying is widely recognised in schools. Still, Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience it differently. Because of their lower hierarchical position, they are more vulnerable to bullying from the SMT since they have less power over decisions, organisational matters, and institutional authority. Those with the authority oversee, assess and take disciplinary action.

Despite the wealth of information available on workplace bullying in schools, there is still a significant gap in our understanding of how Post-level 1 to 3 educators are particularly affected by bullying committed by their managers (Nurhasanah et al., 2024).

2.5.1 Workplace bullying

The growing recognition of workplace bullying as a significant psychosocial risk in organisational contexts, with far-reaching effects on institutional operations and employee welfare, is now accepted. Bullying is now widely recognised as a widespread occupational risk that disrupts healthy workplace relationships and endangers employees' psychological well-being, according to Smit (2021). In his categorisation of workplace bullying as one of the worst psychosocial risks, Escartín (2017) also highlights the persistent and repeated negative behaviours that define it, such as hostility, intimidation, and humiliation. Central to this definition are the repetition of harmful behaviour and the victim's reduced ability to defend himself, features that reflect a wider academic consensus on the nature of bullying. De Wet and Jacobs (2021) expand on this understanding in the educational context by defining workplace bullying as intentional and repeated harmful behaviour expressed through verbal abuse, offensive comments, public humiliation, work obstruction and ridicule that undermines a person's self-assurance and job performance.

The negative impacts of workplace bullying on educators are well documented in studies by Hashish et al. (2024), Mahabeer (2020), and Mokano and Letuma (2025), all of which consistently show negative psychological, emotional and professional

consequences for educators who have been bullied. The human rights aspect of workplace bullying is highlighted by the fact that victims frequently report lower job satisfaction, increased emotional distress and a stronger urge to quit their school or the profession altogether (Siregar & Suma, 2025). Such behaviour violates educators' right to a secure, honourable, and respectful workplace (Smit, 2021). Workplace bullying is viewed through the lens of interpersonal power as a deliberate and ongoing pattern of mistreatment designed to weaken the victim's sense of self-determination. According to Coetzee and Steyn (2017), bullying is a conscious act that results in social isolation and a loss of individual agency, with perpetrators deliberately targeting vulnerable victims. De Wet (2024) goes on to say that bullying is a consistent pattern of physical, verbal, or nonverbal aggression made possible by significant power disparities. These writers claim that this behaviour is strategically designed to lower the output, increase absenteeism and elevate attrition in schools, in addition to being damaging.

Continued bullying has serious consequences for educators' morale and retention. According to Siregar and Suma (2025), educators' commitment is diminished by prolonged exposure to bullying, which frequently leads to disengagement from their professional duties. In the South African educational system, where educator retention remains a constant issue, this trend is especially alarming. Educators at the Post-level 1–3 level are particularly susceptible to managerial harassment since they often have jobs with little authority, few resources and little institutional influence. They are vulnerable to unjust workload distribution, exclusion from decision-making processes, and the undervaluation of their professional inputs due to their lower position in the hierarchy (De Wet & Jacobs, 2024)

With significant repercussions for both individuals and the school setting, the literature generally demonstrates that workplace bullying is systematic, repetitive and caused by power imbalances (Ridge et al., 2017). Despite the fact that bullying in schools is well documented, the research indicates that educators at lower Post-level may be more susceptible because of their limited administrative power and reliance on managers for work assignments and performance evaluations. Due to their positional authority, school principals can engage in behaviours that exacerbate inequality, such

as unfairly allocating tasks, marginalising educators from important decisions, and minimising their skills (Smit, 2021).

Despite a great deal of study on the overall nature, experiences and consequences of workplace bullying, little empirical research has focused on how Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience manager-perpetrated bullying in South African schools. This gap highlights the need for qualitative research into the lived experiences of educators in these lower power positions, especially in contexts where managerial power is strong and frequently unchallenged.

2.5.2 Verbal abuse

De Wet (2024) explains that verbal bullying refers to the act of harming someone through spoken or written language. The findings of Nurhasanah et al. (2024) are aligned with those of De Wet and Jacobs (2021), who reveal that verbal assaults, or as they are more commonly referred to, verbal abuse, are considered emotional bullying; they encompass hurtful statements made even in the absence of physical interaction, defamatory language, menacing phrases, coercion, or insults. The study conducted by Woudstra et al. (2018) revealed that educators were ridiculed, overlooked and dismissed, cursed by their principals (verbal bullying), were subjected to obscene gestures or laughed at, and not only faced threats of violence, but even had items hurled at them. Supported by Bryant and Wilson (2020), additionally, school managers may humiliate educators in front of their learners and colleagues by verbally degrading them. According to Nurhasanah et al. (2024), using language as a weapon to denigrate, threaten or shame a victim is considered verbal bullying. Verbal aggression, according to Nurhasanah et al. (2024), includes yelling, name-calling, public reprimands, and the use of condescending remarks. This kind of harassment in educational settings frequently happens when school managers reprimand educators in front of learners or coworkers, which damages their self-esteem and professional reputation (Ridge et al., 2017).

Within the framework of this research, educators at Cosmo City secondary schools at the Post-level 1 to 3 have reported instances of verbal abuse being employed as a method of enforcing power or stifling opposition by school managers. This kind of conduct fosters a toxic workplace that harms educators' mental health and

professional effectiveness, according to Mokano and Letuma (2025). Previous studies (Mokgolo & Mokgolo, 2019; De Wet, 2021) have looked at verbal bullying in schools, but they tend to generalise educators' experiences and fail to learn about the ways in which verbal maltreatment is used by school managers to maintain hierarchical dominance in urban township environments like Cosmo City. By concentrating only on the experiences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators who have experienced verbal bullying from their managers, the current study aims to fill this gap.

2.5.3 Psychological bullying in schools

Non-physical acts of aggression aimed at causing emotional distress and eroding a person's sense of self-worth are considered psychological bullying. This kind of harassment, according to Hlophe et al. (2017), results in extreme emotional anguish and impairs the victim's capacity to form positive interpersonal bonds in the workplace. Such bullying in the classroom can take the form of ongoing humiliation, exclusion, criticism and threats from educators or co-workers (Smit, 2021). Numerous studies (Ridge et al., 2017; Nurhasanah et al., 2024; Mokonyane et al., 2024) have emphasised the psychological outcomes of workplace bullying among educators. De Wet (2021) discovered that ongoing bullying in schools causes educators to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and emotional burnout. Educators who have been victimised may experience symptoms of mental anguish, decreased appetite, heavy smoking, alcohol abuse and sentiments of shame and helplessness (Smit, 2021).

In the same way, Sambo and Govender (2023) found that educators who were psychologically harassed claimed that they experienced fear, worry, changes in their personality and low self-worth. The authors further argue that several educators had developed health-related ailments, avoided certain areas of the school and felt that their dignity had been affected. According to Woudstra et al. (2018), psychological bullying also harms educators' mental health, resulting in diminished self-esteem and tense relationships with learners. In fact, Hlophe et al.'s (2017) research even points to a rise in cases of educators being hospitalised in mental health facilities as a result of persistent bullying. In the context of school administration, these results imply that school managers could be a major factor in perpetuating psychological bullying by means of ongoing threats, emotional manipulation, as well as the intentional exclusion

of educators at the Post-level 1 to 3 (Mokano & Letuma, 2025). In many South African schools, school managers have positional power that they can abuse to humiliate or isolate Post-level 1 to 3 educators, fostering a culture of terror and quiet.

Previous studies (De Wet, 2021; Hlophe et al., 2017; Sambo & Govender, 2023; Woudstra et al., 2018) have demonstrated the psychological consequences of the workplace. While the bullying of educators is prevalent, they have not specifically studied how school managers, as authority figures, psychologically harm Post-level 1 to 3 educators in township settings such as Cosmo City. This gap is addressed in the current research, which examines how the power relationships between educators and school managers affect educators' emotional and mental well-being in Johannesburg's secondary schools.

2.5.4 Work overload and unfair work allocation

According to Huang et al. (2021), work overload refers to giving certain employees an excessive number of assignments or responsibilities, frequently as a form of punishment or discrimination. According to Mabasa-Manganyi (2023), work overload is a sneaky sort of bullying that uses managerial power to put pressure on particular people. This could involve giving educators too many classes, extra responsibilities outside the classroom or more administrative tasks in school environments without consulting or taking their skills into account (Huang et al., 2021). This results in school managers frequently distributing workloads unfairly or deliberately giving Post-level 1 to 3 educators the most challenging tasks. Mabasa-Manganyi (2023) concur that this manipulation of the task distribution results in burnout, stress, and a feeling of marginalisation among the educators who are impacted.

Although earlier research (De Vos, 2020) has emphasised workload inequalities in schools, they have not examined thoroughly how strategic management (principals) use work assignments as a means of retribution and control. This gap is addressed by the present study, which examines how workload manipulation is used as a deliberate form of workplace harassment targeting educators at the Post-level 1 to 3 level.

2.5.5 Exclusion and withholding of information

Workplace bullying includes a variety of actions intended to weaken, single out, or belittle the people who are the subject of the bullying in the workplace (Zahid et al., 2021). The wilful withholding of information from certain staff is a subtle yet damaging form of workplace bullying. This behaviour is described by Zahid and Nauman (2023) as informational exclusion, in which important information like meeting times, policy updates, or job opportunities is deliberately kept secret to limit someone's participation or impact. In the case of the Cosmo City secondary schools, Post-level 1 to 3 educators have reported being left out of important staff meetings or getting important documents after deadlines have passed. Not only do these methods lead to missed professional possibilities, but they also convey the message that the educators who are impacted are undervalued, which increases their sense of isolation (Zahid et al., 2021).

Another major problem in school settings is interpersonal deviation, actions like gossiping, undermining coworkers, and concealing important information have a detrimental impact on teamwork and organisational performance (Yao et al., 2022). Likewise, Ogunfowora et al. (2021) state that such actions foster an unhealthy school or organisational culture by eroding interpersonal trust and hindering teamwork. In turn, Ogunfowora et al. (2021) explain that workplace exclusion, which entails the experience of being ignored, excluded or socially isolated by peers or supervisors, is closely related to interpersonal deviance. In agreement with Zahid et al. (2021), ostracism is a particularly upsetting form of social exclusion because of its ambiguity and capacity to erode a person's sense of belonging.

Workplace exclusion and the withholding of information have many documented negative consequences. Fatima et al. (2023) discovered that ostracised people are more likely to have reduced job satisfaction, emotional detachment and increased turnover intentions. Additionally, the act of exclusion and withholding of important information in the workplace might cause deviant behavioural reactions since employees might retaliate against what they perceive to be mistreatment or employ defensive mechanisms to deal with being excluded (Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien,

2018). These results illustrate the intricate connection between interpersonal conflict, exclusion and resulting deviant actions.

While prior research has emphasised communication issues in educational institutions (De Wet, 2024; Botha, 2019 & Zahid et al., 2021), these studies frequently fail to distinguish between unintentional communication failures and intentional exclusion as a form of bullying. Because purposeful exclusion is a means of exerting influence and power, allowing leaders to marginalise particular educators and influence organisational dynamics, this distinction is crucial (Yao et al., 2022). In order to address this gap, the present study investigates how school managers might use informational dominance to maintain control and methodically marginalise particular educators at Post-level 1 to 3.

Despite the increasing awareness that workplace ostracism is a kind of social exclusion, its mediating effect on the connection between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal deviance is still under-researched. The existing research identifies both constructs as detrimental workplace occurrences, but there is little empirical research into the mechanisms by which conflict intensifies into aberrant behaviour (Gamian-Wilk et al., 2018). By examining whether workplace ostracism serves as an intervening variable connecting interpersonal conflict to interpersonal deviance (Belgasm et al., 2025), this study seeks to fill this void. A greater understanding of this mediating process might shed light on the development of negative interpersonal relationships in school settings.

2.5.6 Professional undermining

According to Chen (2024), the intentional discrediting of a person's competence, trustworthiness or skills is known as professional sabotage. This type of bullying is characterised by Ogunfowora et al. (2021) as a deliberate effort to undermine the victim's self-assurance and professional reputation. Managers of the school may criticise educators' teaching techniques, disregard their proposals during meetings, or claim ownership of their concepts publicly in an educational setting (Yao et al., 2022). Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City schools have reported that principals frequently criticise their teaching in front of learners or coworkers, deny them

recognition, or ignore their accomplishments. Such conduct undermines educators and impedes their development as professionals (Chen, 2024).

Despite Maunder and Crafter's (2017) investigation into professional disputes between educators, the part played by principals in fostering professional sabotage has received less attention. The goal of the present study is to examine how evaluative and managerial power are misused to erode educators' professionalism to bridge this gap.

2.5.7 Unfair performance appraisals and career stagnation

Ågotnes et al. (2024) explain that the structural type of workplace bullying occurs when people in positions of power manipulate performance evaluations or limit chances for advancement to punish or dominate certain individuals. According to Rosander, Salin, and Blomberg (2021), unjust or prejudiced assessments serve as institutionalised bullying tactics that allow school managers to use official school protocols to maintain power. Educators at P-level 1 to 3 in the schools under consideration have reported unfair performance assessments, unclear promotion choices and limited access to professional development options. By reinforcing power disparities and restricting career advancement, such actions create a climate in which educators experience professional limits and a sense of insecurity (Rosander et al., 2021). The more extensive literature on performance evaluation systems emphasises a number of systemic flaws that undermine their effectiveness. Biased rating methods, a lack of procedural transparency and a limited understanding of psychological and political variables are some of the main flaws in assessment practices in the school setting, according to certain studies (Al-Obaidi et al., 2022; Hameed et al., 2023). These shortcomings can have major effects, such as talent loss and poor overall performance (Norman et al., 2023; Schrøder-Hansen & Hansen, 2022). Additionally, academics have suggested methods for making assessments fairer and more effective, such as minimising evaluator biases, increasing procedural transparency, and enhancing evaluation instruments (Sinha, 2024; Tarigan et al., 2023).

The widespread absence of transparency in performance review procedures is a frequent theme in the literature. This problem, according to research, frequently arises from manual administrative procedures, individual prejudices and the lack of uniform

evaluation standards. By encouraging misunderstandings, ambiguous goals, and uncertainty about professional norms, ambiguous work expectations and subjective judgment, according to Etalong et al. (2022), hinder the developmental aim of performance evaluations. On the other hand, clear and fair evaluation methods have been shown to increase overall productivity, organisational efficiency and employee happiness (Al-Obaidi et al., 2022; Gosavi & Wakchaure, 2024; Tarigan et al., 2023).

Previous research has looked at fairness and objectivity in performance evaluations (Pienaar & Willemse, 2019), but it has not specifically addressed the idea of performance appraisal manipulation as a kind of workplace bullying. This represents a significant gap in the literature because the misuse of official evaluation procedures is a potent way for people in positions of power to threaten, intimidate or silence their workers. This gap is addressed in the current study by examining how principals in secondary schools can employ performance assessments as a means of coercion and control over educators at the Post-level 1 to 3, hence broadening the knowledge of structural bullying in educational settings.

2.5.8 Sexual exploitation

According to the WHO (2023), sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to, taking financial, social or political advantage of someone else sexually, whether it is an actual or attempted exploitation of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust for sexual motives. Powell and Henry (2016) assert that sexual exploitation can often be mistaken for sexual abuse. Nevertheless, the latter is restricted to unwelcome physical behaviours of a sexual kind and is readily identifiable and subject to penalties, as Meyersfeld (2020) notes. Sexual harassment and exploitation are inherently multifaceted concepts that lack a singular legal definition and may arise in interactions involving people from all walks of life. Sexual exploitation has negative impacts on the psychological and physical well-being of the victim, regardless of their gender (Mabuza, 2025). According to Özer and Escartín (2023), in a context of rising unemployment, job-seeking educators face numerous challenges and may find themselves in situations where offering sexual favours or bribes appears to be the only means of securing employment. Cortina and Areguin (2020) describe this phenomenon as unwelcome and uninvited sexual conduct that is viewed by the victim

as degrading, offensive and detrimental to their own safety and psychophysical health. Although this is a global phenomenon, little has been done to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. According to the assertion (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021), sexual exploitation against female and male educators in schools, particularly in secondary education, has not been given the necessary attention and presents a significant issue in various regions. Such a finding concurs with Mabuza's (2025) statement that this form of harassment appears to invert the typical pattern; it causes women not only to defend their allegations of sexual harassment but also to reconsider the conventional understanding of sexual harassment by perpetrators of sexual misconduct in the educational setting. Regrettably, victims are reluctant to notify the appropriate authorities about instances of violence in schools (SAPA, 2023). This issue has led to a lack of professional engagement and widespread departures among educators. Huang et al. (2021) make the case that male Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience different forms of sexual harassment from verbal, nonverbal and physical sources. Although only a limited amount of research has been conducted on this issue, it has largely been overlooked and continues to pose a significant challenge in several contexts.

A review of the existing literature revealed that the majority of earlier research has concentrated on female workplace bullying (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018), while attacks against male educators, particularly sexual harassment, have gone mostly unreported. According to Belgasm et al. (2025) and Longobardi et al. (2019), bullying against educators has remained mostly undocumented (Mahat et al., 2024). Additionally, previous research has often only looked at one or a few forms of sexual exploitation against male educators (Maeng et al., 2019), even if sexual exploitation against educators encompasses a diverse range of behaviours. Longobardi et al. (2019) claim that it is a multilevel occurrence. Educator gender, length of teaching experience and other factors have previously been used to explain bullying against educators (Moon & McCluskey, 2018). The study seeks to contribute to closing the current research gaps by investigating sexual and physical abuse perpetrated by managers against Post-level 1 to 3 educators. This topic has not been examined in previous research.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (75 of 1997) (RSA, 1997) establishes minimum employment criteria, such as the right to a safe workplace. The health and

safety of workers is prioritized by companies under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (85 of 1993) (RSA, 1993). Additionally, the Code of Good Practice on Handling Sexual Harassment Cases (GN R711 in GG 19406 of 17 July 1998) provides recommendations for dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace. Nonetheless, many educators continue to experience workplace bullying despite these legal protections (Langeveldt, 2023). This assertion is supported by Cortina and Areguin (2020), who contend that there are many variables at play concerning this issue, including the inadequate enforcement and implementation of the rules, a widespread atmosphere of silence and fear in schools, and a general lack of understanding of the protections provided by the law.

Mbanga (2023) contends that despite the existence of laws safeguarding Post-level 1 to 3 educators, reporting incidents like workplace bullying can be extremely complicated, lengthy and emotionally draining for the victim, and may not guarantee a favourable result.

Moreover, the criminal justice system might not focus consistently on workplace bullying cases, as such cases can be perceived as less severe violations compared to other criminal activities (Langeveldt, 2023). While legal options exist for educators to safeguard themselves, this information is not widely recognised by educators. Langeveldt (2023) further elaborates that Post-level 1 to 3 educators need to understand the legal options open to them and obtain suitable legal counsel when required. Establishing a culture of respect and a zero-tolerance policy for workplace bullying is equally crucial. Educators must undergo consistent training on safeguarding their rights and preventing sexual harassment or any form of bullying in the workplace. Cortina and Areguin (2020) contend that workplace bullying assaults against educators in South African schools are constantly covered in the mainstream media and social media videos.

The mainstream media and social media are continuously reporting on workplace bullying attacks against educators in South African schools (Sibisi et al., 2025). However, limited scholarly research has been published on this phenomenon. There are very few studies that offer an academic point of view on the sexual exploitation that was suffered and endured by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City schools; this one will add to them.

2.5.10 Favouritism

Favouritism involves the allocation of jobs, contracts, or resources to people who belong to one's own social circle (Bramoullé & Goyal, 2016). It encompasses the behaviour of a public official giving preferential treatment to those within their close network (Mahabeer, 2020). Concurring with the above, Longobardi et al. (2019) state that the favouritism demonstrates biased treatment or offering special advantages to particular individuals or groups, which goes against the principle of fairness in relation to fairness in the school setting. In the study conducted by Bayram et al. (2024), it was revealed that in a school setting, favouritism can be defined as unfair treatment towards educators by favouring certain people over others. It is emphasised that favouritism is frequently shown by tolerating errors or specific behaviours in those favoured, as well as by acting according to friendship, gender, family relationship, political opinions, union membership, professional experience, race or personal interests.

Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience these kinds of traits in a school setting in the hands of the school managers (Prasetia & Akrim, 2024). Tabancalı (2018) further elaborates that favouritism does not only encompass biased treatment in a work environment, but also includes different manifestations such as cronyism, nepotism, and tribalism. He further explained that cronyism prevails where a personal connection, such as relationships with friends or acquaintances, takes precedence over qualifications in public employment, and that nepotism is based on family relationships. In a school environment, principals and the School Governing Body usually appoint individuals with whom they are familiar and have a good relationship. However, educators at Post-level 1 to 3 have no say in the appointment of other educators (Mbanga, 2023).

Similarly, tribalism is another form of individual favouritism, where someone in a position of power shows preference for individuals from the same geographic area or tribe (Bayram et al., 2024). This results in discriminatory practices within the workplace, creating negative attitudes towards those who do not share the same cultural or tribal affiliations (Bayram et al., 2024). In a similar study, Sakçak et al. (2021) discovered that school principals often preferred their friends, union members, and individuals who align with their perspectives over other educators in the school. These

kinds of traits are not reported as educators fear turning their work environment into a toxic one. Sometimes reporting such, the people responsible for dealing with such cases are involved in corruption and protect the perpetrator and the victim suffers the consequences (Bayram et.al., 2024). These cases of corruption receive limited attention because raising them may be interpreted as Post-level 1 to 3 educators uniting against principals. As a result, principals are often afforded greater protection by those in higher authority.

Kaya et al. (2023) further discuss the biased treatment due to favouritism within schools by noting that Post-level 1 to 3 educators do not have equal access to workplace opportunities. For instance, post-level three educators are often perceived as less competent in decision-making roles, and departmental heads are not entrusted with full responsibility for their departments; instead, principals make decisions on their behalf to favour specific educators. Furthermore, tactics like social exclusion, removing responsibilities and public embarrassment are often employed to diminish the victim's self-esteem and foster a hostile atmosphere (Portelada, Candeias & João, 2024).

Favouritism can damage individuals and communities greatly by undermining the principles of fairness and justice. Given that employees within a fair system are often just as motivated, if not more so (Kaya & Koçyiğit, 2023; Sultoni, 2023), those working in environments characterised by favouritism may experience a decline in both motivation and dedication to their job. Consequently, in such workplaces, employees may find their creativity and willingness to contribute to the school diminished (Sultoni, 2023). The results align with findings from prior studies (Özer & Escartín, 2023; Demirtaş & Demirbilek, 2019; Karakose et al., 2024). These studies identified various instances of favouritism within schools. For example, in their study (Bayram et al., 2024) indicated that (Papadakis et al., 2024) observed that school principals tended to exhibit favouritism influenced by their social connections linked to political affiliations, family ties, gender, union memberships and their personal interests. Likewise, Kahraman (2020) discovered that school principals often preferred their friends, union members and individuals who hold similar beliefs over other educators in the institution.

In contrast, Demirtaş and Demirbilek (2019) found that favouritism is only very seldom observed in educational institutions. In a similar vein, Hallinger and Truong (2016)

discovered that there is "no favouritism" in school, which contradicts the results of many studies in the literature, including the current study. However, Topsakal et al. (2024),

Sakçak (2021), Karakose (2024), and Papadakis et al. (2024) report that favouritism does occur in educational settings, although at a significantly lower frequency. Moreover, Topsakal et al. (2024) aver that employees in a school setting marked by favouritism develop feelings of fear and pessimistic expectations about their employment. Ultimately, this leads to alienation and a lack of self-belief, as workers perceive themselves as unimportant or worthless and feel estranged from the institution (Mavungu & Napier, 2019). Furthermore, favouritism damages the pillars of teamwork, leading to a toxic working environment influenced by hostility, intrigue, and mobbing (Kaya et al., 2023). Previous literature does not examine preventive measures against favouritism towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators; thus, it is essential for this research to investigate the judicial remedies that can stop offenders from bullying their subordinates.

Across all the forms of bullying discussed above, the existing literature has primarily focused on general educator-to-educator or peer bullying without isolating the power dynamics between SMTs and Post-level 1 educators. The current study adds to the body of knowledge by investigating how managerial authority, embedded in the hierarchical structure of schools, becomes a conduit for various forms of workplace bullying. This contextualised focus on Cosmo City secondary schools offers new insights into the lived experiences of educators working within township secondary schools' environments.

2.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING

2.6.1 Power imbalance

Power imbalance is frequently linked to an individual's capacity to sway the opinions, behaviours, and values of another, less dominant person (Lam & Xu, 2018). In the present educational setting, power signifies the conflict between individuals who are not equally positioned, resulting in one person being seen as powerful. At the same time, the other is viewed as powerless (Nelson, 2016). School principals possess considerable authority over educators; by virtue of this authority, the objectives of the

school can be met. However, school principals often abuse their power by mistreating their subordinates, which impacts educators' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, perceptions of the school, and their performance (Gundogdu, 2022).

Mistreatment in the workplace" is an all-encompassing term that denotes the different forms of abuse and insults that workers encounter. In addition, Rasa et al. (2019) state that the power imbalance in the workplace can result in discrimination, rudeness, lack of respect, maltreatment, unreasonable behaviours and hostile management techniques and procedures. Rasa et al. (2019) further state that educators face unjust and baseless criticism and principals often set their victims up for failure by not providing the necessary information or by manipulating circumstances, anticipating that their victims will fail and consequently seem unqualified. This viewpoint is supported by Lam and Xu (2018), who agree that bullying entails an imbalance of power in which a more dominant person (the perpetrator) engages in harmful social behaviours against a less powerful person (the victim) in order to control and dominate him or her. Therefore, conflicts between two people who are equally powerful are less likely to be considered bullying (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Ultimately, these power imbalances can stem either directly from an educational institution or indirectly from perceived power disparities (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Educators in low-level positions frequently face assertive or overbearing supervision, which can result in conflicts of personality. It is suggested that those with less power are more likely to become victims of bullying (Sambo & Govender, 2024). Notably, Nguyen et al. (2021) point out that this struggle for power can also extend to rival colleagues; it may not only focus on the less powerful but may also target coworkers who threaten their perceived dominance or authority. Although men in positions of authority have historically been identified as the primary perpetrators of abuse and exploitation, Molefi (2022) notes that these characteristics are not evident when male educators engage in sexual harassment of their female colleagues.

A person in a position of power commits these acts against the victim, either because of their hierarchical status, their social support system (sociability), or their seniority in the school environment, regardless of their gender (Sibisi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the hierarchical nature of schools, where principals have considerable influence over their subordinates, exacerbates the power imbalances in the South African educational

system (Subisi et al., 2025). With little power or voice to protest unjust treatment, educators at Post-level 1 to 3 occupy the lowest ranks of authority (Nguyen et al., 2021). In this atmosphere, bullying by school managers in schools can continue unabated, shrouded in a culture of silence and fear. Although there has been extensive research on workplace bullying around the world, there is still a noticeable gap in the literature on how power imbalance manifests itself in South African schools and how it impacts educators at lower levels (Rasa et al., 2019; Lam & Xu, 2018; Molefi, 2022; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). The majority of current studies tend to generalise educators' experiences without distinguishing between post-level categories, and only a small number use a qualitative methodology to portray educators' actual experiences. In addition, the majority of the literature focuses on male-dominated management abuse, paying little attention to gender neutral viewpoints where both male and female managers may be perpetrators.

As a result, the existing research offers little understanding of how power imbalances lead to management bullying in South African schools' unique environment. This study attempts to close this gap by examining how managers use and sometimes abuse authority in their interactions with Post-level 1 to 3 educators at the Cosmo City secondary school, thus increasing our knowledge of how hierarchical dynamics contribute to workplace bullying in educational settings.

2.7 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The organisational and environmental circumstances that may lead to the development and continuation of workplace bullying in schools are referred to as contextual factors.

2.7.1 Overcrowding

Overcrowded classrooms arise when the number of learners exceeds the optimal limit for successful teaching and acquiring knowledge, posing a notable difficulty within the worldwide educational framework (Tshangana et al., 2023). These classrooms are distinguished by restricted physical areas, insufficient resources and a ratio of educators to learners that hampers the provision of high-quality learning. This setting interferes with efficient teaching, as numerous educators face challenges associated

with discipline, physical limitations and execution assessment (Mbanga, 2023). Principals are likely to ignore the issue and compel the educator to resolve it independently. Consequently, overcrowded schools have negatively impacted educators' self-esteem and job satisfaction, resulting in classrooms where educators confront a variety of obstacles and due to a lack of managerial support, they resign from teaching.

As a result, crowded schools have impacted educators' self-esteem and job satisfaction adversely, leading to a classroom environment where educators face numerous challenges and leave the profession due to the lack of support from their managers (Subisi et al., 2025). Post-level 1 to 3 educators disfavoured by principals are often allocated a larger number of learners and are assigned subjects for which they lack a degree (Likuru & Mwila, 2022). Concurring with (Mbanga, 2023), these educators endure a type of physical abuse as their workload increases to a greater extent than that of their peers. Moreover, the stress and heavy workloads due to overpopulated classrooms impact Post-level 1 to 3 educator mental health greatly, making it difficult to manage their classes (Tshangana et al., 2023). According to Tshangana et al. (2024), educators face heavier workloads due to the increased workload and the demands of managing packed classrooms. Due to the stress and burnout that may result from this scenario, their participation and general performance in the classroom may suffer (Mbanga, 2023). The number of tests that educators must grade, along with the necessity to control and discipline learners, frequently makes them feel overburdened, which prevents them from concentrating on their tasks.

However, little attention is paid to such educators, as they will not be on good terms with the principal. Seherrie (2023) explains that overcrowding frequently leads to a lack of educational resources, such as textbooks, technology and classroom resources, which are inadequate for everyone. Post-level 1 to 3 educators who experience challenges imposed on them by the principals are often assigned inadequate classrooms that lack the necessary resources, aimed at frustrating them. Additionally, this can impede the productivity capacity of the educator to participate fully in the curriculum (Seherrie, 2023). Although the literature indicates the impact of overcrowding on educators, no effective measures have been recommended to address this phenomenon.

2.7.2 Lack of job opportunities

The scarcity of job prospects and skilled educators has always been recognised as contributing elements to educators' increased vulnerability in the classroom. The lack of properly trained educators, according to Ventista and Brown (2023), exacerbates educational disparities and increases the achievement gap between learners from affluent and underserved communities. The scarcity is about the misalignment between educators' professional skills and the topics they are expected to teach, in addition to a lack of educators (See et al., 2020). Furthermore, Perryman and Calvert (2020) support this notion, noting that assigning educators to subjects outside their areas of expertise, such as using a physics educator to teach economics, represents a systemic shortage rather than a personal failure.

Unemployed educators frequently take positions outside of their field of expertise as a means of survival due to the scarcity of permanent jobs (See et al., 2020). However, this frequently has a detrimental impact on their performance, making them susceptible to ridicule, criticism and unjust evaluations from school principals. According to Dreer (2023), such experiences can have a significant impact on educators' psychological well-being and sense of self-worth in their careers.

Additionally, the literature disquieting employment practices that result from socio-economic pressures. Unemployed educators frequently agree to oppressive or exploitative contracts out of fear of prolonged joblessness, according to Perryman and Calvert (2020). Concurring with Mbanga (2023), there are situations where educators are forced to pay monetary amounts when they receive their first pay check or to join unions that are selected by their principals, giving school principals the power to influence their professional affiliations. These actions leave educators vulnerable to managerial bullying and coercion by depriving them of independent support structures like unions (Sibisi et al., 2025).

Additionally, inexperienced educators may be deceived into thinking that principals have complete control over their employment because they are frequently unfamiliar with school appointment protocols (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). This misunderstanding leads to major power imbalances. Such educators are more likely to put up with mistreatment, bullying and unfair practices out of concern that they may lose their jobs

or make those they view as gatekeepers of permanent employment angry, according to Coetzee and Steyn (2017). These patterns are especially common in public secondary institutions, where young educators experience increased workplace bullying, structural manipulation, and administrative demands (See et al., 2020). The majority of recent studies look at health effects, organisational structures, or reporting methods separately, but very few of them integrate all three to illustrate how they interact to affect educators' everyday lives (Dreer, 2023; Ventista & Brown, 2023; Darling-Hammond, Schachner, Wojcikiewicz, & Flook, 2023). There is not enough research on actual reporting methods in schools and whistleblower protection. Most of the literature is general and does not address the unique dangers and experiences faced by educators at the lower Post-level, who often have less influence within the institution. There is little integration of psychological, organisational and structural effects into one model.

Although laws are subject to review, studies rarely examine the experience of educators in reporting, the effect of fear on their choices, and the causes of bullying being underreported in South African schools (Cakirpaloglu et al., 2018). This research attempts to address the gap in the current literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of how unemployment affects the well-being and professional lives of educators at lower Post-level in the Cosmo City secondary school. It will provide fresh empirical data to back up leadership and policy initiatives that foster fair employment and shield at-risk Post-level 1 to 3 educators from workplace bullying.

2.8 THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON EDUCATORS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

With far-reaching consequences for educators' mental health and professional performance, workplace bullying has been consistently recognised as a significant psychosocial risk in educational contexts. According to Scheeler et al. (2021), educators who have been subjected to ongoing bullying frequently experience depression, anxiety, fear, humiliation, withdrawal, rage, drug abuse and disengagement from their employment. In a similar vein, Okeke and Simphiwe (2024) contend that workplace bullying can cause major psychological, physiological, and behavioural problems, such as poor focus, low self-esteem, irritability, extreme stress and even suicidal thoughts.

Additionally, there is evidence that the stress associated with bullying impairs classroom performance and professional skills. Badenhorst and Botha (2022) discovered that educators who are stressed by bullying are less effective in the classroom and in their professional relationships. Additionally, burnout, especially emotional tiredness, is a significant result. According to Maslach (2017), emotional burnout results from persistent workplace stress and ongoing abuse, which supports Lindsäter et al.'s (2022) conclusion that exhaustion is linked to insomnia, high blood pressure, headaches, ulcers and an overall increased risk of sickness. Educators at Post-level 1 to 3 who are experiencing this exhaustion often have lower self-esteem and less confidence, which has a detrimental effect on the quality of their work. Additionally, they are more likely to leave the field, more prone to absenteeism, and less likely to engage learners in a meaningful way (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018).

School managers' conduct is a critical factor in exacerbating these negative outcomes. According to a study by Mavungu and Napier (2019), there is a strong link between managerial behaviour and educator stress, showing that an abusive or unsupportive manager can increase workplace anxiety considerably. Additionally, bullying that is carried out or tolerated by managers can undermine team cohesion and morale. Scheeler et al. (2021) highlight that bullying, whether experienced directly or witnessed, fosters a culture of fear and distrust, which lowers morale and decreases employee involvement. This moral decline causes reduced work satisfaction and high turnover (Adamovic, 2023).

The institutional repercussions go beyond individual welfare. According to Belgasm et al. (2025), bullying in schools that is not dealt with may lead to a bad reputation and make it harder for them to attract talented educators. In a similar vein, Lindsäter et al. (2022) point out that a school's deteriorating reputation weakens its capacity to hire qualified personnel, which has an impact on its long-term viability. To back this up, Vijayakumar and Rajagopal (2024) stress the need for educational establishments to take preventative action against workplace bullying in order to protect their reputation and foster a safe and productive workplace (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Researchers have suggested one important method of strengthening reporting procedures and protecting whistleblowers. According to Mavungu and Napier (2019), educators should not be afraid to report bullying for fear of retaliation. However, since

many South African schools currently lack secure reporting channels, there is frequently fear and underreporting. Langeveldt (2023) emphasises the significance of anonymous systems, hotlines and fair inquiry processes in facilitating efficient reporting.

Whistleblower protection in South Africa is still restricted, notwithstanding these suggestions. In his study, Celestin (2024) claims that the current legislation is inadequate in protecting whistleblowers against victimisation, job insecurity, threats, and potential safety hazards. The current legislative framework is further criticised by Wang et al. (2022) for restricting whistleblowers from coming forward by only protecting employees and requiring formal reporting through stringent, specified channels. Both Celestin (2024) and Wang et al. (2022) come to the conclusion that South Africa's whistleblower legislation does not meet international standards in terms of scope, incentives, and protection for whistleblowers.

Continuing education and awareness are essential for overcoming these systemic issues. According to Einarsen et al. (2020), it is crucial to teach educators about what constitutes bullying and what conduct is considered inappropriate. According to Badimo and Masisi (2025), training should also cover identifying bullying patterns, comprehending its psychological and organisational repercussions, and teaching educators conflict resolution and bystander intervention techniques. Initiatives of this nature have the potential to promote a common knowledge of bullying and cultivate a culture of respect and responsibility (Wang et al., 2022). Despite the abundant literature on the severe effects of workplace bullying on educators, few studies have looked at how managerial bullying specifically affects Post-level 1 to 3 educators in South African secondary schools, especially in environments like Cosmo City secondary school.

2.9 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE BULLYING

Scholars, legislators, and professional groups have increasingly become worried about workplace bullying in the education industry in recent years. Because of its detrimental effects on educator morale, professional relationships, and learners achievement (Langeveldt, 2023), bullying among educators, particularly in South African schools, has garnered a great deal of attention from the public, education

ministries, and lawmakers. According to research, educators are both the targets and perpetrators of workplace bullying, which might take the form of verbal harassment, social isolation, professional undermining and persistent criticism from colleagues or administrators (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021; Jacobs & Teise, 2019).

A number of strategies have been developed in response to these difficulties in order to deal with and combat bullying in schools. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has created a Code of Professional Ethics that outlines the standards of conduct that are expected of educators and expressly forbids any bullying or harassment in the workplace (South African Council for Educators, 2022). This code aims to maintain integrity, respect and collegiality among employees, in accordance with larger educational policies that foster a welcoming and productive learning and working atmosphere.

Despite these policy interventions, research indicates that workplace bullying is still extensive in South African schools (De Vos, 2020). Due to their restricted authority, hierarchical power structures and reliance on higher management for professional advancement, educators at lower Post-level, such as those between Post-level 1 to 3, are frequently more susceptible (Jacobs & Teise, 2019). The likelihood of bullying behaviour may increase in schools like the Cosmo City secondary school due to structural disparities brought on by heavy workloads, big class sizes and administrative pressures.

Additionally, while the SACE Code of Conduct and current labour laws like the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993) and the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (RSA, 1995) offer broad protection against unfair treatment, there is still a gap in the enforcement and reporting mechanisms related to educator-one-educator bullying (Badimo & Masisi, 2025). As a result, educators frequently depend on grievance processes or informal resolution procedures that might not fully address the psychological anguish and social isolation brought on by prolonged bullying.

Therefore, the literature points out the urgent need for context-specific measures to safeguard and support Post-level 1 to 3 educators, who are responsible for the majority of classroom teaching but are often in the most disadvantaged positions in school hierarchies. Improving the understanding of legal remedies, promoting ethical

leadership and establishing clearer workplace rules are all necessary steps towards establishing more secure and encouraging learning environments in schools like the Cosmo City secondary school.

2.9.1 Promote legal remedies

More research has been done on the legal structures in South Africa that protect educators against workplace harassment. According to Langeveldt (2023), legislation like the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (75 of 1997) (RSA, 1997), which establishes minimum employment standards, including the right to a safe workplace and the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) (RSA, 1998), which explicitly prohibits unfair discrimination and harassment at work, are intended to protect workers, including educators, from unfair treatment and harassment. Furthermore, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (85 of 1993) (RSA, 1993) requires that businesses ensure the health and safety of their workforce. In addition, the Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases (Government Notice R711, 1998) (RSA, 1998) provides procedural recommendations for addressing workplace sexual harassment.

Within South African educational institutions, workplace bullying remains prevalent despite this strong legal framework. The ongoing existence of this problem is due to a prevalent culture of fear and silence among educators, inconsistent implementation and enforcement of the relevant laws, as well as a lack of understanding of existing legal safeguards (Geldenhuys & Henn, 2017). The goal of the legislation intended to protect victims is frequently undermined by these systemic flaws, which leave them with insufficient recourse.

A number of legal remedies are available to educators who are bullied, in addition to preventative strategies. The legal concept of 'delictual liability,' which makes people accountable for the harm they do, is emphasised by Langeveldt (2023). This theory, according to Pinho and Colston (2025), permits victims of workplace bullying to seek compensation by demonstrating that the perpetrator's behaviour caused them harm directly. Furthermore, constructive dismissal provides another possible legal solution. This happens when an employer establishes or permits unacceptable working conditions that force an employee to resign (Pinho & Colston, 2025; Langeveldt, 2023).

In these circumstances, the employer may be held responsible for promoting a workplace where bullying is tolerated.

Together, these remedies and legal tools demonstrate both the promise and the drawbacks of South Africa's legal system in dealing with workplace bullying among educators. Although there are formal procedures in place for redress, their efficacy depends on educators being aware of the laws, institutions being willing to uphold them, and the widespread cultural change necessary to break the silence around workplace maltreatment.

2.9.2 Promote organisational justice

As a critical component of employee well-being and behaviour, the notion of workplace fairness has received a considerable amount of attention in studies on workplace psychology and management (Pinho & Colston, 2025). Its origins are in social psychology, where the notion of justice perceptions in organisations is based on fairness in social interactions, according to Memon, Salleh, and Baharom (2016). An employee's sense of fairness in the workplace, particularly in terms of decision-making, resource allocation, and interpersonal interactions, is referred to as organisational justice. According to Kristen (2025), these perceptions are complicated and diverse since Post-level 1 to 3 educators assess fairness in many areas of the school setting, decision-making, and use those evaluations to inform their conduct and reactions at work.

Additionally, Adamovic (2023) contends that organisational justice has an impact on a variety of work-related attitudes and behaviours, such as motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. The three main dimensions of organisational justice are traditionally understood to be distributive, procedural and interactional fairness. The fairness of outcome distributions, such as compensation, workload, or promotions, is the focus of distributive justice (Memon et al., 2016). Procedural justice is concerned with the fairness and transparency of the methods used to make choices. In contrast, interactional justice deals with the calibre of interpersonal interaction and communication throughout the execution of those decisions (Adamovic, 2023).

Noted by Badimo and Masisi (2025), the perception of fairness in choices made by school managers in the educational setting, such as workload distribution,

advancement opportunities, and recognition, has a significant impact on educators' morale and sense of belonging. Post-level 1 to 3 educators are more likely to feel valued, respected and dedicated to their schools when they see fairness in the way policies are implemented and, in a way, management treats employees. Conversely, perceived injustice may cause resentment, a drop in drive, and strained professional interactions, which, in turn, may create a workplace culture that encourages workplace bullying or conflict (Kristen, 2025). Therefore, fostering organisational fairness in schools is not only an ethical necessity but also a smart way of creating a welcoming and respectful work environment.

2.9.3 Implement multiple reporting channels

Establish a range of confidential mechanisms for workplace bullying reporting, such as a hotline or online system, as well as direct reporting to trusted individuals, in order to implement numerous reporting routes (Vijayakumar & Rajagopal, 2024). Managers and HR staff members, for instance, train selected workers, ensure protection against retaliation and offer continuous education to promote a safe reporting environment. These many channels guarantee that educators may report incidents using a method that is convenient for them, which increases the possibility that incidents will be reported and dealt with (De Wet, 2021).

To address workplace bullying, a comprehensive, multi-level approach is needed that includes clear policies, fair management practices, empowerment initiatives and collective action. Researchers claim that lasting change can only occur when prevention and intervention strategies target both the individual and the organisational level (Einarsen et al., 2020). These approaches are particularly crucial in educational settings like secondary schools, where hierarchical systems often make educators susceptible to management-led bullying (De Wet, 2021).

A key aspect of the fight against bullying in the workplace is the establishment and implementation of clear anti-bullying laws. These rules should specify what constitutes bullying, set out reporting procedures and outline disciplinary consequences. According to Einarsen et al. (2020), clear policies communicate a zero tolerance for bullying and promote accountability throughout an organisation. Furthermore, Ahmad et al. (2021) emphasise that fairness and consistency are enhanced by integrating

anti-bullying strategies into formal disciplinary and grievance procedures. De Wet (2021) claims that institutional trust is promoted in South African schools by written policies that allow educators to report incidents without fear of retribution.

Promoting organisational justice and equitable treatment is yet another essential aspect of reducing workplace bullying. Cited in (Ahmad et al., 2021), Greenberg's (1990) theory of organisational justice holds that a person's sense of fairness, whether it be procedural, distributive, or interactional, affects their interpersonal interactions at work. Research has shown that bullying incidents are less common when employees feel that judgments are fair and transparent (Ahmad et al., 2021). Due to this, performance reviews should be conducted transparently, and Post-level 1 to 3 educators should be engaged in the decision-making process in order to foster and minimise the abuse of power and show respect for schools (Kristen, 2025).

Pokharel et al. (2024) allude to the fact that it is essential to provide educators with the resources they need to succeed through education and awareness. The authors further argue that employees are taught how to recognise, prevent, and handle bullying scenarios professionally through training programs. Concurring with Prasetya and Akrim (2024), educators may feel more empowered to handle bullying behaviour if they are given awareness initiatives that include lessons in assertiveness and emotional intelligence. De Wet (2021) takes a similar approach by advocating for professional development that enhances educators' capacity to deal with disputes and boosts their resilience. Salin (2021) states that awareness seminars instruct educators on how to spot the warning signs of bullying and how to follow the proper reporting procedures. Through empowerment, educators gain the skills and confidence they need to deal with abuse positively.

Prasetya and Akrim (2024) emphasise that another effective approach is to encourage peer support and collective action among employees. Since bullying typically flourishes in isolation, fostering camaraderie among educators is one strategy for overcoming anxiety and silence. Nathan (2017) claims that collective resistance reduces power inequalities and restores workers' sense of dignity. Team-based interventions, union membership, and other forms of collective action are highlighted by Pokharel et al. (2024) to address this issue. Furthermore, a sense of shared accountability can be cultivated by encouraging engagement and open lines of

communication. Peer mentoring and group reporting strategies in the school environment, according to De Wet (2021), enhance post-level 1 to 3 educators' protection and encourage mutual support.

Salin (2021) notes that it is also necessary to raise management and leadership accountability. An increasing number of studies have linked ineffective leadership to a rise in workplace harassment (Ågotnes et al., 2024). Leaders play a critical role in fostering a moral workplace environment and exhibiting respectful behaviour. Effective leadership, according to Nathan (2017), includes empathy, honesty, and fairness in one's relationships with others. As a result, leadership development programs that highlight emotional intelligence, dispute resolution, and fair management practices may help lower bullying incidences and increase workplace trust (Pokharel et al., 2024).

The promotion of a positive organisational culture reduces the likelihood of bullying. According to Einarsen et al. (2020), a society that values respect, inclusivity and open communication discourage harmful conduct. (Ismail et al., 2021) advocate value based, collaborative school cultures that encourage mutual respect, while Christianson and Barton (2021) argue that supportive workplace norms reduce structural bullying facilitators. In addition to preventing bullying, a positive culture improves morale, productivity and job satisfaction.

In order to protect victims and ensure a timely response, accessible reporting and support systems are essential (Ågotnes et al., 2024). As suggested by Nathan (2017), a number of private reporting choices should be available, such as anonymous submissions. To ensure impartiality, De Wet (2021) highlights the value of counselling and employee assistance programs (EAPs), while Einarsen et al. (2020) advocate different complaint-handling procedures by supporting educators who have experienced bullying. Supported by Ågotnes et al. (2024), victims are more inclined to come forward if they have faith in the reporting system, which enables quick resolution and recurrence prevention.

According to the literature reviewed, workplace bullying remains a pervasive and harmful issue in educational settings, negatively impacting educators' psychological well-being, job satisfaction and overall institutional harmony. The Occupational Health

and Safety Act (1993), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) and the Employment Equity Act (1998) are all components of South Africa's legal system, which offers crucial safeguards against discrimination and harassment. However, research shows that, in spite of these formal procedures, workplace bullying persists in schools because of inadequate enforcement, insufficient knowledge of legal rights, and a pervasive culture of silence and fear among educators. Therefore, legal remedies like constructive discharge and delictual liability, while theoretically successful, are frequently reactive rather than preventative.

Additionally, the literature emphasises the rising significance of organisational justice and proactive approaches in promoting safer and more respectful workplace environments. Fairness in the allocation of responsibilities, decision-making and interpersonal interactions increases educators' sense of belonging and lowers the risk of bullying conduct. Strategies like transparent policy implementation, leadership accountability, frequent training and awareness campaigns and easily accessible support systems are often advised by academics. The effective use of these methods, nevertheless, is contingent upon institutional dedication, ongoing monitoring and the development of an open and respectful organisational culture that respects employee dignity and voice.

There is still a considerable gap in our understanding of how educators in South African schools actually view and experience these interventions, despite significant advancements in theory and policy. Little empirical data exists on how effectively legal protections and organisational tactics are implemented in practice, how well they prevent bullying, and what obstacles educators encounter when seeking justice or support. Addressing this gap is essential for creating contextually relevant solutions and reflecting the lived realities of educators. Therefore, the next chapter describes the research approach and methodology used to explore educators' perceptions of workplace bullying and to assess the efficacy of existing legal and organisational measures in combating it.

2.10 CONCLUSION

The study's theoretical framework and literature review were introduced in Chapter 2. The significance of theory in research, the theories supporting the study and how these theories influenced the research were covered. The chapter also examined the literature on workplace bullying, including its manifestations, the variables that contribute to it, the effects it has on Post-level 1 to 3 educators and the strategies employed to combat it.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology utilised in this investigation. The research design outlines the population involved, sampling techniques, tools for data collection, methods of data analysis and the ethical considerations. Furthermore, this chapter aims to present a clear account of how the research was carried out to examine the experiences of educators at Post-level 1 to 3 regarding workplace bullying by management in secondary schools located in Cosmo City, Johannesburg.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research approach, according to Ugwu and Ese-Val (2023), is centred around emotions, ideas or experiences. In other words, qualitative research is used to learn how people see their surroundings. The study employed qualitative research approach as it assisted the researcher to investigate individual educators' perceptions regarding workplace bullying and its impact on the Post-level 1 to 3 work performance. Qualitative research approach is a scientific inquiry approach that prioritises the depth and richness of context and voice in order to understand social phenomena (Lim, 2024). In turn, Kraus et al. (2022) assert that qualitative research approach embraces openness. It employs a variety of equivalent techniques, such as open-ended questions, in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation, to explore the subjective experiences, perspectives and meanings that individuals attach to their social world, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the phenomena.

As Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) point out, qualitative research's flexibility and adaptability are essential since it seeks to include a diverse range of human experiences and viewpoints. Qualitative research approach aim to cultivate a context-rich understanding, recognising the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and produce insights that are consistent with the real-world experiences of educators at Post-level 1 to 3. At the same time, qualitative research approaches maintain academic integrity because of their methodological underpinnings, procedures and rigor, most notably the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Ganapathy, 2024).

Using qualitative research techniques, one may mostly use words or images to understand the meaning of an event or problem from the perspective of the respondents, to determine the cause of the event or problem or to describe how the event or problem occurs (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020)

According to Ugwu and Ese (2023), qualitative research approach primarily focuses on emotions, concepts or experiences. Consequently, the main goal of data collection, usually presented in narrative form, was to uncover insights that could lead to testable hypotheses. Essentially, qualitative research approach is used to understand better how individuals perceive their surroundings. This study used qualitative research approach to help examine the views of individual educators concerning workplace bullying and its effects on the performance of Post-level 1 to 3 educators.

The objective of this study was to investigate the nature and effects of workplace bullying directed by the Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools located in Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa. The research sought to identify the types of bullying experienced by these educators and emphasise the detrimental effects on their social, psychological, emotional, financial, and overall wellbeing. By employing qualitative research approach, the study assisted the researcher in exploring individual educators' perceptions of workplace bullying and its influence on the performance of Post-level 1 to 3 educators.

Lastly, it is crucial to acknowledge that qualitative research approach has limited applications. Whether this research strategy is appropriate depends on the topic being studied, the precise research question and the study's general aims. Qualitative research approach, for instance, excels in capturing the nuances of human experience and perspective, such as the breadth and depth of Post-level 1 to 3 educators' experiences and motivations, making it ideal for exploring the causes of workplace bullying in Cosmo City's secondary schools (Lim et al., 2023).

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Turin et al. (2024), a paradigm is a set of theories, concepts, or assumptions that serve as the foundation for concepts like 'identity' or 'organisations' (such as religion). There are a variety of paradigms that researchers can use in their studies. In this study, interpretivism was used. Turin et al. (2024) argue that

interpretivism is a method of seeing things, a set of thoughts, standards, viewpoints or anything else that influences how we view and comprehend the world all around us. Interpretivism denotes the idea that reality is subjective and is shaped socially by people through their experiences and social interactions (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This was further reinforced by Pulla and Carter (2018), whose interpretivist perspectives encourage the researcher to explore the significance behind the comprehension of human behaviour, interactions and society; therefore, this entails the researcher striving to create a profound subjective insight into individuals' lives. Additionally, interpretivism denotes the idea that reality is subjective and shaped socially by people through their experiences and social interactions (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). This research concentrated on various realities as perceived by different post-level educators across various schools. Bullying was experienced through various forms by different people. An encounter of bullying from one educator to another is different; what one educator perceives as bullying might not be the same experience for another educator. The central emphasis of the interpretivist research in this study was to investigate how individuals and groups understand their experiences and interactions.

3.3.1 Characteristics of the research paradigm

3.3.1.1 *Ontology*

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that aims to identify the true essence, or the fundamental ideas that form the themes that are examined to understand the significance contained in research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For example, what is bullying? Does it exist? The fundamental ontologies are idealism and realism. According to Ylönen and Aven (2023), the idea that society is founded on ideas, such as how people perceive and believe things to be, and how people create reality as it is, is known as ontological idealism. Erikawati (2023) alludes to the fact that the philosophy of realism holds that the external world truly exists and can be reached through human observation and experience (Erikawati, 2023). This research aimed to delve into Post-level 1 to 3 educators' perceptions about the bullying encountered in secondary schools within Cosmo City. The research utilised semi-structured interviews with Post-level 1 to 3 educators to obtain insights into the concepts influencing the bullying within their experiences and its impact on their lives. This process permitted

the researcher to discover the socially constructed realities of the phenomenon under investigation through the participants' perspectives in their school environment.

3.3.1.2 Epistemology

Our rationalist culture gives epistemology more weight since it seeks to explain why we, as a group, decide that certain things are true and others are not (Sol & Heng, 2022). It refers to the character and legitimacy of human beliefs in relation to the research (Schmidt, 2023). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with educators from different grades after class to verify the participants' comprehension for the purpose of this study. According to Potter's epistemology (2017), it addresses the question of how people are able to learn about and understand things. Through interaction with the participants and their professional environment, the researcher learned about their actual lives and gained insight into their experiences.

3.3.1.3 Advantages of qualitative research approach

Qualitative research approach has a number of significant benefits that make it ideal for investigating complicated social and human behaviours, especially delicate topics like workplace bullying committed by managers (Busetto et al., 2020). One of its primary advantages is that it can provide a wealth of insightful data about people's thoughts, feelings and experiences. Concurring with Lim et al. (2022), the researcher is able to discover motives, attitudes and unique meanings that quantitative methods may not capture due to this degree of granularity. Furthermore, qualitative research approach allows educators at Post-level 1 to 3 to express their experiences of managerial bullying in their own words, uncovering nuanced dynamics that structured interviews may miss (Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022). The inherent flexibility of qualitative research approach is yet another significant benefit. Data collection tools like semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to change questions, explore new concepts and pursue unanticipated paths depending on the participants' answers (Ganapathy, 2024). Additionally, this responsiveness fosters genuine, open communication, which is crucial while addressing delicate subjects like victimization, bullying or the misuse of authority (Kraus et al., 2022). The qualitative method's flexibility thus increases the data collected in this study's depth and credibility.

Furthermore, qualitative research promotes confidence and connection between the researcher and the respondents. Lim (2024) notes that participants are more likely to open up and share their experiences honestly since the approach depends on personal interaction rather than precise measurement instruments. This encouraging atmosphere encourages post-level 1 to 3 educators who may be afraid of retaliation or have little faith in reporting mechanisms to report occurrences of bullying and their emotional effects (Lim et al., 2022).

Therefore, qualitative research provides a full understanding of human behaviour by looking at the underlying motivations, contextual factors, and the subjective meanings that people give to their experiences (Kraus et al., 2022). Post-level 1 to 3 educators' stories in this study helped shed light on how managerial actions affect their well-being, performance, and sense of professional identity. This kind of knowledge is crucial for guiding school leadership practices, legislation formulation and intervention strategies. Junjie and Yingxin (2022) explain that the approach is methodologically flexible, as researchers may employ a range of methods, such as interviews, observations and focus groups, to meet the needs of the study. The validity and richness of the findings are both improved by this flexibility. Ganapathy (2024) points out that qualitative research approach may have its drawbacks. Still, its capacity to record intricate, nuanced experiences makes it a potent instrument for comprehending the challenges faced by educators in Cosmo City secondary schools.

The qualitative research approach is suitable for this study as it provides the best framework for exploring Post-level 1 to 3 educators' lived experiences, points of view, and sense-making processes inside their actual classrooms. Since the subject of investigation covered complex interpersonal interactions like workplace bullying, power dynamics, and organisational behaviour, a qualitative approach enables the researcher to obtain nuanced, context-dependent insights that numbers alone would not provide (Kraus et al., 2022). This approach allows researchers to create thorough, sensitive portrayals of the participants' daily existence, depth, flexibility and the ability to explore emerging issues during the data collection process. More in line with the study's goal of understanding complex human behaviours, subjective interpretations, and the socio-cultural forces influencing Post-level 1 to 3 educators' experiences than quantitative techniques, which value measurability and generalisability, the qualitative

method was more appropriate. This approach, therefore, enabled one to approach the subject with empathy, thoroughly and a contextually informed understanding.

In conclusion, the qualitative research approach offered the depth, adaptability, and contextual awareness needed to analyse workplace bullying as a live and subjective phenomenon. Because of these benefits, this was the best methodological option for this research.

3.3.1.4 Disadvantages of qualitative research

Qualitative research approach has advantages, but there are drawbacks as well. Mwita (2022) explains that due to the small sample sizes, time-consuming data collection and analysis, and the lack of numerical patterns, this can be investigated through restricted generalisations. Additionally, qualitative research might involve labour-intensive and expensive tasks like recording and categorisation. Kang and Evans (2020) add that it can take a great deal of time for the researcher to acquire data and sort it in order to extract the most crucial information; what one researcher considers important may not be so important to another. The crucial problem might be disregarded and missed.

Furthermore, Coşkun (2020) alludes to the fact that personal experiences of the researcher may be prejudiced, which could affect data collection, processing and interpretation and distort the findings, and that the researcher's interpretation of the findings may differ significantly from that of an outside observer.

It can be difficult to maintain secrecy and anonymity in a small group if the participants are immediately identifiable, as the replication issues include a strong reliance on participant-researcher contact. Park, Konge and Artino (2020) believe that due to the subjective character of qualitative research, the majority do not always accept the facts collected, and there is no objectivity to confirm the findings. According to Mwita (2022), because it necessitates specialised classification and theme analysis, qualitative data is complicated. Furthermore, it is challenging to apply the traditional norms of dependability and credibility because of their subjective nature. Assessing data rigidity is more challenging since human minds want to remember things the way they wish to. Findings from qualitative data are useful but challenging to communicate.

3.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Oyewobi et al. (2024), a theoretical framework for the study refers to reviewing various theories and selecting the most appropriate one that connects to the phenomenon being investigated. Maeng et al. (2019) state that a theoretical framework can contain or uphold a theory of a research study, as it presents and outlines the theory that clarifies the reason behind the existence of the research problem being examined. Jozkowski (2017) cites Juan et al. (2018), who understand that the theoretical framework links the researcher to prior knowledge by offering a lucid explanation of the connections between the variables deemed pertinent to the study. In turn, Orunbon (2023) highlights that the theoretical framework acts as the foundation for the entire dissertation investigation as it offers a coherent framework of interrelated ideas that assist the researcher in organising the study clearly and understanding the results. Additionally, Luft et al. (2022) state that the theoretical framework is essential as it enables the researcher to position their study within the established body of knowledge and to explain the selection of research methods and analysis techniques.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mahat et al. (2024) defined a research design as a set of processes and strategies used by researchers to combine many components of a study logically and successfully handle the research problem. As noted by Khanday and Singh (2020), a research design is a systematic blueprint that is utilised by a researcher to address questions reliably, and it is highly objective and precise. In order to investigate workplace bullying committed by school administration against post-level one to three educators in particular secondary schools in Cosmo City, this study used a general qualitative research approach. When a study aims to comprehend and describe participants' experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations of a phenomenon without following the philosophical presumptions and methodological practices of a particular qualitative tradition, such as a generic qualitative research design is appropriate.

The generic qualitative research is defined as a technique for locating and examining first-hand experiences that people have shared in a real-world context (Ellis & Hart, 2023). Contended by Aguas ,(2021) without following the particular philosophical

presumptions and methods of well-known qualitative approaches like phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography or narrative inquiry, a generic qualitative research design is an adaptable qualitative approach that aims to comprehend participants experiences, perceptions and interpretation of a phenomenon. The goal of this study was to explore how Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management, the various forms it takes, the perceived reasons, the effects on educators' professional and personal well-being, and the strategies that can be utilised to resolve it. A generic qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate because the study's goal was to get a thorough knowledge of participants' experiences and meanings rather than to produce a theory, investigate a culture, create a life history, or find the universal core of lived experience.

Through semi-structured interviews, the design offered flexibility to gather rich, descriptive data, enabling participants to express their experiences in their own words. This made it easier to comprehend workplace bullying in the context of Cosmo City's secondary schools. Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase thematic analysis were used to analyse the interview data, allowing the researcher to find, arrange, and interpret recurrent themes and patterns associated with the study's objectives. By acknowledging that participants create meaning from their experiences within their social and organisational contexts, the generic qualitative research design further enhanced the interpretivist paradigm of the study. This made it possible for the researcher to comprehend how Post-level 1 to 3 educators saw bullying at work and how that perception affected their professional experiences.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.6.1 Population

According to Willie (2023), an entire group of people, or events that are the subject of a study, has a common characteristic, which is referred to as the population in research. It contains all the components that the researcher wants to examine and make inferences about (Sol & Heng, 2022). The population is defined by Willie (2023) as a shared trait among all the individuals or events that are the focus of a study. It has

every element that the researcher hopes to analyse and draw conclusions from (Sol & Heng, 2022).

Stratton (2024) simplifies this by stating that the population is the entire collection of items, such as people or objects, which have a common characteristic defined by the sampling criteria used by the researcher. In this study, the population comprised Post-level one to Post-level three educators in the Cosmo City Township in the Further Education and Training Phase in the Gauteng Province.

3.6.2 Sampling, technique and the size

The process of choosing a sample from a large population or from a single person for specific research is called sampling (Lim, 2024). This research employed a blend of purposive and snowball sampling to choose participants who could offer valuable insights into workplace bullying by the school management. Purposive sampling was utilised to identify educators at Post-level 1 to 3 who satisfy certain criteria: teaching experience of at least a year in a mainstream school located in Johannesburg North, availability, willingness to take part in the research, and experience or awareness of bullying behaviours from school leadership. Using this technique, the researcher purposefully selected participants who were more likely to provide thorough and valuable data about the subject under study.

This purposeful sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling, involves the researcher choosing the participants based on their distinctive qualities. (Stratton, 2024) Purposive sampling can be defined as a technique of selecting participants from a population where the researcher chooses individuals based on specific traits, experiences, or other relevant factors related to the population of interest. The ideal participants for this study are educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in Cosmo City secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District. The research targeted Post-level 1 to 3, as these levels consisted of educators who were actively engaged in classroom teaching and frequently interacted with the school management.

The reason for the chosen target is that this group faced a higher likelihood of encountering workplace bullying from the SMT, which might make their experiences related to the goals of the research. Campbell et al. (2020) conclude that educators in South African public schools face significant challenges, including high levels of

bullying, regardless of the Post-level, school size, or diverse environments, constituting a severe form of workplace social stress. Additionally, the prevalence of violence in schools has escalated, leading to many Post-level 1 to 3 educators feeling that their work environment is unsafe.

Purposeful sampling is used to select individuals who are most likely to give valuable and useful information (Campbell et al., 2020). The researcher was able to attain different perceptions from different individuals' educators, which assisted in the provision of relevant information for the study (Patton, 2015). The sample size of the participants in this study included 16 educators, eight males and eight females. The research recruited participants from four public secondary schools located in Johannesburg, in the North Cosmo City. Ideally, every school would provide four participants, facilitating a balanced representation across schools to guarantee a variety of experiences and comparability. The criteria were the following: Post-level one: eight participants (two per school), Post-level 2: four participants (one per school), and Post-level 3: four participants (one per school). The schools consisted of African tribe groups; this implies that the interviews were conducted within these tribes. Using the above sampling assisted the study by gathering all the relevant information on how the workplace environment affected each individual educator. Principals were excluded from the interview process, as it could have compromised the study.

Subsequently, snowball sampling was implemented, where the initial participants were encouraged to recommend or refer other colleagues who may have faced bullying but could be reluctant to come forward on their own. As noted by Pasikowski (2024), snowball sampling initiates the beginning of the chain referral methods in sampling theory; these methods consist of networks of connections that facilitate moving from one unit to another through insights or suggestions gathered from those units. Ting et al. (2025) concur that it can be asserted that this approach is especially beneficial in sensitive research areas like workplace bullying, where the fear of retribution or discomfort may hamper open self-identification. In order to guarantee that participants fulfilled the study's inclusion requirements and make it easier to find more qualified participants through recommendations, purposeful and snowball sampling were combined. This strategy was employed to reach data saturation, increase the sample

size, save time and obtain information-rich participants. This method also fostered trust, as referrals typically came from familiar and trusted colleagues (Ting et al., 2025).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering more information with the aim of gaining insights about the topic (Hameed et al., 2023). Subsequent to the question phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller, purposefully chosen group of participants. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews are used to collect data from participants who share personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about the topic of interest. In this study semi-structured interviews with Post-level 1 to 3 educators from secondary schools in Cosmo City were used to gather data. Because they allowed the researcher to get rich, in-depth accounts of participants' experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations of workplace bullying committed by Senior School Management, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable strategy for gathering data. In order to ensure that all important topics pertinent to the research objectives were covered, this interview approach also allowed for the flexibility to ask follow-up and probing questions, allowing participants to expound on concerns that arose throughout the interviews (Ganapathy, 2024).

Based on the research goals of the study and the literature evaluation, an interview guide with open-ended questions was created. The interview questions were on the experiences of Post-level 1 to 3 educators with bullying at work, the types of bullying they encountered, the perceived causes of the bullying, the effects on their personal and professional well-being, and potential strategies for addressing workplace bullying in schools. Participants were encouraged to give thorough answers and articulate their opinions in their own words by using open-ended questions. To guarantee participants' comfort and secrecy, interviews were held at a time and location that were convenient, private, and uninterrupted. To guarantee an accurate record of the conversations, all interviews were audio recorded with the participants' informed consent. The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes and took 30 days to complete. To make data analysis easier, audio recordings were subsequently verbatim transcribed. The researcher took field notes both during and right after each interview, in addition to audio recordings. These field notes recorded observations that were not visible in the

audio recordings, such as participants' nonverbal communication, emotional expressions, pauses, and environmental elements. In order to record reflections on the interview process, new concepts, and possible researcher assumptions, the researcher also kept reflective notes following each interview. By encouraging ongoing self-awareness throughout data collection, keeping reflexive notes improved the study process's transparency and added to the findings' validity and confirmability. Until enough material was gathered to fully address the research objectives and no significantly new information surfaced from follow-up interviews, indicating that appropriate depth had been reached, data gathering proceeded.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Kivunga and Kuyini (2017), data analysis is the process of turning collected data into useful information. Dawadi (2020) contends that to enhance the overall depth of the analysis, both deductive and inductive methodologies can be employed. He further explains that a deductive methodology can serve as the initial point, which facilitates the examination of data concerning the themes that have surfaced from the literature review conducted for the study. This study employed thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is appropriate for recognising, analysing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning (themes) within the qualitative data. (Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). To uphold the essential rigor in the analytical process, researchers implemented the six-phase procedure as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2023). Thematic analysis is appropriate in this study as it allows the researcher to organise and analyse participant stories in relation to the research questions without being restricted by the analytical techniques of a particular qualitative tradition and it is well suited to a generic qualitative research design. In this study once every interview had been verbatim transcribed, the analysis started.

The analysis were conducted according to Braun and Clarke (2023) six-phase of thematic analysis:

- Familiarising with the data

In order to fully understand the data and make note of preliminary finding, the researcher listened to the audio-recordings and read the transcripts multiple times,

took notes on key concepts and verbatim transcribed the interviews. This made it easier for the researcher to comprehend what the participants stated and prepared the data for further study.

- Generating initial codes

Significant portions of the data pertinent to the study's goals were methodically coded. Participants who gave similar answers were given codes that were identical or closely related so that they could provide an insight into the context of the discussion.

- Searching for themes

The original codes were analysed and categorised into more general groups. After that, related categories were arranged into possible themes that represented recurrent themes in the accounts of the participants.

- Reviewing themes

To make sure the preliminary themes appropriately reflected participant experiences and answered the study questions, they were compared to the coded extracts and the whole dataset. Overlapping themes were combined, and those with insufficient evidence were either eliminated or improved. Each topic was meticulously established and given a name that accurately reflected its main idea. Each theme and its connection to the goals and theoretical framework of the study were clearly described by the researcher.

- Defining and naming themes

As found in the study of Dawadi (2020), this stage starts with the goal of enhancing and clarifying the themes, which involves identifying the core meaning of each theme and assessing what elements of the data each theme represents. Each theme was carefully identified and given names that accurately conveyed its main idea. Each theme and its connection to the goals and theoretical framework of the study were clearly described by the researcher.

- Writing up

The concluding stage of the analysis involves documenting the findings in a report, according to Dawadi (2020). Braun and Clarke (2023) emphasise that a report of a thematic analysis must persuade the audience of the value and authenticity of the analysis. In chapter 4, the final themes were analysed and presented with participant quotes to strengthen the conclusions. In order to provide a thorough knowledge of workplace bullying committed by Senior School Management against Post-level 1 to 3 educators, the topics were examined in relation to the body of current literature and the theoretical framework.

By ensuring that themes were firmly rooted in participant stories and in line with the study's research objectives, the methodological use of Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase thematic analysis improved the finding's credibility and dependability.

Table 3.1 below presents the participants' demographics.

Table 3.1: Participants' Demographic details

Participants	School A	School B	School C	School D
Males	2	2	2	2
Females	2	2	2	2
Number of participants per school in total	4	4	4	4
Number of participants in total	16			

3.5.3 Research site and participant selection

The research site refers to the specific location where research activities are conducted. This can be interpreted as the physical, collective and social environment in which the researcher performs the research (Willie, 2023).

3.5.3.1 Inclusion criteria

The participants consisted of educators employed by schools around Cosmo City, holding Post-level 1 to 3 positions, who had experienced workplace bullying perpetrated by the management and were willing and able to provide informed consent

and participate voluntarily in the study. The participant had to be able to communicate in English, as the data collection and study material would be gathered using English.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA

In qualitative research, trustworthiness and quality criteria principles is divided into four main categories: reliability, transferability, credibility and conformability.

3.9.1 Credibility

Korstjens and Moser (2017) note that credibility is comparable to internal validity and deals with the truth-value element and further elaborate that the credibility of the study results determines if they are likely to be based on the participants' original data and their initial perspectives. The study's credibility was achieved by ensuring that every interpretation, conclusion and theme accurately reflects educators' actual managerial bullying experiences rather than the researcher's biases. It helped to ensure that the findings are based on reasonable, credible and specific evidence.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the process through which a qualitative researcher demonstrates how the study's findings may be applicable to other contexts (Khanam et al., 2024). In the context of this study, transferability was achieved through rich, contextual and thorough descriptions of the school environment, participants, and bullying events, enabling readers to decide whether the results are relevant to other South African institutions or related learning environments.

3.9.3 Conformability

Conformability refers to the impartiality and objectivity of the findings, which ensures that they are not impacted by any biases or preferences of the researchers (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Researchers employ a variety of techniques to increase the confirmability of their results, such as peer debriefing, member checking and reflexive journaling (Kakose et al., 2024). The data for this study were gathered by the researcher, who recorded the interview process with a tape recorder while getting information directly from the participants. Reflexive journaling, the use of verbatim

quotes and the independent examination of transcripts and topics contributed to the increased verifiability. This ensured that the study's results are based on the experiences of the participants and not on the researcher's preconceptions.

3.9.4 Dependability

Kakar et al. (2023) explain that dependability, as well as the stability and consistency of the research process over time, defines its trustworthiness. To ensure dependability, a systematic and well-documented research design was followed. To create a systematic and transparent process, every stage of the study was carefully recorded, from getting permission to collect and analysing the data. This involved interview guides, field notes, coding records, ethical approval paperwork, raw data storage and analysis drafts. The audit trail presents a clear view of the source of the data and the logic behind the results of the study, thereby making it possible to evaluate or replicate the study methodology.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical standards were followed throughout the study process to guarantee all the participants' safety, dignity and well-being. Researchers must use ethical theories and ideals that steer responsible decision-making in order to differentiate between suitable and unacceptable behaviour during the research process, as Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023) underline. Strict ethical measures were needed to protect participants from possible emotional or professional harm, given the sensitive nature of workplace bullying.

3.10.1 Informed consent

In the context of this research, informed consent is defined as a voluntary decision made on the basis of sufficient information and a sufficient grasp of the implications of taking part in the suggested study as well as the study itself (Lindsater et al., 2020). The ethical problem of respect for participants' integrity as well as their right to self-determination is the foundation underpinning the notion of consent (Manandhar & Joshi, 2020). Prior to every interview, participants were given a thorough explanation of the aims, methods, time demands and expectations of the investigation. They were informed about the sorts of questions they would be asked, the use of an audio

recorder, and the way the data would be assessed and presented. As evidence that they understood and accepted the terms, the participants signed informed consent forms.

3.10.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Mahat et al. (2024) explain that confidentiality and anonymity procedures are used to safeguard the privacy of human participants in research while gathering, evaluating, and analysing the participants' data. In this study, confidentiality was given top priority due to the hierarchical structure of schools and the susceptibility to workplace bullying.

Participants' names, roles and identifiers were kept secret. Instead of using real identities, pseudonyms were used and all audio recordings, transcripts and notes were kept in a safe place. Only the researcher and the research supervisor could have access to the data.

3.10.3 Permission to conduct the research

A basic component of legal and ethical research practice is getting approval to conduct research, formalised through the informed consent and ethical review process (Manandhar & Joshi, 2020). Preserving the integrity of the scientific process, guaranteeing responsible research execution and safeguarding participants' rights and welfare all depend on this (Rose & Johnson, 2020). For instance, written and verbal approval were obtained from the principals of the Cosmo City Secondary Schools and the Johannesburg North Education District before data collection commenced. In this study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa Ethical Clearance Committee. Upon approval, the researcher then sought written approval from the Gauteng Department of Education.

3.10.4 Privacy

In Resnik (2018), privacy is defined as the right to be free from unwarranted intrusion into one's personal life, while confidentiality is the protection of that information. Given the sensitive nature of workplace bullying and the chance of being recognised in a hierarchical school environment, preserving participants' confidentiality was a major ethical consideration in this study. Interviews were at secluded locations on the

premises where other personnel could not interrupt or monitor the proceedings. This created a safe environment where people might share their experiences freely.

3.10.5 Voluntary participation

The ethical concept of ‘voluntary participation’ in qualitative research states that people should be free to decide whether or not to participate in a study without being subjected to any form of coercion or pressure (Lindsater et al.,2020). Additionally, they should have the right to leave at any moment without facing any repercussions. Participation in the study was completely voluntary. Post-level 1 to 3 educators were given the option to participate, opt out, or drop out at any point during the study without facing any repercussions. No one was compelled, coerced, or persuaded to participate in the interviews.

3.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

3.11.1 Limitations of the study

In conducting this study, the limitations included but were not limited to Post-level 1 to 3 educators being reluctant to engage in the study because they felt uneasy about recounting the experiences that had happened to them, or feared that if they were found participating in the study by the principal, they could face consequences, such as a harsh working environment. School principals prevented the researcher from participating in this study on the school premises due to concerns that the school might be vulnerable to exposure from the misconduct towards Post-level 1 to 3. As a result of employing purposive sampling, the researcher was able to carry out the study in a limited number of conveniently selected schools; therefore, the findings of the research could not yield a generalised conclusion concerning secondary schools.

3.11.2 Delimitations

This research was concentrated exclusively on Post-level 1 to 3 educators as specified in the title; the investigation only examined four schools, and the researcher choose participants who are available. Because of these boundaries, the results from this research could not establish a generalised conclusion regarding the causes and

consequences of workplace bullying inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research design and methods used to examine Post-level 1 to 3 educators' experiences with workplace bullying by the Senior School Management in secondary schools are covered in this chapter. It covered the ethical issues as well as the qualitative phenomenological research design, sampling techniques, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The interview data findings are introduced and evaluated in the following chapter. The methodological framework that directed the study is covered in this chapter. It discussed the research paradigm, qualitative approach, and design as well as the population, sampling methods, data collection techniques and analytical procedures utilised throughout the inquiry. The steps taken to guarantee trustworthiness and adherence to ethical norms are also discussed. The goal of this chapter was to offer a clear and thorough account of the methods used to examine workplace bullying committed by the Senior School Management against Post-level 1 to 3 educators at the Cosmo City Secondary School.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology. Therefore, Chapter 4 will pay attention to the data obtained through semi-structured interviews and analyse them through thematic analysis following its six phases. The following objectives were kept in mind when presenting the data: to identify the factors perpetrated towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators by Senior School Management, to explore the nature of workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3, to explore the impact of workplace bullying by the management on the day-to-day lives of Post-level 1 to 3 educators and to formulate the intervention strategies that address the workplace bullying conducted by the Senior School Management towards educators Post-level 1 to 3 in secondary schools of Cosmo City.

In this chapter, the author presents, analyses, and interprets the data that were gathered. The participants' demographic data are provided in a table 4.1 for clarity's sake before the data are presented. The emphasis was on the answers to each study question, the links to the main themes and sub-themes that came up, and the direct quotations that supported those themes. The information was gathered from educators at the secondary school level in Cosmo City township schools. The purpose of the study was to explore the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by the Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary schools, Johannesburg, South Africa. The study sought to identify various forms of bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa and highlight their negative impact on their social, psychological, emotional, financial and overall well-being.

4.2 BACKGROUND DATA ON THE POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS FROM THE SELECTED SCHOOLS

To ensure the credibility of the study, educators at Post-level one to three from various schools with various types of experience were selected. The importance of the data was that they demonstrated different educators with different levels and types of

experience. Given the study's qualitative approach, a qualitative study was used to analyse the data.

In addition, the background data was organised according to the schools they worked at, their sexuality, age, prior education, the number of years they taught, the topic they taught, and the years in service. The table below summarises the data about the participants.

Table 4.1: Educators at Post-level 1 to 3: Educators' information

No. Educators	Demographics		No. of years in the field	Grade	Schools	Subject offered
	Age	Gender				
1	24-30	Female (PL1)	1	8-9	A	EMS
2	55-60	Male (PL 2)	27	10-11	A	Business studies
3	38-40	Male (PL3)	5	10-12	A	Economics
4	31-40	Female (PL 4)	8	10-12	A	Physical Science
5	36-40	Male (PL 5)	14	8-10	B	CAT & Technology
6	27-30	Female (PL6)	5	8-9	B	Creative Arts
7	45-50	Male (PL7)	5	11-12	B	Geography
8	38-40	Female (PL8)	7	10-11	B	Tourism
9	33-40	Female (PL9)	12	10-12	C	Mathematics
10	33-40	Male (PL10)	11	10-11	C	Life Sciences
11	40-50	Female (PL11)	17	8-9	C	Life Orientation

12	29-30	Male (PL12)	5	8-9	C	Technology
No. Educators	Demographics		No. of years in the field	Grade	Schools	Subject offered
	Age	Gender				
13	45-50	Male (PL13)	18	10	D	History
14	55-60	Male (PL14)	35	8-9	D	EMS
15	35-40	Female (PL15)	15	10-12	D	Life Sciences
16	31-40	Female (PL16)	8	11-12	D	Economics EMS

4.2.1 Description of participants

The sample comprised of 16 educators from four schools labelled as School A to School D in the study. The participants ranged from the age of 24 to 60, with an approximate average age of 39 years.

4.3 MAIN FINDINGS

The study-sample included Post-level 1 to 3 educators with various teaching experiences from different secondary township schools and different age groups. Both genders were granted equal opportunities by an equal split. The researcher ensured that different types of workplace bullying experiences were explored through asking open-ended questions to gather more information about various experiences from different secondary township schools. Participants were drawn from Johannesburg and Cosmo City to represent the township.

4.4. PRESENTATION OF DATA BY INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

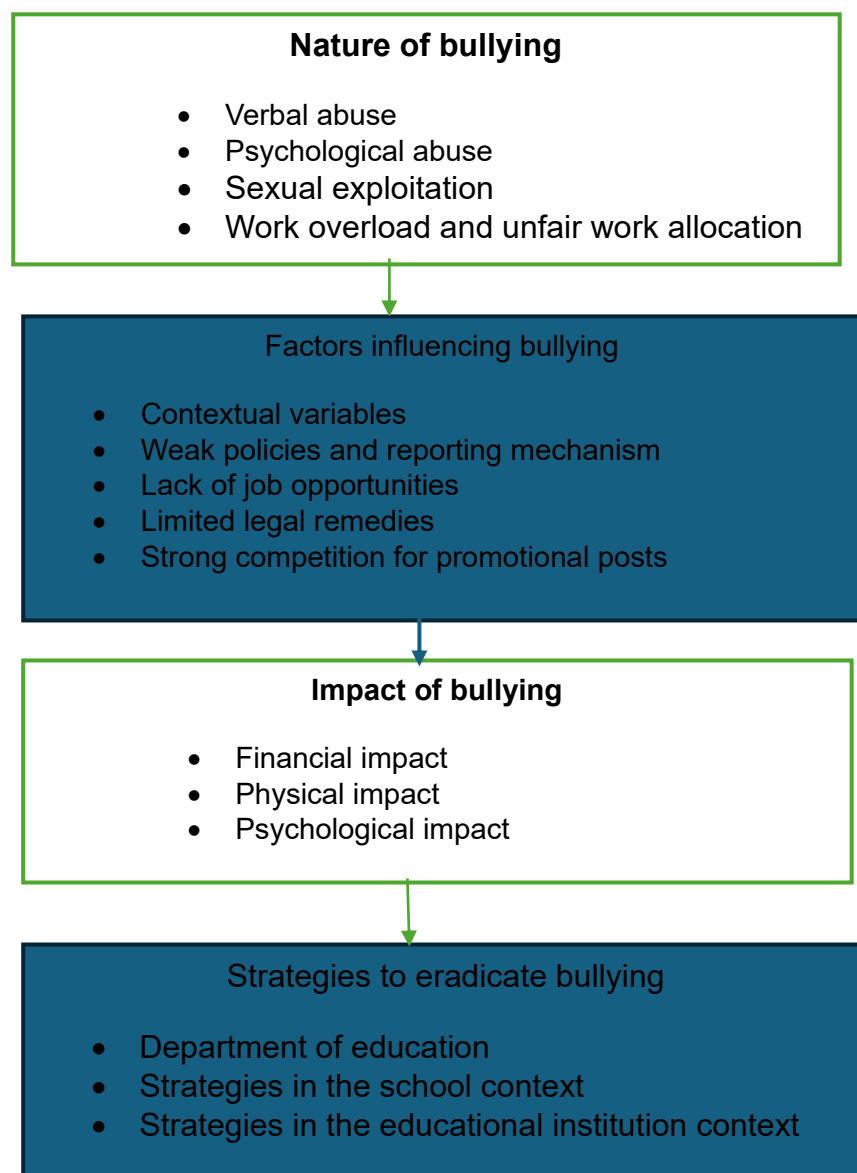
To collect data, semi-structured interviews were used in this study, followed by open-ended questions to gather as much information as possible. Different experiences of workplace bullying were brought by different participants, who shared their real

experiences and those they experienced through their colleagues who are in management positions within the school environment. The responses of the participants were recorded by the researcher. Sub-questions were used to expand the research questions, assisting in obtaining more data, and assisted with regard to the development of codes, which further assisted in creating themes.

4.5 WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATED BY SENIOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN OSMO CITY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG NORTH.

This section aims to explore workplace bullying inflicted by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township schools, in the Johannesburg North District. Themes and sub- themes will be used to present the data. Codes resulting from the data are depicted on the diagram below.

Figure 4.2: Codes developed into themes



The researcher identified themes from the aforementioned codes to enhance the presentation of the data. Additionally, themes and subthemes will assist in providing a more comprehensive view of the data.

4.6 THEME 1: THE NATURE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING EXPERIENCED BY POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Table 4.2: Sub-themes developed from main theme 1

Themes	Sub- themes
Verbal abuse	Inappropriate public communication by the school leadership. Educators were ridiculed and cursed.
Psychological bullying	Educators were blackmailed to do things they were not comfortable with to please the principal and to be in the good books of the management. Some were threatened about the positions they held at work.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual favours were asked of newly appointed educators in order to secure a permanent post.
Work overload and unfair work allocation	Educators were given bigger classes as a way of punishment; the allocation of classes was biased.

4.6.1 Verbal abuse encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township

During the semi-structured interviews, the participants indicated verbal abuse as a form of workplace bullying that they were subjected to within the school environment, which is perpetuated by those at the school management level. Their answers revealed that verbal bullying is recognised as repeated and purposeful hostile actions carried out by individuals with authority, notably the school manager such as the principal. These behaviours were frequently integrated into the daily managerial practices and were seen as continuous rather than as isolated occurrences. Additionally, the individuals claimed that verbal bullying fosters an environment of fear, emotional distress, and helplessness, which has a detrimental impact on their productivity and general well-being.

PL16:

I experienced severe emotional and verbal abuse in the year 2023 after the subject I teach, Economics, performed poorly, achieving only 58%. Other subjects in the same stream performed poorly, but nothing happened to those educators. I was belittled and called a traitor by the principal. I avoided reporting the matter as I did not want to escalate it to the point where I would turn my workspace into a toxic environment. Learners were also instigated against me by the same principal, resulting in an increasingly hostile work environment.

The participant explained how her performance exposed her to the wrath of the principal and how the verbal abuse started. This indicated that Post-level 1 to 3 educators live in fear in their workplace as they feel helpless and have lost hope, as they know that, irrespective of what they can do, little will be done to assist them. They are also afraid that if they report the matter, they can be victimised and the situation will be exacerbated. This shows that Post-level 1 to 3 educators endure this type of abuse due to the limited power they have in schools. They are held responsible for the results of the school to a point where it turns into emotional distress, causing educators to lose hope in their capabilities.

PL15 from another school had a similar experience:

The principal talks to you as if you are a child; the other day, he told me that if the results do not improve, then I must start looking for another school, as he cannot keep a liability like me in the school.

In this regard, the participant described the principal's condescending and intimidating communication style. The principal labels the Post-level 1 to 3 educators as unreliable and readily replaceable by stating that they should "start looking for another school" and calling them a "liability." The power imbalance between the management and Post-level 1 to 3 educators is manifested in this type of discourse, where the authority is utilised to control and exert pressure on educators rather than to assist them. Additionally, the phrase implies that, rather than using professional growth or coaching, performance goals are conveyed through threats of job insecurity and fear. Post-level 1 to 3 educators may thus feel anxious, embarrassed, and unappreciated in their

professional capacity. Such conduct can have a detrimental impact on educators' confidence and job satisfaction, in addition to creating a hostile working environment.

Participants 11 and 12 indicated that once the principal targets you, the verbal attacks do not stop, it continues until one feels demoralised. Participants further explained that:

Being called stupid in front of my colleagues made me feel like I was worth nothing. I started feeling anxious and too exhausted to go to work. I ended up asking my doctor to book me off from work (PL11).

this kind of emotional abuse makes me think twice whenever I need to come to work, sometimes I absent myself for no reason just to avoid being insulted for no reason, every day you need to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally to be insulted. (PL12).

In general, the participants' actual experiences reveal that verbal abuse was a key element of workplace bullying, which was defined by ongoing humiliation, intimidation, and abuse of power. This had a major impact on educators' emotional well-being and job performance. The verbal abuse encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in township schools adversely affects their mental health. The participants mentioned above reported symptoms of depression and anxiety, with some resorting to absenteeism as a coping strategy in response to the psychological distress inflicted by school leadership.

PL4 mentioned:

We experience a persistent criticism in the presence of other educators, your work being unfairly questioned and micromanaged as if you do not know your job responsibilities, I was shouted at in front of my learners by the principal just because I forgot to sign the time book because I rushed to the morning class as I was ten minutes behind, I had to pretend that I was okay, I smiled and apologised.

Similarly, another participant narrated that:

I was shouted at by the principal in front of my learners because I forgot to sign my file, which was due for submission the next day, and I had taken an

early departure the day before hence I could not sign the, I was subjected to an idiot. (PL10)

The above response indicates that Post-level 1 to 3 educators are not respected by their managers, small issues cannot be addressed professionally. Post-level 1 to 3 educators endure harsh, emotional, demeaning words due to the lack of respect they encounter from their managers. This reflects a school culture in which verbal abuse is normalised as a leadership practice. However, rather than promoting effective leadership, such behaviour fosters discomfort among educators and contributes to feelings of marginalization and professional undermining. PL11:

I once witnessed the principal shouting at one of my colleagues for the late submission of marks in the staff briefing. His tone was humiliating and very harsh; it was as if he was talking to his 16-year-old child. My colleague was teary and could not answer as she was embarrassed by the words the principal was directing at him. The principal further mentioned that the reason my colleague had submitted the marks late was that she was a drunkard who could not separate her personal life from work.

The remarks from Participant 11 revealed that certain Post-level 1 to 3 educators were scared to defend themselves or talk back in front of the principal since they felt embarrassed by the manner in which the school principal conducted himself. According to the participant, the principal could resort to using their personal life struggles against the educators to humiliate them. This indicates a leadership crisis in township schools, where some school leaders lack effective communication skills, which are central to sound leadership practice. Instead, they appear to conflate personal and professional matters in the execution of their leadership responsibilities.

4.6.2 Psychological bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

The participants elaborated on the forms of psychological bullying they had experienced at the hands of their managers. In their responses, the participants explained that they had seen most of their colleagues being admitted to a mental

institution due to being unfairly treated. Other participants explained that being emotionally attacked at times leads to depression and demoralisation.

PL4:

It is very stressful to wake up every morning and prepare yourself for a toxic working environment, while you feel anxious and are constantly anticipating conflict or criticism. Often, I experience insomnia, and this affects my concentration at work. So many times, I have experienced the feelings of self-doubt, which have affected my mental health.

The statement above shows that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 are subjected to psychological bullying, which has a serious negative impact on their well-being. Exposure to a toxic environment makes it difficult for them to remain passionate about their work, as it further affects their sleeping patterns. They feel drained, anxious, and experience feelings of self-doubt due to the toxic working environment in which they work. The participant further explains how she experienced insomnia at night due to not resting well. A toxic environment has an extremely negative effect on the educators' health. It demotivates them from doing their work to the best of their ability.

PL11:

I experienced severe psychological bullying from the principal, which greatly impacted my mental well-being and resulted in six months of hospitalisation at a mental health facility, this negatively affected my children. Instead of getting the help needed, the principal purportedly ridiculed my condition, referred to me as "crazy," and questioned my capability to work with learners.

Participant 11 revealed how the bullying pushed her to be admitted to a mental institution and how it impacted her family. Post-level one educators feel that they do not have the power to take matters into their hands, as they are scared, which might exacerbate their precarious situation at work.

PL13:

As the deputy curriculum educator of the school, I feel like I am not valued enough in my school. The principal does not recognise me. Whenever we

have some disagreement, he does not address it directly with me; I will hear from other post-level one educators in the corridors. This affects me emotionally because, as much as I try to be professional and not pay attention to the hearsay, I once caught him discussing me with a post-level-1 educator. I pretended that I had not heard anything. He calls me names such as “a weakling” and some other demeaning names. In the staff briefings, when I raise my hand to try to address the staff, he ignores me. This affected me mentally as even new educators in the system tend to talk to me disrespectfully because of how the principal treats me in front of the staff.

The statement made by PL 13's responses show how the conflict between him and the principal escalates to a point where other post-level one to two educators disrespect him due to the treatment he receives from the principal in front of other colleagues. As much as Post-level three educators are part of the management, they are not immune to workplace bullying. This statement clearly indicates that some school principals bully Post-level 1 to 3 educators psychologically by ignoring them when they attempt to contribute to school affairs. Their inputs during school meetings are disregarded, which constitutes a form of workplace bullying that is commonly observed and often contributes to educator attrition.

4.6.3 Sexual exploitation encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators Cosmo City secondary schools

The participants revealed that certain educators at Cosmo City secondary township schools in Post-level 1 to 3 experience sexual exploitation as a severe and extremely upsetting form of workplace bullying. Members of the Senior School Management were seen to engage in sexual exploitation when they abused their positional power to seek or suggest that they have an inappropriate or personal relationship in exchange for preferential treatment and professional opportunities. Some participants shared their experiences, demonstrating that there was a misuse of their position by the management in order to create an uncomfortable working environment and coercive moments.

PL5 explained:

There are times when the management will make unacceptable comments on one's appearance and how you must use your salary to buy new clothes to look pretty like other female educators, but in cases like these, to whom do I report?

Similarly, another participant mentioned that:

I was told that if I wanted to teach the matric and participate in marking, I needed to sleep with the principal, which made me feel anxious because it made me feel insulted. PL6

The participants revealed how uncomfortable certain comments made them feel, and that the reporting channels were limited. The participants felt disrespected and undermined by the comments they received from the management.

PL8:

During my time in a substantive post from the previous school, the principal proposed that he could assist in securing me a permanent post if I accompanied him for a massage. I was taken aback and turned down the offer, even when the principal later suggested he would cover all expenses. On the final day of the contract, the principal mentioned a suitable position was open, but insinuated that my attitude was the reason for not being considered. I realised I was not the only one experiencing this; one of the educators supposedly agreed to a relationship with the principal to obtain a job.

In a similar vein, PL4 stated that

due to financial and employment hardships, I felt compelled to enter into a relationship with the principal in order to protect my job. I suffered greatly mentally as the matter became widely known throughout the school for sleeping with him. Upon receiving my appointment letter, I ended the relationship. The principal started mistreating me by allocating subjects beyond my qualifications, excluding me from teaching matric classes, and denying me permission to go for marking. In addition, learners were told to

throw papers at me if I was five minutes late in class. I never reported this because I did not want to continue suffering emotionally by reporting to people who are close to him.

The verbatim report above from both Participants 4 and 8 indicated that the principals tend to abuse their power by using young educators who are desperate for employment by asking them for sexual favours in exchange for permanent posts. These educators find it difficult to report such matters because they feel they lack the power to stand on their own feet, often agreeing to this type of behaviour due to the challenging socio-economic backgrounds from which they come. They are forced into this kind of situation due to the lack of job opportunities outside, and they hope that the only person who has the upper hand to ensure permanent employment is the principal.

In general, the results reveal that sexual exploitation is a severe form of workplace harassment that is based on an imbalance of power and an abuse of authority, even if it is frequently hidden and underreported. These encounters foster a culture of fear, silence, and professional uncertainty among Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township secondary schools.

4.6.4 Work overload and unfair work allocation encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

During the semi-structured interviews, the participants discussed their experiences with regard to unreasonable work demands and the work overload in their schools. According to the responses, Post-level 1 to 3 educators frequently experienced an excessive workload and an unfair distribution of duties. Participants saw these actions as forms of workplace bullying that had a detrimental impact on their professional performance, emotional health, and overall job satisfaction.

Some participants from school A and B indicated that they were given more tasks and more responsibilities in comparison with their colleagues. One participant acceded that:

Our school is overcrowded. I have a class with 147 learners squashed in one class. There are no resources at all to accommodate such a class. I tried to

speak to the principal regarding this matter; all he could say was, "You said on your CV you work well under pressure; now don't come here and tell me nonsense." Certain educators in this school are given classes with fewer learners just because they accept everything and never question anything. I believe I am punished because I am not a person who keeps quiet when I feel mistreated. (P3)

PL6:

As a Head of Department for Commerce, I am given so many responsibilities compared to other HODs. I am responsible for Tourism and Consumer Studies; on top of that, I have my other subjects on which to focus. This is a big school, and I am responsible for almost 80 percent of the school, as I am heading six subjects. The number of lower grades, such as 8 and 9, is insane. When I complained about this, the principal said, "If you feel like you cannot handle this, retire and go home." I was really offended by his response as I was crying out for help. I end up doing shadow moderation due to the workload I have to manage. I really do not know what to do. Even those in district when they visit our school, they ignore our complaints. I am just coming to work for the sake of coming to work.

These responses indicate that there is an unfair distribution of work in the school due to different views between the principal and the Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Outspoken educators are punished by being given more tasks than their colleagues, which places an additional burden on them and diminishes the enjoyment of their work.

PL1:

I feel like I am outstripped in my duties; I feel redundant in this school. I am the deputy curriculum head; however, most of my duties are given to the post-level one and two educators. This is all because I do not see eye-to-eye with the principal due to the misuse of the school finances and the manner in which he treats other staff members. I am excluded from certain meetings, especially concerning finance, the recruitment of other educators, and decisions taken in the school. Sometimes I hear from other educators or

learners that the principal has dismissed the school. Even when new educators are introduced to the school, I only learn about them during staff briefings. My role is limited to being assigned the task of compiling the timetable for the entire school and being instructed on which educators should be allocated to which subjects. I have no input in any decision of this school. This demotivates me and leads to disrespect from other colleagues as the principal talks badly about me in front of them.

The professional exclusion and exclusion from management roles are reflected in the above response. The participant's responsibilities are said to be transferred to educators at a lower level, even if they are in a deputy curriculum role. This indicates the potential misuse of managerial authority and an effort to diminish the participants' position. This treatment, according to the participant, is related to arguments with the principal about the management of school funds, which may have led to the deliberate exclusion from meetings and important decision-making procedures like staff recruiting and financial talks.

In the same vein, another participant shared that, PL16:

As an HOD, I have no say when it comes to the allocation of educators, even allocation of classes to me, I wait to see the timetable. I am used to having plus 100 learners in class and I continue doing my work, and I cannot complain because once I do, I know the principal will make my life a living hell. I always tell my educators that we are here for learners, let us do our work, and leave this place.

Similarly, PL7 shared that:

Last week I spoke to my HOD regarding the seven classes that are allocated to me, and, to be honest, she was so rude, telling me that I need to stop complaining and do what I get paid for. I teach three overcrowded classes with plus or minus 130 learners in each class in Grade 8, I have two other Grade 9 classes that are also overcrowded, and two Grade 12 classes. We are expected to be present from Monday to Saturday with no rest or even

petrol money. When I complain, this is the answer I get. I cannot absent myself for even a day because the principal will tell me where to get off.

The response above indicated that Post- level 1 to 3 educators suffer from heavy work burdens due to the differences between them and the management. Irrespective of the position they hold in the school, they are not immune to the heavy work burden and unfair treatment. Post-level 2 to 3 educators are excluded from certain duties, such as decision-making, and important information is withheld from them as a form of punishment. According to the responses, Post-level 4 is not the only perpetrator, but also there are Post-level 2 educators who are perpetrating bullying towards the Post-level 1 educators.

4.6.5 Theme 1

The first theme was based on the workplace bullying encountered by educators at Post- level 1 to 3. The findings revealed that workplace bullying is evident in Cosmo City secondary township schools. The findings discussed above were based on the following four themes: verbal abuse, psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, work overload, and work allocation.

4.7 THEME 2: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WORKPLACE BULLYING ENCOUNTERED BY POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN TOWNSHIPS OF COSMO CITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Table 4.3: Subthemes developed from main theme 2

Theme	Sub-themes
Contextual variables	Power imbalances, a large number of enrolments in schools and favouritism
Weak policies and reporting mechanisms	Limited reporting channels, excessive workloads, and inequitable distribution.
Lack of job opportunities	High levels of unemployment among educators contribute to the abuse they endure in the workplace.
Limited legal remedies	Unions are the only organisation that protects the rights of educators

Strong competition for promotional posts	Educators are working against each other for promotional posts.
---	---

4.7.1 Contextual variables contributing to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

Numerous factors contribute to the workplace bullying faced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in the workplace. Several participants were asked to share their lived experiences and background factors that contribute to workplace bullying. Through the data collected, several participants believed that background factors played a crucial part in workplace bullying experienced in Cosmo City township schools. Participants enlightened how the following contextual factors, such as excessive workloads and being made to teach overcrowded classrooms, contributed to the bullying experienced in the workplace.

PL2 explained:

The issue in our school is that we have a high number of enrolments every year; only a few educators are selected to teach a large number of learners, depending on our relationship with the management. If you are not on good terms, it means you will be given a class with a high number of learners as a form of punishment.

PL13 explained that:

We are given three days for marking, last year I had a backlog of marking because I had 434 scripts to mark within three days, and this was only for one grade.

PL8:

I had 150 Grade 11 learners, which I also had to mark, and management gave me no grace and wanted the marks in as soon as possible. It was overwhelming for me, but I had to do it, while other educators only had 120 scripts to mark.

According to the responses from PL 2 and 13 overcrowding in schools is used as a strategy to punish educators; it is no longer primarily an issue of the school lacking space to accommodate a certain number of learners, but is used to punish a few educators who are not on good terms with the management. The issue is that Post-level 1 to 3 educators have no input regarding the decisions of the school, such as the placement of learners. In addition to the remarks made by the participants, it is evident that favouritism is considered one of the contextual factors contributing to workplace bullying in township secondary schools. Educators who are on good terms with the management are allocated classes with lower enrolment numbers, while those who are not favoured are assigned to overcrowded classrooms. This unequal treatment undermines the productivity of Post-level 1 to 3 educators, as teaching in overcrowded classrooms is significantly more challenging and less conducive to effective teaching and learning.

4.7.2 Weak policies and reporting mechanisms contributing to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

Participants shared their experiences of the lack of effective reporting channels and lack of policies. The study showed that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 often found themselves between a rock and a hard place when they could not find any policies that could guide them when faced with a difficult situation. These actions were seen by participants as types of workplace bullying that had a detrimental impact on their work performance, emotional well-being and level of job satisfaction. The participants alluded to how weak policies and reporting mechanisms contribute to this form of workplace bullying in their schools.

PL4 mentioned that:

Our school is like a playground, you know, in my entire life of teaching, I have never seen a circus like this. I worked in three different schools before coming to this school, but I have never seen a school without proper policies; in fact, I have never seen any policy since I arrived at this school. I believe that if there were proper channels and proper anti-bullying policies, our school could be functioning well. Last month, I saw one of my colleagues breaking

down in front of learners because his HOD had spoken harshly to him in front of the learners, but he could not report the matter to anyone, as the same HOD has a good relationship with the principal. And I could not advise him on what to do because I also do not know.

The above response indicates the absence of effective policies in the school. This adds to the work environment confusion and unprofessionalism. The participant uses terms "like a playground" or "like a circus" to characterise the school, suggesting chaos and poor administration. Without clear anti-bullying policies and reporting channels, Post-level 1 to 3 educators are unable to deal with harassment or mistreatment in a meaningful way.

The emotional cost of workplace bullying and educators' inability to seek help, particularly when the bully has a close relationship with the principal, is demonstrated by the incident of an educator who broke down in front of learners. The systemic failures in protection, guidance and leadership accountability that permit bullying and harassment to continue unchecked are further highlighted by the participants' uncertainty about how to give other colleagues advice.

Another participant, PL9, indicated that:

In the year 2023, I was sick and could not report to work as I had to go and see the doctor. I sent an apology to both my HOD and the deputy principal. Unfortunately, the HOD was also not present at work and only replied to my message the next morning. The doctor booked me off for three days. When I returned to work, the principal summoned me to his office and asked me why I did not report when I was absent. I told him I had reported to the deputy, and his response was extremely harsh. He asked me to indicate that between him and the deputy, who had hired me and told me not to forget where my bread was buttered. I did not tell anyone about this because I was scared to be victimized for reporting the matter, and also, to whom do I report, who will not get me into more trouble?

The participants' responses indicate fear and anxiety over being abused by the school management. Though the participant had informed both the deputy principal and the

head of department (HOD) about their medical absence, the principal responded negatively, inquiring if they had told them properly and added a menacing comment about "not forgetting where your bread is buttered." This shows how power can frighten others, therefore discouraging the educators from expressing themselves or asking for help. The participant's unwillingness to disclose the event shows a culture of fear, and that there are no effective anti-bullying policies or proper reporting channels in their schools

4.7.3 Lack of job opportunities as a contributing factor to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

Post-level 1 to 3 educators, especially those in township secondary schools like those in Cosmo City, face workplace bullying as a result of the limited job opportunities. Due to the restricted employment opportunities and high unemployment rates in the South African education industry, there is fierce competition, job instability and power imbalances that might make individuals more susceptible to bullying. Participants explained their experiences regarding the lack of job opportunities.

PL1:

When I came to this school, it was through the other principal, who knows my current principal. I had to travel the whole night without knowing where I would sleep. On my arrival in the morning, the principal approached and offered me a place to stay with him for those months while I am still awaiting payment. Due to my desperation because of being unemployed for three years, I accepted the offer, but the whole stay came with a price. I ended up leaving the job due to the trauma I was experiencing at his home, asking me to do the duties of a wife. I ended up leaving the job after eight months of being paid, as I could not take it anymore. Shortly after that, I got this current post.

PL11:

To tell the truth, the shortage of jobs makes it very hard to complain. Many qualified unemployed educators are seeking employment day in, day out. So

even if you are ill-treated by the management, you need to keep quiet because no one wants to lose their job.

The above responses emphasise the vulnerability that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 experience due to the scarcity of employment, also demonstrating their openness to exploitation and abuse. According to PL11, educators are reluctant to report mistreatment because they are concerned about being fired, given the scarcity of employment opportunities. Together, these reports show how economic stresses increase the likelihood of the management's abuse of authority.

PL6:

Being a new teacher on a contract, it is really not easy; you become very vulnerable. If you complain that you are treated unfairly by the management, you first worry about how this will affect the renewal of your contract; this fear causes us to remain silent. For example, on my side, I am given a heavier workload than some other educators; if I dare and try to speak out about it, I will be told that I am not grateful and that I must remember that I am on contract.

PL10:

It's difficult to report bullying while under a temporary contract. For recommendations and renewal, you rely on management. As a result, you persevere even when you are treated unfairly. I occasionally feel trapped. It's difficult to get another teaching position, even if the atmosphere is dangerous. Thus, you remain and put up with the circumstances because you need the income and the experience. Because we require permanent positions, many of us remain silent. We are afraid of being labelled as troublesome. Bullying is allowed to persist because people are afraid of losing their jobs.

The participants' responses above indicate that newly hired educators at Post-level 1 reported that workplace bullying was largely caused by the scarcity of employment opportunities. Due to the scarcity of permanent teaching positions and job insecurity, participants expressed fear of reporting bullying. Due to their temporary contracts and reliance on management referrals for permanent employment, many claimed that they

had put up with unjust treatment, excessive workloads, and verbal abuse. Additionally, the responses showed that the competition for a few positions led to hostility and exclusion, with new educators frequently viewed as expendable. As a result, the participants described feeling stuck in bad school settings where bullying was common, since quitting the field or finding another job seemed impossible.

4.7.4 Limited legal remedies contributing to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

This study highlights that the limited legal remedies available to Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary schools contribute to the workplace bullying they experienced. According to the participants, educators frequently turn to teacher unions for help and direction when bullying occurs. Nonetheless, many participants complained that these systems sometimes failed to react quickly or efficiently, leaving educators feeling alone. Participant 11 and 12 shared:

PL12:

Our principal is a site steward as a SADTU representative in the school; he coerced educators to vote for him. Now, in this case, who do we report to? In this school, we will die due to the silence. All these new educators bow down to him, the minute he renews their contract, he makes them join the union and always instructs them to vote for them

PL11:

I don't report to the union, as some of the union representatives are close friends with the principal, so it will be pointless because your matter will not be taken seriously. The union representatives will tell you that they will talk to the principal, but no action will be taken. We have no effective reporting channels.

The participants' responses show that certain educators do not view unions as an effective means of reporting workplace bullying. Participants believe that the way school manager and union representatives interact can influence how complaints are

resolved. As a result, Post-level 1 to 3 educators believe their concerns will not be taken into account sufficiently and are less inclined to report bullying.

Furthermore, the data show that power imbalances in schools might cause reporting systems to become more complex. If individuals in managerial roles also have authority within union systems, educators might think they have no secure or independent platform to express their worries. Educators, particularly those with temporary contracts, are wary of this situation as they may worry about the consequences of speaking up.

PL4:

I was still forced to work under the same circumstances and with the same principal even after I had filed the case. I was being bullied by him. You understand that the union cannot solve all your issues. You get a feeling of being trapped if they postpone the case. It's possible to wait for several months without getting feedback. You are informed that the matter is still being processed when you follow up. Some educators stopped reporting because they don't believe the union will accomplish anything.

PL9:

The problem is that there are limited legal remedies available to report bullying; we rely on the unions to protect us; however, nothing is done. You cannot go to the social media and expose the principal, as the law is against that. I cannot even afford a good lawyer to assist me to address this suffering. Lawyers are expensive, and the senior people who love the principal they will protect him at length.

The participants' from school A and C responses indicate that there are insufficient precautions in place for those who are bullied at work. The participants express annoyance at the delays in union procedures, stating that cases can take months with no response. Such delays can lead to feelings of being stuck since Post-level 1 to 3 educators are forced to carry on teaching in a hostile setting while they wait for help. Consequently, some educators lose faith in the reporting mechanism and eventually cease reporting incidents.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted how challenging it is for educators to fight bullying because of the few legal options available. According to the participants, Post-level 1 to 3 educators rely mostly on unions for protection, but very little seems to be done in response to complaints. The response also mentions financial obstacles since many educators might find it excessively costly to file a lawsuit using private attorneys. Additionally, the participants posit that people in positions of power may protect one another, making it more difficult for victims to get justice. This causes educators who believe the system is biased against them to feel helpless. Delays in union intervention, financial obstacles to legal assistance and few alternative reporting options all contribute to the persistence of workplace bullying, as evidenced by these responses collectively.

4.7.5 Strong competition for promotional posts contributing to workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary township schools

According to this study, educators at Post- level 1 to 3 indicated that competition for promotional posts contributes to factors influencing workplace bullying in the township schools of Cosmo City. Participants from school A and B shared that some educators work closely with the principal by betraying other educators in order to gain the advantage of obtaining promotions.

PL7:

My current HOD used to be so close to the principal by passing false information about other educators just to be favoured by the principal. I am talking about someone who used to be a union representative in our school. When the vacancy for an HOD was advertised in our school, we all knew that the post was his.

PL1:

In this school, every staffroom has a spy that frequently visits the principal's office to report on other colleagues. There is no privacy; even some of our personal details are known by the principal. You will hear him passing a remark in the corridors about your personal life. This is all because everyone

wants to be promoted, and in our school, the principal is believed to be the one who can make that happen.

According to the above participants, the intense competition for promotional positions contributes to a toxic atmosphere within schools, generating feelings of mistrust and suspicion among staff. According to the responses, some colleagues try to position themselves favourably with the principal by spreading false information, revealing details about others, or remaining closely aligned with the principal to get promoted. Consequently, educators at Post-level 1 to 3 may find themselves feeling mistrusted, exposed, and anxious in the classroom. The fight for promotion can encourage behaviours that compromise colleagues instead of teamwork and professionalism. This condition promotes workplace bullying because some educators face monitoring and professional development barriers. Generally, the study indicates that strong competition for promotional posts might affect the professional atmosphere negatively in the school.

PL8:

The current acting deputy principal in our school allegedly helped the principal to make one of our colleagues resign; it was alleged that the educator slept with a learner. At first, I believed it, but after a while I realised it was something planned because there was a time during a staff briefing, the principal was reprimanding one of the colleagues by mentioning that whoever wants to mess with him will leave like the former teacher. He further said he has the power to make or break you.

PL4:

The principal once threatened me that he would open a case against me for defamation of character, as he mentioned that he knew that I always talk ill about him around the school. He said he has a tape recording where I am accusing him of misusing funds and sleeping with new educators by promising them permanent posts. Later, I found out it was one of the educators who is now the site manager for the SSIP programme. It made me realise how low people can go just to get promotion posts.

The participants' from school A and B responses indicate that the fight for promotional posts causes conflict among post-level 1 to 3 educators. To gain favour and raise their chances of promotion, some educators may associate themselves with the principal. By doing this, they run the risk of revealing details about other educators that might put others at risk. Additionally, respondents recalled times when school principals employed intimidation and coercion to prevent educators from challenging their decisions. Consequently, some Post-level 1 to 3 educators feel intimidated and powerless. Because Post-level 1 to 3 educators may experience being singled out, silenced and undermined at work while others benefit from their proximity to management, these dynamics lead to workplace bullying. These responses shows that the battle for promotions can have a detrimental impact on professional connections and the general environment of the school.

4.7.6 Theme 2

Theme 2 was based on the contributing factors to workplace bullying perpetrated by the Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township schools. Factors contributing to workplace bullying include a lack of employment opportunities, contextual factors, and weak policies and reporting mechanisms. Additionally, the research showed that rivalry for limited permanent positions and chances for promotion creates tension, exclusion and animosity among employees. The competitive environment, along with the power disparity between junior educators and management, strengthens a culture of silence and submission. As a result, bullying actions have become commonplace in the school environment among educators place a higher priority on job security than on addressing unjust treatment. Scarcity of employment opportunities for educators at Post-level 1 to 3 fosters fear, silence and dependency, which allows workplace bullying to continue in township secondary schools.

4.8 THEME 3: THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING INFLICTED BY SENIOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POST-LEVEL1 TO 3 IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS OF COSMO CITY

Table 4.4: Subthemes developed from main theme 3

Themes	Sub-themes
--------	------------

Financial impact	Paying for a permanent post
Physical impact	Overworked and unpaid extra hours
Psychological impact	Increasing number of educators admitted to mental institutions

4.8.1 The financial impact inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators

Responses detailed how bullying by management and higher personnel frequently led to unfair financial hardship and economic insecurity. The participants were asked to share how bullying had impacted them financially.

PL15:

Since we are given additional classes over weekends without receiving any financial compensation, I feel taken advantage of. Since you spend more time at school, you pay more for food and transportation, but you don't earn any more money. Paid responsibilities are subject to how close you are to the management. Even when we are competent, some of us are ignored. It seems like retaliation for not constantly agreeing with the management. You are denied the chance to make additional money at school if you are bullied or disliked by the management because our salaries are already modest, this has an impact on us.

PL 20

At times you will be requested by the principal to run certain errands for the school using your own petrol, there are times where I am forced to use my own car to transport my learners to other schools for orals as I will be told that the school cannot refund me. We attend workshops using our own petrol because there is no transport allocated for us to use.

The responses from participant 15 indicate that Post-level 1 to 3 educators are expected to use their own money for the school errands without any compensation, which affects them negatively. The responses indicate that they are compelled to travel using their own petrol without any reimbursement. They felt they were taken advantage

of, especially when these responsibilities extended beyond their job descriptions and were not equitably shared among them.

PL2:

I was told to pay R15 000 upfront so that I can be promoted as an HOD. By that time, I was struggling financially, and I had hospital bills to pay, but because I failed to pay, the post was given to the highest bidder.

PL13:

I was removed from teaching matric because the principal did not want me to go for marking all. After all, I had refused to give him money after receiving my marking salary the previous year. Every teacher who goes to marking must pay R1000 from their pocket every January and thank the principal for approving them to go for marking. I think this will not stop because it seems as if the same educators enjoy sharing their sweat with him, and they see nothing wrong with it. Only a few are complaining, but they cannot tell him that because they fear they will be removed from teaching matric classes just like me. I mean, we are all here to work for our families, but in this school, you must work for him. And it's not only marking money, but also when they receive their bonus, but they must also buy him lunch.

The above responses indicate financial exploitation and corruption by the school management. PL2 indicated that to be shortlisted, a certain amount of money had to be paid, or else the post would be given to those who have the means. Educators are compelled to pay the money they received to the principal for marking and bonuses. In these accounts, financial abuse is shown to be utilised to control educators, encourage compliance, and punish disobedience, thereby creating a morally oppressive environment. Additionally, some educators were unfairly denied access to income-producing prospects like paid extra classes, national marking, and acting roles. This was seen by participants as favouritism and a kind of punishment associated with bullying. Consequently, some educators, particularly those with entry-level salaries or temporary contracts, find themselves under financial strain.

4.8.2 The physical impact inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators

Workplace bullying has a considerable physical impact on educators at Post-level 1–3. Continuous stress and pressure inside the school setting caused participants to experience headaches, exhaustion, high blood pressure, sleeplessness, physical aches and recurring sickness. Excessive workloads, bullying and a lack of backing from the management all played a role in educator’s burnout and physical fatigue. The participants were asked to share how bullying had impacted them physically.

PL1:

My high blood pressure is a result of the constant stress I experience at work. Sometimes, the treatment we receive is extremely unfair, and it has an impact on my well-being. The bullying has had a physical impact on me because I'm always stressed. I get headaches most days, particularly after being yelled at by the principal. I'm always physically tired. We are given too much work and deadlines that are impossible to meet. I cannot even relax at home, since all I can think about is my job.

PL7:

Particularly for new educators, the workload is excessive. We are assigned too many responsibilities without assistance. This results in burnout and bodily fatigue. My immunity has deteriorated. Because of stress and overwork, I frequently become ill. My health has undoubtedly been impacted by this. Because I'm constantly worried and not eating well, I've experienced weight loss. My physical health has been impacted by this workplace. The strain occasionally makes me feel lightheaded and weak. On certain days, I force myself to work.

Responses from PL 1 and 7 indicate that excessive and unfair workload contributes to the physical impact on educators. Effects such as weight loss are mentioned by the participant 7. Educators push themselves to work even if they do not feel well. This shows that the unfair allocation of duties contributes to the physical impact on educators and this can lead to high absenteeism in the workplace.

PL3:

I am always tired; I work Monday to Saturday to attend extra classes. During the week, the classes end at 16h30, and I get home late due to the traffic. I do not rest when I get home, as I need to do household chores and help my kids with homework. By the time I get to sleep, I don't even feel my body. I tried to speak to the principal and the teacher who is responsible for drafting the timetable to put me in the morning, but it seems that no one is listening. The same teacher who is responsible for the timetable I am his supervisor, but because the principal permitted him to disrespect other educators he just talk to you like you are nobody. When I complain, I am told that if I do not want to teach, I must then leave the school and go and find myself another job.

According to participant 3, educators at Post-level 1 to 3 are coerced into doing extra classes, and educators are not included in the decision-making process regarding their availability. Time with family is sacrificed due to the workloads educators have to carry. Management encourages disrespect between colleagues by allocating certain tasks to Post-level 1 educators as a way of undermining their supervisors.

PL8:

The pressure that comes with teaching Grade 12 is a lot. You are forced to base your life around the school; you are not supposed to be absent, even if it is a family responsibility or even if you are sick. You will be asked by the principal who will teach your learners when you go to a funeral?. Last year, one of the colleagues lost her brother, and she was told by the principal that she could not take more than two days off, as if she had lost her mom or her husband. The principal further asked, What is the point of you going to the funeral, because that person is dead and never coming back? That was so awful, and the poor teacher did not know what to say, and due to that the teacher had a panic attack and was rushed to the hospital.

The responses demonstrate that workplace bullying has a significant physical impact on educators at Post-level 1 to 3. Ongoing stress and pressure in the school

environment caused participants to report headaches, exhaustion, elevated blood pressure, sleeplessness, bodily discomfort and frequent sickness. Excessive workloads and inadequate management support led to burnout and physical weariness among educators. The responses also indicate that many educators kept working even when they were ill, out of fear of becoming victims or losing their employment. Their general health and well-being were adversely impacted by this prolonged stress exposure. As a result, workplace can cause major physical health issues that had an impact on their job performance and overall well-being.

4.8.3 The psychological impact inflicted on Post-level 1 to 3 educators

Post-level 1 to 3 educators experienced significant psychological consequences from workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management. Constant bullying actions like verbal abuse, intimidation, excessive monitoring and unfair criticism led to feelings of emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, despondency and burnout among participants. Their job satisfaction, personal well-being and professional confidence were all adversely impacted by these psychological effects. The participants were asked to share how bullying had impacted their psychology.

PL15:

I'm depressed and unmotivated. The emotional strain of the job occasionally makes me want to give up. The manner in which I was treated by my HOD made me feel worthless. I lost interest in the things I once liked and became withdrawn.

PL15:

I wake up anxious every morning because I'm unsure of what will occur at school. I feel anxious all day because my mind keeps looking for things that might be wrong. I'm feeling emotionally exhausted. I'm constantly thinking about what transpired at school and what could occur the next day, even when I'm at home due to how harsh our principal is towards teachers.

According to the above, the participants, bullying caused persistent worry and emotional stress. Participants shared they feared being watched all the time and being publicly reprimanded. As a result, there was increased emotional instability and stress.

One participant shared:

I'm always under stressed since I have too much work and unrealistic deadlines, I feel worn out both in body and mind, but I am scared to absent myself even during Saturdays because I do not want to hear anything that might affect me psychologically. Already I have my own personal issues (PL6).

Another participant commented:

I don't have the same enthusiasm or energy for teaching anymore. Being admitted to the mental institution, I have never been the same. Transferring to other schools takes forever. I wish I could leave my job, but at the same time, I do not have a backup plan (PL16).

Emotional discomfort and persistent anxiety were discovered to be the main psychological effects. According to the participants, the workplace was fraught with tension and dread due to the management's erratic behaviour and persistent fault finding. Before and during school hours, many participants reported feeling anxious, frequently worrying about being punished, humiliated or unfairly judged. This persistent stress spilled over into their personal lives, impairing their capacity to unwind, rest and keep their emotions in check. Consequently, participants reported being in a persistent state of psychological distress and emotional weariness.

The participants began to doubt their professional skills and value as a result of constant unfavourable feedback, public criticism, and a lack of acknowledgement from management. Low self-esteem and decreased professional confidence were other notable effects. Furthermore, participants declared that being undermined by management made them feel incompetent and underappreciated, which undermined their sense of professional identity and self-assurance. Despite being knowledgeable and skilled, some educators began to question their competence. Their decreased

self-esteem had an impact on their classroom behaviour as well as their reluctance to participate in extracurricular events or voice expert views.

4.8.5 Theme 3

The main findings of theme three dealt with the impact of workplace bullying on educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in the township schools of Cosmo City, in Johannesburg North District. The theme dealt with the financial, psychological and physical effects of bullying on Post-level 1 to 3 educators. This theme will be detailed thoroughly in Chapter 5.

4.9. THEME 4: STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BULLYING TOWARDS POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Table 4.5: Subthemes developed from the main theme 4

Sub-themes	Codes
Department of Education	Visits to the school, efficient development, and implementation of anti-bullying policies.
Strategies in the school context	Involvement of SGB members, workshops, and an effective reporting mechanism.
Strategies in the educational institution's context	Proactive, instructive and useful interventions

The participants were requested to propose intervention strategies that could be used to combat workplace bullying committed by management against educators in Post-level 1 to 3. Their answers demonstrated a clear need for policy enforcement, helpful leadership and safe reporting procedures.

4.9.1 Proposed strategies suggested to be implemented by the Department of Education

The Department of Basic Education has a great deal of power and responsibility in addressing and preventing workplace bullying in schools. The Department, as the main regulatory authority for public education, is authorised to create rules, oversee

schools, uphold professional standards and shield educators from mistreatment and exploitation.

PL8 explained that:

The Department must treat bullying seriously and put strict regulations in place. There must be an immediate investigation and action taken if a principal is accused of bullying. The department's officials should frequently visit schools and have private conversations with educators. This will enable them to comprehend the reality of the situation on the ground. Workshops are necessary for managers and principals on how to deal with educators in a professional manner. Because they don't have enough leadership training, some managers take advantage of their position. Educators must collaborate together to find strategies that might work for them to reduce bullying in the workplace such as anonymous reporting or suggestion box that can be collected once a month.

PL2:

The Department should establish a secret reporting mechanism whereby educators may report bullying without being afraid of being targeted.

PL8 explained that, instead of remaining alone, educators can assist one another and report bullying together by forming peer support groups. Management and educators should receive conflict resolution training. Professional dispute resolution should be a skill that principals and educators possess. Mechanisms for anonymous reporting, such as online forms or suggestion boxes are crucial. When bullying is reported in confidence, educators feel more comfortable doing this. Everyone can be reminded of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour through regular courses on professional conduct and workplace ethics.

The responses indicated the importance of the Department of Education to intervene in the schools and conduct a thorough investigation of the contextual factors that contribute to bullying in the school environment by consulting educators about their experiences. Workshops for managers, such as those recommended to learn how to

treat educators with professionalism, will contribute positively to eradicating bullying experienced in the school environment.

PL 3 shared that:

There should be a hotline available to educators where they may report principals who ask for money. The principal held up my documents, so I worked for months without getting paid. I was threatened when I asked. The Department must see that HR procedures are carried out at the district level and not just by principals. We can urge the School Governing Body to assist by monitoring bullying in our school. To avoid this financial exploitation, the department is required to conduct routine audits of school finances.

Another participant, 14, added that:

The department must safeguard educators financially. We cannot be employed if we are not paid or to pay to get the job. Principals who take advantage of educators should face severe disciplinary consequences. Investigations must not be too slow to take place when educators report these problems. Because a delay in intervention allows principals to keep misusing their authority, the department must take immediate action. Payment systems must be transparent. The department should make payments to educators directly into their accounts for any extra classes or responsibilities, rather than through the principal. Furthermore, new educators should be closely supervised by the department. Many quit because school principals are late in submitting paperwork, causing them to go for months without getting paid.

PL 3 raised the need for protection against financial misappropriation by school principals. Participant claimed that they were threatened when they inquired about their salaries. The responses stressed the need for the Department of Education to create a hotline for principals abusing their authority, guarantee suitable HR policies, and conduct ongoing audits. The responses indicated that the School Governing Bodies need to be actively involved in keeping an eye on managerial behaviour. When bullying is detected, they ought to intervene. When making decisions on school activities,

educators ought to be involved. Bullying and unfair treatment are decreased when educators have a voice. All bullying events should be documented by schools instead of disregarding problems, there can be a record aid of formal resolution

PL 14 also recommended disciplinary action against principals who abuse educators, the strict monitoring of new educators, and direct payment for extra duties. They indicated that the principal's capacity to keep abusing their authority comes from the delayed intervention, which causes some educators to resign due to financial distress or unpaid salaries.

PL6 stated that:

Workshops should be held to educate educators about their financial rights. Many new educators are unaware that it's against the law to pay for posts. District officials are required to check if educators are compensated for additional lessons by going to schools. The department ought to develop an online system through which appointment papers are sent directly to the district. This will stop principals from delaying submissions.

PL12:

New educators may not be aware of their labour rights or the procedures for reporting workplace bullying. Training workshops and induction programs should be established to teach them about grievance procedures, conflict resolution methods, and professional protection. Educators can be given the ability to respond effectively to bullying incidents if they are aware of it.

The importance of educators' awareness and systemic protections against financial abuse was highlighted by the participant. They pointed out that many Post-level 1 to 3 educators are unaware that it is against the law to pay for posts and proposed that there must be workshops to teach them about their rights. The participant further suggested that district authorities keep an eye on payments for extra classes conducted outside working hours and that appointment letters be sent directly to the district through an online system to prevent principals from delaying payments. In general, participants emphasised that the department's proactive intervention is necessary to end financial misuse, rebuild confidence in Senior School Management,

and guarantee that Post-level 1 to 3 educators operate in a secure, equitable, and encouraging work environment.

4.9.2 Strategies suggested to be implemented in the school context

The participants were asked to recommend concrete, doable strategies that schools may use to lessen the bullying that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 face at work. The emphasise was on practical measures that can be integrated into school systems to establish a more secure and encouraging atmosphere.

PL1 stated:

A clear anti-bullying policy ought to be posted in staff rooms at schools. Everyone has to understand the definition of bullying and that it will not be accepted. A mentorship system for new educators can protect them, and systems such as induction for new educators can assist a great deal, as they will familiarise themselves with different policies that can protect them from bullying. Educators must be given a fair chance to speak during the staff briefing without any form of disrespect.

Participant PL1 explained that it is important that each educator must be familiar with an anti-bullying policy. Each school must have policies that will eradicate bullying in the school environment. Newly appointed educators must be inducted correctly in order to know which policies are relevant to protect themselves from issues such as bullying.

Furthermore, the results show that a mix of transparent communication, staff empowerment, supportive leadership, policy enforcement and psychological assistance is needed to reduce bullying in schools. When used successfully, these strategies might help Post-level 1 to 3 educators create a courteous, safe and cooperative learning environment.

4.9.3 Proposed strategies suggested to be implemented by the educational institutions.

Participants were asked to recommend methods that educational establishments, including colleges and universities, education training programs and professional

development courses, may use to train recently hired educators to identify, stop and deal with bullying in the workplace. Proactive, instructive and useful interventions were the main topics of their answers.

PL2 stated that:

Modules on bullying and workplace ethics ought to be a part of university teacher preparation programs. Before they start working, educators should be taught how to handle bullying and must be required to participate in conflict resolution workshops. They need to learn how to resolve conflicts in a professional manner without making things worse. Assertiveness qualities should be taught in education training institution. When confronted with bullying from colleagues or management, new educators must be able to advocate for themselves.

The participant explained how the educational training institution can assist in preparing the incoming educators to deal with bullying in the workplace. Early workshops on bullying can have a great impact on the livelihood of educators, as they will be prepared to deal with things that might impact their health negatively, such as how to deal with bullying. PL9 stated that:

I believe educational instructions can help in preparing educators for the working environment, for example, upcoming educators can practise handling bullying situations by using role-playing scenarios during training. This facilitates the handling of real-life situations. Educators can develop skills in handling bullying by using behavioural simulation during their training. This facilitates the handling of real-life situations. Educational institutions' mentorship programs can connect the upcoming educators with seasoned educators who can help them deal with bullying at work, as presented to the newly appointed teacher. They must have access to counselling and support services. They will gain emotional coping mechanisms and resilience as a result when they enter the professional environment.

Additionally, PL5 commented that:

Seminars on power dynamics in schools can be held in universities. Upcoming educators need to learn how to deal with hierarchical systems professionally and how they might occasionally contribute to bullying. Programs for teacher education should include workshops on professional communication and teamwork. These abilities lessen the likelihood of bullying and conflict. Training must also address worker's rights and financial ethics so that they do not allow anyone to take advantage of them. Newly hired educators should be aware that they should never be required to pay for further classes or posts. I mean, it is so painful as a new educator to pay for a post while you have responsibilities waiting for you.

The participants emphasised the importance of preparing new educators to manage power dynamics and prevent workplace bullying. They recommended structured mentoring programmes, role-playing scenarios and access to counselling services to help novice educators develop emotional resilience and effective coping skills for the demands of the school environment. Participant PL5 further advised that educational institutions should include training on financial ethics, workers' rights, collaboration, professional communication and hierarchical systems in order to prevent exploitation and reduce conflict. Both participants stressed that inexperienced educators are often forced to pay for jobs, which is psychologically exhausting and unjust and that adequate training and assistance can enable them to overcome these challenges. This will make the teaching workforce more resilient and professional.

The theme 4 main findings were to focus on strategies that can be used to curb workplace bullying towards educators at Post-level 1 to 3 within the schools. The following chapter will consist of the detailed strategy.

4.10 CONCLUSION

The data presentation was dealt with in Chapter 4. The data were collected from sixteen participants who were provided. Participants were sampled according to a purposive sampling method, which consisted of eight Post-level one, four Post-level two, and four Post-level three educators who were working in the Cosmo City township schools, Johannesburg North District. Four themes were recognised in the data presentation. The same codes developed four main themes, which were organised

into sub-themes. The main results emerging from these themes were that Post-level 1 to 3 educators experienced workplace bullying. Factors that were identified as influencing bullying were financial, physical and psychological bullying. The next chapter will be based on the findings and analysis of this current chapter, recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The previous chapter focused on data presentation and interpretation. It presented and interpreted the data, and lastly analysed the data. Codes that led to the key themes emerged in Chapter 4. The developed themes included types of bullying, causal factors that contribute to bullying, the effects of bullying and strategies that can be used to lessen bullying among educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in Cosmo City township schools.

The conclusions drawn from the concepts established in Chapter 4 will be covered in this chapter. In addition, some of the literature examined in Chapter 2 will be cited in the discussions. Furthermore, the study's findings and recommendations will be presented in this chapter.

The codes and concepts introduced in Table 5.1 will serve as a guide for Chapter 5.

Table 5.1. Themes and sub-themes to be discussed in this chapter

Theme	Sub-themes
Theme 1 Forms of bullying encountered by educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in Cosmo City townships	• Verbal abuse • Psychological bullying • Sexual exploitation • Work overload and unfair work allocation
Theme 2 Factors contributing to workplace bullying	• Contextual factors • Weak policies and reporting mechanisms • Lack of job opportunities • Limited legal remedies • Strong competition for promotional posts
Theme	Sub-themes

Theme 3 The impacts of workplace bullying on Post-level 1 to 3 educators	• Financial impact • Physical impact • Psychological impact
Theme 4 Strategies to reduce workplace bullying	• Department of Education • Strategies in the school context • Strategies in the education institution's context

5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS

This study sought to investigate the workplace bullying that post-level 1 to 3 educators encounter in Cosmo City township secondary schools. According to the data, Post-level 1 to 3 educators are subjected to a wide range of abuses, such as verbal intimidation, psychological manipulation, financial exploitation and sexual abuse of power by people in leadership roles. These results shed light on crucial dynamics in the school environment that have an impact on the overall health of Post-level 1 to 3 educators, both personally and professionally.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main goal of this part is to provide a summary of the study's findings in accordance with the topics and sub-themes listed in Table 5.1. Following the study's conclusions, suggestions and summary of the study findings will be given.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Forms of workplace bullying encountered by educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in township schools of the Cosmo City North District

Post-level 1 to 3 educators encounter several types of workplace bullying in their workplace, such as sexual, verbal, psychological, work overload and unfair work allocation.

5.3.1.1 Verbal abuse

The study findings show that verbal abuse is common in the township schools of Cosmo City. Post-level 1 to 3 educators are exposed to verbal abuse from the Senior School Management, such as hostile comments about how they look, their fashion

sense and even being reprimanded in front of their learners and colleagues. Yelling, making insulting comments during staff meetings, making threats and using offensive language were common forms of verbal abuse, according to the findings. Nurhasanah et al.'s research findings (2024) concurred with the study conducted by De Wet and Jacobs (2021), namely that verbal assaults or more commonly referred to as verbal abuse, are considered emotional bullying; they encompass hurtful statements made even in the absence of physical interaction. Defamatory language, menacing phrases, coercion or insults, which junior educators are subjected to at the hands of senior colleagues, particularly those who hold leadership positions.

The findings show that verbal abuse is used as a weapon to dominate and regulate Post-level 1 to 3 educators, as demonstrated by these incidents. This kind of conduct might make Post-level 1 to 3 educators hesitant to voice their worries or dispute unfair treatment, as it becomes commonplace in the school environment. The lens of the Power and Control Theory, which examines how people in positions of power can exert influence over others through threats, intimidation and psychological manipulation, can be used to understand these results. In agreement with Grant, Haverland and Kalbfleisch (2023), this theory clarifies how managers or people in more senior positions might abuse their power to frighten, degrade and bully in the context of the workplace, subordinates, therefore maintaining control and reinforcing hierarchical domination. Principals and members of the Senior School Management have institutional power that gives them the ability to affect the Post-level on three educators' working environment, performance evaluations and career prospects. Post-level 1 to 3 educators, who have little power, may be more susceptible to manipulative control and retaliatory conduct by their supervisors (Petrova, 2024). Because of the threat of retaliation or victimisation, some Post-level 1 to 3 educators felt unable to speak out against verbal abuse. As a result, verbal abuse became a means of reinforcing power inequalities in the workplace.

Additionally, these results can be explained by the Organisational Justice Theory, which highlights the significance of fairness, respect and transparency in organizations. Post-level 1 to 3 educators can feel that the organisational climate is unjust and unsupportive when school officials verbally abuse or publicly humiliate them. In agreement with this finding, Neall and Tuckey (2021) believe that

organizational justice theory sheds light on the structural imbalance that allows management to bully Post-level 1 to 3 educators. This might result in lower job satisfaction, emotional discomfort and less dedication to the job. This study further shows that some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that they lost faith in the institutional mechanisms intended to handle workplace complaints. Mokano and Letuma (2025) believe that this kind of conduct fosters a toxic workplace that harms educators' mental health and professional effectiveness.

5.3.1.2 Psychological bullying

Findings of the study found that educators Post-level 1 to 3 are subjected to psychological bullying in schools. Some educators believe that psychological bullying manifests itself through emotional abuse, where some of the Senior School Management use harsh words toward them. The view of Hlophe et al. (2017) confirms that non-physical acts of aggression aimed at causing emotional distress and eroding a person's sense of self-worth are considered psychological bullying. The findings of this study further revealed that emotional discomfort and persistent anxiety were discovered to be the main psychological effects that Post-level 1 to 3 educators had suffered in township schools. Woudstra et al. (2018) agree with this view by mentioning that workplace bullying also harms educators' mental health, resulting in diminished self-esteem and tense relationships with learners.

Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that their mental conditions were used against them after their admission, and this created feelings of anxiety and self-doubt. In agreement with this finding, Sambo and Govender (2023) state that emotional disengagement and withdrawal may be interpreted as responses to ongoing injustice using the Theory of Organisational Justice. The view of Neall and Tuckey (2021) confirms that bullying actions are not only acts of dominance but also breaches of justice standards, such as distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice. Furthermore, these results may be understood theoretically through the Power and Control Theory, which postulates that continuous exposure to authoritarian intimidation and unfair treatment might cause subordinates to experience chronic stress and anxiety (Kaduma, 2024).

Okeke and Simphiwe (2024) conclude that the findings advance theoretical knowledge by demonstrating how escalating justice-related bullying in township schools contributes to professional disengagement and potential educator attrition. As a result, Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are psychologically harassed experience fear, worry, changes in their personality and low self-worth.

5.3.1.3 Sexual exploitation

This study uncovered that Post-level 1 to 3 educators experience sexual abuse at the hands of the management. Educators at Post-level 1 to 3 believed that the form of sexual abuse they experienced comprised being asked for sexual favours in exchange for permanent posts or promotional posts, and inappropriate comments about their dress code. This finding is supported by Özer and Escartín (2023), who argue that in a highly competitive employment environment, unemployed educators often encounter exploitative practices, including situations where offering sexual favours or paying bribes becomes the only perceived means of securing a teaching post. In line with the findings, female educators felt that they were more prone to sexual abuse perpetrated by their male principals than by male educators. Contrary to this view of these educators, Bounds and Jenkins (2018) believe that those attacks against male educators, particularly sexual harassment, have gone mostly unreported.

In addition, the study further revealed that some Post-level 1 to 3 educators who experienced sexual abuse believed that it had detrimental effects on their health and performance at work. In line with this finding, Scheeler et al. (2021) believe that sexual exploitation has negative impacts on the psychological and physical well-being of the victim, regardless of the gender of the victim. For instance, the findings of this study highlighted that she felt compelled to enter into a relationship with the principal in order to protect her job. These findings can be explained theoretically using the Power and Control Theory, which posits that people in positions of authority may employ their power to dominate or control others in order to keep their position (Petrova, 2024).

5.3.1.4 Work overload and unfair work allocation

The findings of this study outlined that educator's at Post-level 1 to 3 experienced excessive workloads and the unfair distribution of duties. Grant et al. (2023) believe that these forms of workplace bullying had a detrimental impact on their professional

performance, emotional health, and overall job satisfaction. The view of Mabasa-Manganyi (2023) confirms that work overload is a subtle kind of bullying that uses managerial power to put pressure on particular people. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City secondary schools believe that school managers frequently distribute workloads unfairly or deliberately give them the most challenging tasks as a form of punishment. This finding is supported by Hofmann et al. (2017) who believe that manipulation of the task distribution results in burnout, stress and a feeling of marginalisation among the educators who are impacted. In contrast with this view, De Vos (2020) believes that workload inequalities in schools have not been thoroughly examined, and how strategically management (principals) use work assignment as a means of retribution and control. In light of the Power and Control Theory, workload manipulation can be seen as a non-physical manifestation of coercive control and how the Senior School Management places too much responsibility on Post-level 1 to 3 educators, which reduces their independence and ultimately limits their ability to question authority (Mabasa-Manganyi, 2023).

5.3.2 Theme 2: Factors contributing to workplace bullying towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators

Several factors contributing to workplace bullying were identified, which included contextual factors, weak policies and reporting mechanisms and a lack of job opportunities.

5.3.2.1 Contextual factors

Power imbalances and a high number of learner enrolments, which led to overcrowding in classes, were one of the findings in this study. The findings of this study demonstrate that overcrowding is the factor influencing workplace bullying, which is used as a form of punishment against Post-level 1 to 3 educators (De Wet, 2025). Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believe that certain educators were given fewer classes with a smaller number of learners in class. In contrast, other educators had a heavier burden, entailing having a large number of learners in one class. The views of Likuru and Mwila (2022) confirm that Post-level 1 to 3 educators disfavoured by principals are often allocated a larger number of learners and are assigned subjects for which they lack specific training as a form of punishment. In contrast with this view,

Seherrie (2023) believes that overcrowding is frequently caused by the lack of educational resources, such as textbooks, technology and classroom resources, which are inadequate for everyone. For example, findings in this study outlined that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 are not part of decision-making when it comes to the allocation of duties, the decisions of what to teach and the allocation of duties are left to the principal. This practice makes certain that Post-level 1 to 3 educators are vulnerable to workplace bullying. This view is supported by Gundogdu (2022), who believes that school principals often abuse their power by mistreating their subordinates, which impacts educators' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, perceptions of the school and their performance.

Findings in this study outlined that educators at post-level 1 to 3 are frequently left out of discussions regarding workload distribution and instructional duties. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that the majority of choices pertaining to subject allocation, class distribution and other professional responsibilities are made by the principals without really involving them in the discussion. This finding is supported by Tshangana et al. (2024), who assert that school principals may misuse their power by having too much control over administrative choices, which may have a detrimental impact on Post-level 1 to 3 educators' perspectives, impressions of the school environment, and professional performance. In line with this view (Seherrie, 2023), Post-level 1 to 3 educators may feel unappreciated and powerless in the school environment when they are excluded from choices that directly impact their workload and teaching duties.

The lens of the Power and Control Theory, which examines how people in positions of authority can utilise organisational structures and Senior School Management choices to retain dominance over subordinates, may be used to explain these results further. In concurring with this, Hashish et al. (2024) believe that the misuse of authority, allocation of overcrowded classes, and exclusion from decision-making processes may be seen in this study's context as ways in which power is used and maintained throughout the school system. As a result, such behaviours not only increase Post-level 1 to 3 educators' workload but also function as low-key methods of intimidation that prevent them from questioning management choices.

5.3.2.2 Weak policies and reporting mechanism

Findings in this study revealed that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 often felt that policies in their schools were non-existent, which makes them vulnerable to bullying and mistreatment by the Senior School Managements. In line with this finding, the lack of availability of anti-bullying policies contributed a great deal to the workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators (Lin et al., 2022). Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that some schools had no policy at all that could be used to curb bullying in schools. Contrary to the view of these educators, De Wet (2021) claims that institutional trust is promoted in South African schools by written policies that allow educators to report incidents without fear of retribution. Findings in this study further confirmed that educators at Post-level 1 to 3 find it difficult to report bullying as they fear that bullying can persist. Contrary to this view, Ahmad et al. (2021) believe that bullying incidents are less common when employees feel that judgments are fair and transparent.

The significance of fairness in organisational procedures and decision-making processes, as highlighted by Organisational Justice Theory, can also be used to understand these results. As a result, Post-level 1 to 3 educators may continue to be bullied with little protection unless there are clear standards, open processes and consistent enforcement.

5.3.2.3 Lack of job opportunities

The study found that the lack of job opportunities contributes to workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that they endured workplace bullying due to a lack of job opportunities in the educational sector. In line with this view, Perryman and Calvert (2020) believe that unemployed educators frequently agree to oppressive or exploitative contracts out of fear of prolonged joblessness. In contrast with this view, Prasetya and Akrim (2024) believe that educators may feel more empowered to handle bullying behaviour if they are given awareness initiatives that include lessons in assertiveness and emotional intelligence. The findings of this study revealed that due to temporary contracts and reliance of Post-level 1-3 educators on management referrals for permanent employment, many said they put up with unjust treatment, excessive workloads, and

verbal abuse. This finding is consistent with the work of Perryman and Calvert (2020), who believe that inexperienced educators may be deceived into thinking that principals have complete control over their employment because they are frequently unfamiliar with school appointment protocols. The lens of the Power and Control Theory, which shows the imbalance of power between the school managers and the Post-level 1 to 3 educators, can be used to understand these results. Motsei and Nkomo (2016) clarify how managers in hierarchical positions, like schools, may use their positional power to intimidate, undermine, and isolate their subordinates. Educators at Post-level 1 to 3 are more vulnerable to workplace bullying because of job insecurity and a shortage of employment options. In support of this view, Salin (2021) states that it is believed that Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are worried about unemployment or who rely on short-term contracts may feel forced to put up with unfair treatment. This notion might give school managers more power and make Post-level 1 to 3 educators less inclined to question or confront maltreatment.

5.3.2.4 Limitation of legal remedies

The findings of this study found that limited legal remedies contributed to the workplace bullying encountered by educators at Post-level 1 to 3. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that they could rely only on the unions to intervene and protect them and further mentioned that this process is inefficient, as it takes time to receive the feedback, or sometimes the process is deliberately delayed. Contrary to this view, Langeveldt (2023) believes that there are remedies, such as delictual liability, vicarious liability, and constitutional claims, available for educators at Post-level 1 to 3 who are individuals affected by bullying. In contrast with this view, Mbanga (2023) believes that although these remedies are available, challenges such as a lack of legal literacy, time-consuming processes, costs and fear of retaliation, may restrict educators at Post-level 1 to 3 from accessing legal assistance. Post-level 1 to 3 educators are hesitant to report bullying incidents because they are afraid of retribution by their school principals and their co-workers.

In the lens of the Organisational Justice Theory, which examines how these behaviours are frequently perceived as unfair when management abuses authority to regulate educators, which exacerbates the detrimental effects of bullying, can be used to explain these findings. Concurring with William (2024), the researcher believe that

management's abuse of authority not only encourages bullying but also diminishes educators' feelings of justice, self-worth and faith in their profession. Agreeing with this view, Hendra et al. (2022) believe that structural power is susceptible to abuse, which can lead to exclusion, intimidation or unfair treatment. Post-level 1 to 3 educators are hesitant to report bullying incidents because they are afraid of retribution from school principals and their co-workers. As a result, this makes Post-level 1 to 3 educators believe that institutional systems designed to protect them are insufficient and foster feelings of vulnerability and discontent in the workplace.

5.3.2.5 Strong competition for promotional posts

Findings in this study indicated that certain educators at Post-level 1 to 3 who are close to the Senior School Management and cause conflict between the principal and other colleagues receive promotional posts. In agreement with this finding, Bayram et al., (2024) confirm that this kind of a behaviour demonstrates biased treatment or offering special advantages to particular individuals or groups, which goes against the principle of fairness in relation to fairness in the school setting. In contrast to this view, Topsakal et al. (2024), Sakçak et al. (2021), Karakose et al. (2024) and Papadakis et al. (2024) believe that these kinds of actions are present in the educational setting but at a significantly lower frequency. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators believe that they can only get promotional posts if they have good relations with the principals. In agreement with this view, Sakçak et al. (2021) believe that school principals often preferred their friends, union members and individuals who align with their perspectives over other educators in the school.

The lens of the Power and Control Theory, which examines how these practices may exacerbate current power imbalances in schools and restrict equitable competition for leadership roles, can be used to understand these findings. In agreement with this view, Hashish et al. (2024) believe that the Power and Control Theory explains the power dynamics and behaviours behind bullying. As a result, some Post-level 1 to 3 educators might refrain from confronting unjust practices or reporting bullying actions out of concern that doing so may hurt their opportunities for promotional posts or continued employment.

5.3.4 Theme 3. The impact of workplace bullying on educators

Theme 3 highlights the impact of workplace bullying on Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Due to workplace bullying, participants reported psychological strain, emotional anguish, a decline in job satisfaction and difficulties in their professional relationships.

5.3.4.1 Financial impact

After focusing on the financial abuse suffered by educators at Post-level 1 to 3, this study proved that financial abuse is prevalent in the township schools of Cosmo City, which ended up having a negative impact on Post-level 1 to three educators' financial well-being. In agreement with this finding, Mbanga (2023) alleges that there are situations where Post-level 1 to 3 educators are forced to pay monetary amounts when they receive their first paycheck. Post-level 1 to 3 educators in this study confirmed that they paid for promotional posts, donated money for events and attended extra classes on weekends without any reimbursement, while others did not. In line with this view, Subisi et al. (2025) believe that this affects the monthly budget of the educators at Post-level 1 to 3. Some educators shared that they were deprived of any opportunities that could generate an extra income for them as a form of punishment by the school managers.

These financial effects can be explained theoretically by the Power and Control Theory, which emphasises how authority figures can indirectly affect the well-being of their subordinates by creating stressful situations, making excessive demands and treating them unfairly (Salin, 2021). In support of this view, Nathan (2017) believes that these actions leave educators vulnerable to managerial bullying and coercion by depriving them of independent support structures like financial gain. As a result, the incidents revealed in this study indicate that workplace bullying has real consequences for Post-level 1 to 3 educators' financial security and general well-being, in addition to harming their mental health.

5.3.4.2 Physical impact

The study findings show that workplace bullying had a physical impact on Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that the forms of physical abuse

they experienced were excessive workload and long hours of work, working Monday to Saturday without any rest and not being able to be absent due to the criticism they received from their school managers. In support of this view, Tshangana et al. (2024) believe that rising workload levels and the demands of managing overcrowded classrooms lead to an intensified workload for educators at Post-level 1 to 3. This view is echoed by Mbanga (2023), who believes that such conditions may lead to burnout, thereby diminishing educators' involvement and overall classroom effectiveness. Some Post-level 1 to 3 educators experienced burnout and insomnia due to the workload they experienced at the school. Subisi et al. (2025) confirm that crowded schools have adversely impacted Post-level 1 to 3 educators' self-esteem and job satisfaction, leading to a classroom environment where educators face numerous challenges and leave the profession due to the lack of support from their managers.

These physical effects can be explained theoretically by the Theory of Organisational Justice, which highlights how the physical stress on Post-level 1 to 3 educators is exacerbated by perceptions of unfair treatment and unequal workplace policies (William, 2024).

5.3.4.3 Psychological impact

The findings of the study show that workplace bullying had a psychological impact on Post-level 1 to 3 educators. Post-level 1 to 3 educators believed that emotional discomfort and persistent anxiety were the main psychological effects they experienced. According to Woudstra et al. (2018), workplace bullying also harms educators' mental health, resulting in diminished self-esteem and tense relationships with learners. Concurring with Hendra et al. (2022), these results may be understood theoretically through the Power and Control Theory, which postulates that continuous exposure to authoritarian intimidation and unfair treatment might cause subordinates to experience chronic stress and anxiety.

The findings in this study further showed that due to the emotional turmoil endured by the Post-level 1 to 3 educators, some ended up in mental institutions. In agreement with this view, Hlophe et al. (2017) believe that there is a rise in cases of educators being hospitalised in mental health facilities as a result of persistent bullying. The study further revealed that the majority of Post-level 1 to 3 educators who have gone to

mental institutions had already experienced different forms of bullying. The views of De Wet (2024) confirm that post-level 1 to 3 educators who have been victimised may experience symptoms of mental anguish, decreased appetite, heavy smoking, alcohol abuse and sentiments of shame and helplessness.

5.3.5 Theme 4. Strategies suggested to reduce workplace bullying

In order to address workplace bullying in the educational setting, practical, long-lasting solutions that foster a secure and encouraging work environment for educators must be developed and put into practice. Post-level 1 to 3 educators' well-being, dignity and professional development depends on strategies that reduce bullying and its detrimental effects. Schools and other educational institutions can promote excellent working relationships and raise educators' morale, productivity and retention by emphasising preventative measures, supportive interventions and institutional responsibility. The next section lists important strategies that educators can use at the school and institutional levels to effectively manage and reduce bullying at work.

5.3.5.1 Strategies implemented by the Department of Education

Findings in this study demonstrated that the Department of Education must ensure that HR procedures are carried out at the district level and not just by principals. In agreement with Mbanga (2023), the researcher believe that improved Human Resource and Payroll systems must be put in place to reduce reliance on manual capturing and introduce synchronised recruitment systems, which will be effective, as once the appointment is captured, this activates the payroll. According to Ahmed and Pierre (2024), newly appointed educators must have written communication detailing the procedures and timeline of the payment. Concurring with Campion et al. (2019), the written communication regarding payment terms indicates an ethical human resource practice within the education sector. The study indicated that the Department of Education must develop policies that will protect Post-level 1 to 3 educators from workplace bullying. The study also suggested that training workshops and induction programs should be established to teach them about grievance procedures, conflict resolution methods and professional protection. In agreement with this, Sileyew (2019) notes that induction programs and effective training can benefit educators to become self-directed. However, Kaya et al. (2023) claim that induction has not yet been able

to offer a compelling identification of the efficiency in equipping educators with information about grievance procedures.

5.3.5.2 Strategies implemented by the Department of Education

The findings in the study indicate that schools must develop their own anti-bullying policies to curb workplace bullying and newly appointed educators must be inducted correctly in order to know which policies are relevant to protect themselves from issues such as bullying. According to Einarsen et al. (2020), to address workplace bullying, a comprehensive, multi-level approach is needed that includes clear policies, fair management practices, empowerment initiatives and collective action. In contrast, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) has implemented a Code of Professional Ethics that demonstrates the standards of conduct that are expected of educators and expressly forbids any bullying or harassment in the workplace (South African Council for Educators, 2022). According to the responses from participants, proper channels must be followed to report bullying in the workplace. In agreement with this, Vijayakumar and Rajagopal (2024) state that a range of confidential mechanisms for workplace bullying reporting must be instituted, such as a hotline or online system, as well as direct reporting to trusted individuals, in order to implement numerous reporting routes.

Supporting the above, current labour laws like the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 offer broad protection against unfair treatment (Badimo & Masisi, 2025). The study further suggests that the school governing bodies must intervene to reduce bullying in the school workplace, and there must be various channels where bullying can be reported without creating fear in educators (Sol & Heng, 2022).

5.3.5.3 Strategies suggested to be implemented by the educational institutions

This study revealed that service training institutions can assist in preparing the incoming educators to deal with bullying in the workplace. These approaches are particularly crucial in educational settings like secondary schools, where hierarchical systems often make Post-level 1 to 3 educators susceptible to management-led bullying (De Wet, 2021). Early workshops on bullying can create a great impact on the

livelihood of educators at the Post-level 1 to 3. The findings further advised that teacher education institutions should include training on financial ethics, workers' rights, collaboration, professional communication and hierarchical systems to prevent exploitation and reduce conflict. In agreement with this, Prasetia and Akrim (2024), educators may feel more empowered to handle bullying behaviour if they are given awareness initiatives that include lessons in assertiveness and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, to equip the next educators for the demands of the workplace, the participants suggested instituting mentoring programs, role-playing situations, and counselling access to help them develop emotional resiliency and coping skills. Concurring with Pokharel et al. (2024), it is essential to provide educators at Post-level 1 to 3 with the resources they need to succeed through education and awareness. The authors (Pokharel et al., 2024) further argue that Post-level 1 to 3 educators are taught, during induction, how to recognise, prevent and handle bullying scenarios professionally through training programs.

5.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO NEW KNOWLEDGE

This study explored the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools in Cosmo City, Johannesburg, South Africa. Dealing with workplace bullying in the district will be useful to the officials and policymakers to make them understand the factors contributing to bullying, the nature of bullying, the impact of bullying and the strategies to deal with bullying in schools encountered by educators at Post-level 1 to 3. If the recommendations put forward are implemented, they are more likely to provide a conducive working environment for Post-level 1 to 3 educators.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests the recommendations below:

5.5.1 Recommendations for the Department of Education

This section represents the recommendation directed to the Department of Education. These suggestions are meant to reinforce anti-bullying laws, encourage healthy work cultures, and offer resources for Post-level 1 to 3 educators who are being bullied at work.

5.5.1.1 Develop policies that will protect educators

It is recommended that the department and the districts develop clear and effective policies. These policies will assist Post-level 1 to 3 educators with defending themselves regarding bullying experienced in the workplace. The Department of Education can create workshops based on the wellness of educators and the Department of Education can workshop principals on leadership skills and promote professionalism to reduce the occurrence of an inconducive working environment.

5.5.1.2 Create safe reporting channels

Anonymous reporting channels at the provincial and district levels should be created by the Department of Education. Various channels, such as online reporting channels, where bullying can be reported without creating fear in Post-level 1 to 3 educators, will provide a conducive working environment. Ensuring confidentiality through the process of reporting bullying will encourage the victims of bullying to come forward. The Department of Education can furthermore conduct an individual survey, assessment evaluation, or mechanisms for anonymous reporting, such as online forms or suggestion boxes, to follow up on any bullying recurrence and apply disciplinary action if there is any misconduct or the recurrence of bullying.

5.5.1.3 Investigate and address complaints fairly

The department must put proper grievance channels in place to assist in the investigation, the investigation procedures must be transparent and the victim must be given a time frame for when the case will be resolved and how it will be resolved. There must be consequences that the perpetrator will endure, such as a three-month suspension without payment. This will reduce the cases of workplace bullying.

5.5.1.4 Support the victim of bullying

The department of education must provide professional psychology, especially if bullying caused severe emotional damage. Wellness programme such as stress management and trauma briefing programmes will assist educators to manage and avoid anything that can harm them emotionally. Free counselling services, where

educators will cut costs, will encourage educators to pay attention to their emotional wellness, which will lead to speedy recovery.

5.5.1.5 A neutral representative organisation

According to the study's results, some Post-level 1 to 3 educators specifically had hardly any confidence in union representation when it came to addressing workplace bullying and unfair labour practices. Therefore, the Department of Education can partner with other supporting networks, such as legal independent bodies like ABVOB Legal Assist, Legal Wise, or Legal Aid South Africa, which will guarantee that Post-level 1 to 3 educators receive neutral, unbiased and effective legal assistance. Objective: Independent groups may provide investigations, mediation and anonymous reporting systems. These structures would encourage Post-level 1 to 3 educators to describe events free of worries about bias or victimisation.

5.5.2 Recommendations for the school context

The following recommendations are made to address the challenges highlighted in this study.

5.5.2.1 Induction workshops and anti-bullying policies

Schools to be encouraged to workshop newly appointed educators and the existing ones about policies such as the PAM document, which will guide them to understand and practise professionalism in the school environment. The study further suggested that it is important that each educator must be familiar with an anti-bullying policy. It is crucial for each school to have policies that will eradicate bullying in the school environment.

5.5.2.2 Fair distribution of work

It is recommended that schools ensure a fair distribution of workload. Heads of departments should be supported to execute their duties efficiently by allocating subjects and tasks correctly and consistently to the educators responsible for them. Allocation must not be used as a form of punishment for other Post-level 1 to 3 educators; this will reduce the physical and mental abuse of educators.

5.5.2.3 School Governing Body involvement

School governing bodies need to be actively involved in keeping an eye on managerial behaviour, educators' representatives can liaise with the SGB and create a school culture where workplace bullying will not be permitted. Educators, along with the SGB, can create policies that align with the school code of conduct for educators that will assist in eradicating workplace bullying.

5.5.3 Recommendations for the education institution

The recommendations in this section are aimed at educational establishments. The ideas seek to improve communication, foster supportive workshop programs and establish safe workplaces that deter bullying among educators.

5.5.3.1 Provide workshops as part of scholarship engagement

The findings of the study suggested how the educational institution can assist in preparing the incoming educators to deal with bullying in the workplace. Early workshops on bullying can create a great impact on the livelihood of educators, as they will be prepared to deal with things that might impact their health negatively.

5.5.3.2. Mentoring programs

The study further suggests that the educational institutions can equip upcoming educators for the demands of the workplace. Mentoring programs, role-playing situations, and counselling access can help Post-level 1 to 3 educators to develop emotional resiliency and coping skills. The study further advised that educational institutions should include training on financial ethics, workers' rights, collaboration, professional communication and hierarchical systems to prevent exploitation, such as paying for posts, and reduce conflict.

5.5.4 Review of the study objectives

The study achieved the following objectives:

- To explore the nature of workplace bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City.

- To identify the contributing factors to workplace bullying inflicted by Senior School Management towards educators at Post-level 1 to 3.
- To examine the impact of workplace bullying by Senior School Management on the day-to-day living of educators at Post-level 1 to 3.
- To develop strategies for addressing workplace bullying inflicted by Senior School Management towards educators at Post-level 1 to 3.

The objectives of the study were met. Four types of bullying encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City township were identified; thereafter, the factors contributing to workplace bullying were explored. The effects of workplace bullying on different educators at Post-level 1 to 3 were examined, and lastly, the strategies to resolve workplace bullying were established.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the nature and impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards educators at Post-level 1 to 3 in secondary schools of South Africa. The study was limited to 16 participants and did not include Post-level 4, who are the principals of the schools, who are also not immune to workplace bullying. The study focused on educators only and did not consider the other staff, such as general workers, administrators, district officials and learners. A future study can focus on the workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 4 in Johannesburg North district, so they can share their lived reality of workplace bullying.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study was sought primarily to investigate the workplace harassment encountered by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City, Johannesburg North District's secondary schools. The research examined the types of workplace bullying directed against Post-level 1 to 3 educators as well as the factors contributing to workplace bullying. The study also looked at the impacts of workplace bullying on educators' personal and professional well-being at Post-level 1 to 3. According to the study, members of the Senior School Management are primarily responsible for the various forms of workplace bullying that Post-level 1 to 3 educator encounter, such as verbal abuse, sexual exploitation, excessive workload allocation, unfair performance scrutiny,

professional undermining and psychological abuse. Perceptions of unfair and uneven organisational processes in schools, abuse of authority, lack of responsibility and hierarchical power imbalances were all identified as factors contributing to bullying. The effects on Post-level 1 to 3 educators were profound, leading to emotional discomfort, diminished self-esteem, decreased job satisfaction, decreased productivity and, in some cases, intentions to quit the profession. These factors eventually had an impact on the quality of teaching and learning as well as the wellbeing of Post-level 1 to 3 educators.

In light of the findings, suggested strategies for controlling and reducing workplace bullying in schools were recommended. Lastly, the study advised practical actions to address and reduce the frequency of bullying seen by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in school.

REFERENCES

- Adamovic, M. (2023). Organizational justice research: A review, synthesis, and research agenda. *European Management Review*, 20(4), 762-782. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12564>
- Ågotnes, K. W., Nielsen, M. B., Skogstad, A., Gjerstad, J., & Einarsen, S. V. (2023). The role of leadership practices in the relationship between role stressors and exposure to bullying behaviours – a longitudinal moderated mediation design. *Work & Stress*, 38(1), 44-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2023.2226635>
- Aguas, P. (2022). Fusing approaches in educational research: Data collection and data analysis in phenomenological research. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5027>
- Ahmad, S., Islam, T., Sohal, A. S., Cox, J. W., & Kaleem, A. (2021). Managing bullying in the workplace: a model of servant leadership, employee resilience and proactive personality. *Personnel Review*, 50(7/8), 1613-1631. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-062020-0470>
- Ahmed, N., & Pierre, D. P. (2024). The role of classroom management in enhancing learners' academic performance: Educators' experiences. *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, 5(1), 202-218. <https://doi.org/10.46627/silet.v5i1.364>
- Alhassan, A. K., Alzaqat, R. T., & Alswelih, F. S. (2023). Workplace bullying and violence in health sector in Saudi Arabia. *Medicine*, 102(35), e34913. <https://doi.org/10.1097/md.00000000000034913>
- Al-Obaidi, R. K. N., Idan, A. K., & Alwan, A. N. M. (2022). Evaluating the level of transparency and its relationship to performance evaluation in a sample of Iraqi banks listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange. *Webology*, 19(1), 3657-3683. <https://doi.org/10.14704/web/v19i1/web19241>
- Alzoubi, H. M., Ahmed, G., Al-Gasaymeh, A., & Kurdi, B. A. (2019). Empirical study on sustainable supply chain strategies and its impact on competitive priorities: The mediating role of supply chain collaboration. *Management Science Letters*, 10, 703708. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.9.008>

- Ariza-Montes, J. A., Rodríguez, A. L. L., & Millán, A. G. L. (2015). Workplace bullying among educators: An analysis from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model perspective. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 58(8), 818-827. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jom.0000000000000804>
- Badenhorst, M., & Botha, D. (2022). Workplace bullying in a South African higher education institution: Academic and support staff experiences. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20, 5-13. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v20i0.1909>
- Badimo, T. P., & Masisi, I. M. (2025). Educators' experiences and coping strategies in response to learner violence in Mopani District, Limpopo. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v21i1.1527>
- Baxen, E. (2021). Strategies to support educators experiencing school violence. [Master thesis, University of Pretoria]. <http://hdl.handle.net/2263/83899>
- Bayram, I., Duyar, Y., Karakose, T., & Kaplan, H. I. (2024). An investigation of educators' perspectives on favouritism in schools: Implications for educational policy and practice. *Educational Process International Journal*, 13(4), 102-114. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2024.134.6>
- Belgasm, H., Alsubi, A., Iyiola, K., & Khadem, A. (2025). Interpersonal conflict and employee behaviour in the public sector: Investigating the role of workplace ostracism and supervisors' active empathic listening. *Behavioural Sciences*, 15(2), 194. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15020194>
- Bernotaite, L., & Malinauskiene, V. (2017). Workplace bullying and mental health among educators in relation to psychosocial job characteristics and burnout. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*. 30(4), 629-640. <https://doi.org/10.13075/ijomeh.1896.00943>
- Bernstein, C., & Batchelor, T. P. (2022). Qualitative exploration of workplace demands, resources and bullying among educators in South African schools: Implications for individual and organisational well-being. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n2a2081>

- Botha, D. (2019). Employees' perceptions and experiences of bullying in the workplace. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 16(1), 180-208. <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcm19004.0010>
- Bounds, C., & Jenkins, L. N. (2018). Teacher-directed violence and stress: The role of the school setting. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 22(4), 435-442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-018-0180-3>
- Bramoullé, Y., & Goyal, S. (2016). Favouritism. *Journal of Development Economics*, 122, 16-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2016.04.006>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, M. N. Coutanche, L. M. McMullen, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher .APA handbook of research methods in psychology: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological (2), 65–81. *American Psychological Association*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000319-004>
- Bryant, D., & Wilson, A. (2020). Factors potentially influencing discipline referral and suspensions at an affiliated charter high school. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 10(1), 119-128. <https://doi.org/10.5590/jerap.2020.10.1.08>
- Burger, C., Strohmeier, D., & Kollerová, L. (2022). Educators can make a difference in bullying: Effects of teacher interventions on learners' adoption of bully, victim, bullyvictim or defender roles across time. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51(12), 2312-2327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01674-6>
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(1), 2-20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-s>
- Cakirpaloglu, S. D., Čech, T., Kvintová, J., Štenclová, V., & Křeménková, L. (2018). The relationship between coping strategies and workplace bullying in elementary school educators. *ICERI Proceedings*, 1, 2641-2648. <https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2018.1585>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple: Research case

examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652-661.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

Celestin, M. (2024). The role of whistleblower protection laws in enhancing corporate accountability and ethical business practices. *Journal of Business, Sciences and Technology* 8(4,) 1046-1057. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15063336>

Chauke, T. A. (2024). Teacher intervention strategies on reducing youth violent behaviour in one historically disadvantaged school: A multi-disciplinary approach. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 36(2). <https://doi.org/10.25159/2708-9355/14037>

Chen, N. (2024). The impact of workplace ostracism on employee well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: A study of the mediation effects of remote work challenges. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 26, 101-174.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2024.101174>

Christianson, M. K., & Barton, M. A. (2021), Sensemaking in the time of COVID-19. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58, 572-576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12658>

Citizen Digital. (2026, May 17). 'Slaps and kicks': Nyamira teacher in hospital after principal assaults him 'for being late to school' *Citizen Digital*.
<https://citizen.digital/article/slapsand-kicks-nyamira-teacher-in-hospital-after-principal-assaults-him-for-being-late-to-school-n358185>

Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases. (1998). *GN R711 in Government Gazette 19406 of 17 July 1998*.
<https://www.gov.za/documents/codegood-practice-handling-sexual-harassment-cases>

Coetzee, A., & Steyn, F. (2017). Workplace violence in private and public secondary schools in Tshwane, Gauteng. *Southern African Journal of Criminology*, 30(3), 29-49.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2263/65258>

Coetzee, M., & Van Dyk, J. (2017). Workplace bullying and turnover intention: Exploring work engagement as a potential mediator. *Psychological Reports*, 121(2), 375-392.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294117725073>

- Cortina, L. M., & Areguin, M. A. (2020). Putting people down and pushing them out: sexual harassment in the workplace. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour*, 8(1), 285-309. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych012420-055606>
- Coşkun, K. (2020). A new explanation for the conflict between constructivist and objectivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920938280>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Schachner, A. C. W., Wojcikiewics, S. K., & Flook, L. (2023). Educating educators to enact the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 28(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2022.2130506>
- Dawadi, S. (2020). Thematic analysis APPROACH: A step-by-step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1–2), 62-71. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49731>
- De Cieri, H., Sheehan, C., Donohue, R., Shea, T., & Cooper, B. (2019). Workplace bullying: an examination of power and perpetrators. *Personnel Review*, 48(2), 324–341. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-02-2018-0057>
- De Vos, J. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 and SUBSEQUENT social distancing on travel behaviour. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 5, 100121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2020.100121>
- De Wet, C. & Jacobs, L.(2024). What newspapers tell us about teacher-on-learner violence in South African schools. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 13(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v13i1.7589>
- De Wet, C., & Jacobs, L. (2018). The complexity of teacher-targeted workplace bullying: An analysis for policy. *Journal for Juridical Science*, 43(2), 53-78. <https://doi.org/10.18820/24150517/jjs43.i2.3>
- De Wet, C., & Jacobs, L. (2021). Workplace bullying, emotional abuse and harassment in schools. In J. R. Blase, J. C. De Wet, & C. F. De Wet (Eds.), *Handbooks of workplace bullying, emotional abuse and harassment* (Vol. 4, pp. 187–219). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5308-5_11

- DeJonckheere, M., & VAUGHN, L. M. (2019). Semi-structured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, 7(2), e000057. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- Demirtaş, H., & Demirbilek, N. (2019). The effect of school principals' favouritism on educators' perceptions of organizational justice and trust in the principal. *Journal of the Social Sciences Institute at Bingöl University in Turkey*, 9(17), 111-142. <https://doi.org/10.29029/busbed.456491>
- Dreer, B. (2023). On the outcomes of teacher wellbeing: A systematic review of research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 120-5179. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1205179>
- Einarsen, S. V., & Ågotnes, K. W. (2023). Bullying and harassment in the workplace. In F. C. Worrell (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Psychology*. Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.103>
- Einarsen, S. V., Hoel, H., Sapf, D., & Cooper, C. L. (Eds.). (2020). *Bullying and harassment in the workplace: Theory, research and practice*. 3rd ed. (pp. 22-23). CRC Press. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429462528>
- Employment Equity Act. (1998). Act No. 55 of 1998. <https://www.gov.za/documents/employment-equity-act>. See also Republic of South Africa.
- Ellis, J., & Hart, D. (2023). Strengthening the choice for a generic qualitative research design. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5474>
- eNCA. (2026, March 24). Two Gauteng pupils fatally stabbed in separate incidents. eNCA. Available online at: <https://www.enca.com/news-top-stories/two-gauteng-pupils-fatally-stabbed-separate-incidents>
- Erikawati, E. (2023). The philosophy of realism in education. *Journal of Innovation in Teaching and Instructional Media*, 4(1), 70-79. <https://doi.org/10.52690/jitim.v4i1.732>

- Escartin, J. (2017). Adopting an evidence-based approach to prevent and intervene against workplace bullying situations. *Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 7(4), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2161-0487.1000320>
- Etalong, T. A., Chikelese, F. O., & Chukwunyelum, A. O. (2022). The obstacles to using performance appraisal and reward systems as tools for improving employee performance. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, 10(5), 86-93. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijbmr.2013/vol10n5pp8693>
- Farrell, E. (2020). Researching lived experience in education: misunderstood or missed opportunity? *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920942066>
- Fatima, T., Bilal, A. R., Imran, M. K., & Sarwar, A. (2023). Manifestations of workplace ostracism: An insight into academics' psychological well-being. *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*, 12(1), 79-103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sajbs-03-2019-0053>
- Ferrara, P., Franceschini, G., Villani, A., & Corsello, G. (2019). Physical, psychological and social impact of school violence on children. *The Italian Journal of Pediatrics/Italian Journal of Pediatrics*, 45(1), 76. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13052-019-0669-z>
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Examining the effectiveness of schoolbullying intervention programs globally: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 1(1), 14-31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-0007-4>
- Gamian-Wilk, M., & Madeja-Bien, K. (2018). Ostracism in the workplace. In P. D'Cruz, E. Noronha, G. Keashly, & S. Tye-Williams (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace bullying, emotional abuse and harassment* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–30). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5154-8_2-1
- Ganapathy, K. (2024). The importance of qualitative research in the contemporary era. *Global Journal of Health Sciences and Research*, 2, 59-62. https://doi.org/10.25259/gjhsr_34_2024
- Garg, R. (2016). Methodology for research I. *Indian Journal of Anaesthesia*, 60(9), 640649. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5049.190619>

- Geldenhuys, M., & Henn, C. M. (2017). The relationship between demographic variables and well-being of women in South African workplaces. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(0). <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v15i0.683>
- Gosavi, A., & Wakchaure, R. (2024). Performance appraisal methods and job satisfaction in public and private sector banks: A comprehensive analysis. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.21890>
- Grant, B., Haverland, J., & Kalbfleisch, J. (2023). Title IX Policy Implementation and Sexual Harassment Prevalence in K-12 schools. *Educational Policy*, 38(2), 510–547. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048231163809>
- Greenberg, J. (1987). A taxonomy of Organizational Justice theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(1), 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1987.4306437ie>
- Greenberg, J. (1990). Organizational justice: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management*, 16(2), 399–432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639001600208>
- Gündoğdu, S. (2022). The relationship between school principals' sources of power and preschool educators' occupational sense of belonging levels. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(6), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.126.9.6>
- Hallinger, P., & Truong, T. (2016). “Above must be above, and below must be below”: Enactment of relational school leadership in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 17(4), 677-690. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-016-9463-4>
- Hameed, R. M., Bashir, F., Zahid, N., & Raja, A. R. M. (2023). Investigating how the perception of appraisal politics and bias influences job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour, with trust playing a moderating role among employees. *Bulletin of Business and Economics*, 12(4), 189-204. <https://doi.org/10.61506/01.00103>
- Hashish, E. A., Alsayed, S., Alnajjar, H. A., & Bakar, S.A.A. (2024). The relationship between organisational justice and bullying behaviours among nurses: The role of nurse managers' caring behaviours. *BMC Nursing*, 23(1), 134.-503 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02134-1>

- Hayes, B. B., & Keyser, E. (2022). The psychological contract theory on individual and work-related outcomes: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(7). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i7/14he386>
- Hendra, H., Amin, S., & Setiawati, R. (2022). Improving organisational justice citizenship behaviour through organisational justice and job satisfaction. *Journal of Business Studies and Management Review*, 5(2), 233-241. <https://doi.org/10.22437/jbsmr.v5i2.18033>
- Hlophe, S. L., Morojele, P. J., & Motsa, N. D. (2017). Learners' constructions of bullying in a South African school context. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 13(1), 1-9. <https://td-sa.net/index.php/td/article/view/391/514>
- Hodgins, M., Kane, R., Itzkovich, Y., & Fahie, D. (2024). Workplace bullying and harassment in higher education institutions: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(9), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21091173>
- Hodgins, M., MacCurtain, S., & Mannix-McNamara, P. (2020). Power and inaction: Why organisations fail to address workplace bullying. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 13(3), 265-290. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijwhm-10-2019-0125>
- Hofmann, E., Hartl, B., Gangl, K., Hartner-Tiefenthaler, M., & Kirchler, E. (2017). Authorities' coercive and legitimate power: The impact on cognitions underlying cooperation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00005>
- Huang, B., Ma, L., & Xia, W. (2021). The mixed effect of role overload on extra-role performance: The mediating role of the behavioural inhibition system/ behavioural activation system responses. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 748732. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.748732>
- Jacobs, L., & Teise, K. L. (2019). Educators' subjective experiences of workplace bullying within a perceived neoliberalist education system. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(4), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39n4a1868>

- Jozkowski, A. C. (2017). Review of the book *Reason & rigor: How conceptual frameworks guide research*. (2nd ed.), by L. Ravitch & M. Riggan. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, 31(4), 378–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07380577.2017.1360538>
- Juan, A., Zuze, L., Hannan, S., Govender, A., & Reddy, V. (2018). Bullies, victims and bully-victims in South African schools: Examining the risk factors. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38ns1a1585>
- Junjie, M., & Yingxin, M. (2022). The discussions of positivism and interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 10-14. <https://doi.org/10.36348/gajhss.2022.v04i01.002>
- Kaduma, K. D. (2024). Compliance toward ethical leadership among school principals: A synthesis of qualitative research-based evidence. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 16(1), 6-15. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJEAPS/article-abstract/9481B3371836>
- Kahraman, Ü. (2020). The school managers' favouritism behaviours. *Journal of Educational Research*.6(3), 90-106. <https://doi.org/10.29065/usakead.811773>
- Kang, D., & Evans, J. (2020). Against method: Exploding the boundary between qualitative and quantitative studies of science. *Quantitative Science Studies*, 1(3), 930-944. https://doi.org/10.1162/qss_a_00056
- Karakose, T., Polat, H., Tülübaş, T., & Demirkol, M. (2024). A review of the conceptual structure and evolution of digital leadership research in education. *Education Sciences*, 14(11), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14111166>
- Kawulich, B. (2004). Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques. *Journal of Research in Education*. 14(1).96-113. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944757>
(Accessed 18 April 2025)
- Kaya, A., Türk, N., Batmaz, H., & Griffiths, M. D. (2023). Online gaming addiction and basic Psychological Needs among Adolescents: The mediating roles of meaning in life and responsibility. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 22(4), 2413-2437. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-022-00994-9>

- Khanam, Z., Khan, Z., Arwab, M., & Khan, A. (2024). Assessing the mediating role of organizational justice between the responsible leadership and employee turnover intention in the healthcare sector. *Leadership in Health Services*, 37(3), 342-358. <https://doi.org/10.1108/lhs-06-2023-0046>
- Khanday, M. A., & Singh, J. R. (2020). Economic design of X control chart under double EWMA. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods*, 18(2), 2–12. <https://doi.org/10.22237/jmasm/1604189520>
- Kirsten, M. (2025). Organisational justice, support and cynicism: A moderated mediation model of organisational citizenship behaviour in South African workplaces. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(0), 2310-3213. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.3213>
- Kivunja, C. (2018). Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework: A systematic review of lessons from the field. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(6), 44-53. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v7n6p44>
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26>
- Ko, C., Ma, J., Bartnik, R., Haney, M. H., & Kang, M. (2017). Ethical Leadership: An integrative review and future research agenda. *Ethics & Behavior*, 28(2), 104-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2017.1318069>
- Kõiv, K., & Aia-Utsal, M. (2021). Victimized educators' experiences of teacher-targeted bullying by learners. *Psychological Applications and Trends*, 4, 172-176. <https://doi.org/10.36315/2021inpact036>
- Kraus, S., Breier, M., Lim, W. M., Dabić, M., Kumar, S., Kanbach, D., Mukherjee, D., Corvello, V., Piñeiro-Chousa, J., Liguori, E., Palacios-Marqués, D., Schiavone, F., Ferraris, A., Fernandes, C., & Ferreira, J. J. (2022). Literature reviews as independent studies: Guidelines for academic practice. *Review of Managerial Science*, 16(8), 2577-2595. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-022-00588-8>

- Lam, L. W., & Xu, A. J. (2018). Power imbalance and employee silence: the role of abusive leadership, power distance orientation, and perceived organisational politics. *Applied Psychology*, 68(3), 513-546. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-51143-001>
- Langeveldt, D. C. (2023). Legal remedies for educators as victims of workplace bullying in South Africa. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 5(2), 109-123. <https://doi.org/10.46303/repam.2023.12>
- Laryeafio, M. N., & Ogbewe, O. C. (2023). Ethical consideration dilemma: systematic review of ethics in qualitative data collection through interviews. *Journal of Ethics in Entrepreneurship and Technology*, 3(2), 94-110. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jeet-09-20220014>
- Leigh-Osroosh, K. (2021). The phenomenological house: A metaphoric framework for descriptive phenomenological psychological design and analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6) 1817-1829. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4815>
- Likuru, L. C., & Mwila, P. M. (2022). Overcrowded classrooms: Effect on teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Ilemela municipality, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 30 (2), 75-87. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2022/v30i230744>
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 33(2), 199-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Lim, W. M., Kumar, S., Pandey, N., Verma, D., & Kumar, D. (2022). Evolution and trends in consumer behaviour: Insights from the Journal of Consumer Behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 22(1), 217-232. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2118>
- Lin, L., Chien, Y., Chen, Y., Wu, C., & Chiou, H. (2022). Bullying experiences, depression, and the moderating role of resilience among adolescents. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.872100>
- Lindsäter, E., Svärdman, F., Wallert, J., Ivanova, E., Söderholm, A., Fondberg, R., Nilsson, G., Cervenka, S., Lekander, M., & Rück, C. (2022). Exhaustion disorder:

- Scoping review of research on a recently introduced stress-related diagnosis. *BJPsych Open*, 8(5), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2022.559>
- Longobardi, C., Badenez-Ribera, L., Fabris, M. A., Martines, A., & McMahon, S. D. (2018). Prevalence of learners violence against educators: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Violence*, 9(6), 596-610. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000202>
- Luft, J. A., Jeong, S., Idsardi, R., & Gardner, G. (2022). Literature reviews, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual frameworks: An introduction for new biology education researchers. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 21(3), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.21-05-0134>
- Mabasa-Manganyi, R. B. (2023). Factors influencing foundation phase rural educators' understanding and practices in selecting inclusive teaching strategies. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v13i1.991>
- Mabuza, D. C. (2025). Effects of broken homes on the academic life of university learners, Case University of Eswatini Learners. *Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies*, 5(1), 138-151. <https://doi.org/10.53103/cjess.v5i1.302>
- Maeng, J. L., Malone, M., & Cornell, D. (2019). Learners threats of violence against educators: Prevalence and outcomes using a threat assessment approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 87, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102934>
- Mahabeer, P. (2020). Novice educators' beliefs and fears about bullying in schools in South Africa. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 85(1). <https://doi.org/10.19108/koers.85.1.2445>
- Mahat, D., Neupane, D., & Shrestha, S. (2024). Quantitative research design and sample trends: A systematic examination of emerging paradigms and best practices. *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(2), 20-27. <https://doi.org/10.47760/cognizance.2024.v04i02.002>
- Mahome, M., Mphahlele, L.K & Malatji, K.S. (2023). Educators' safety within the teacherdirected violence: A model for advancing educators' safety in South African schools. *Russian Law Journal*, 11(3), 3047-3055. <https://russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/2514>

- Manandhar, N., & Joshi, S. K. (2020). Importance of consent in the research. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Health*, 10(2), 89-91.
<https://doi.org/10.3126/ijosh.v10i2.33284>
- Mangena, M. C., & Matlala, S. F. (2023). Educators' lived experiences of workplace violence and harassment committed by learners from selected high schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Healthcare*, 11(18), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11182602>
- Martinko, M. J., Mackey, J. D., Moss, S. E., Harvey, P., McAllister, C. P., & Brees, J. R. (2018). *Leader Affect Questionnaires*. [Database record]. APA PsycTests.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/t66650-000>
- Maslach, C. (2017). Finding solutions to the problem of burnout. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 69(2), 143-152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000090>
- Matemane, T. M., & Chauke, T. A. (2025). Violence perpetrated by learners and management towards Early-Career educators in South African township schools. *Social Sciences*, 14(2), 65. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020065>
- Maunder, R. E., & Crafter, S. (2017). School bullying from a sociocultural perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 38, 13-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.10.010>
- Mavungu, E. M. & Napier, G. (2019). Workplace bullying in South African schools: Prevalence, predictors and psychosocial health outcomes. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 29(6), 544-549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2019.1693462>
- Mbanga, S. (2023). Enhancing a quality teaching and learning environment in large classes in South African universities: A theoretical exposition. *Annals of Social Sciences & Management Studies*, 9(5), 1-6.
<https://doi.org/10.19080/asm.2023.09.555773>
- McMahon, S. D., Martinez, A., Espelage, D., Rose, C., Reddy, L. A., Lane, K., Anderman, E. M., Reynolds, C. R., Jones, A., & Brown, V. (2014). Violence directed against educators: Results from a national survey. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(7), 753-766.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21777>

- Memon, M. A., Salleh, R., & Baharom, M. N. R. (2016). The link between training satisfaction, work engagement and turnover intention. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 40(6), 407-429. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejtd-10-2015-0077>
- Meyersfeld, B. (2020). Sexual harassment and disciplinary procedures: never the twain shall meet. *Constitutional Court Review*, 10(1), 301-330. <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2020.0011>.
- Magaldi D. and Berler M. (2020) Semi-structured Interviews. In: Zeigler-Hill V., Shackelford T.K. .*Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*. Springer, Cham, 01 (1)4825-4830. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_857
- Mokano, M. F., & Letuma, M. C. (2025). Disciplinary issues in special education: Educators' experiences and attribution. *African Journal of Disability*, 14, 1655. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v14i0.1655>
- Mokgolo, M. M., & Chigo, E. M. (2024). Exploring a framework to manage bullying in South African academia: Human resources perspective. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 50, 2129. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v50i0.2129>
- Mokonyane, A., Mampane, K. B., & Mollo, N. T. (2024). Challenges experienced by public secondary school educators in the application of the legal framework for their safety. *Journal for Juridical Science*, 49(3), 90-109. <https://doi.org/10.38140/jjs.v49i3.7419>
- Molefi, M. (2022). The negative consequence of teacher-directed violence on learners learning. *International e-Journal of Educational Studies*, 6(12), 264-271. <https://doi.org/10.31458/iejes.1194082>
- Mollo, N. T. (2024). Functionaries' 'duty to act': Ensuring educators' right to safety from violence in public schools. *Perspectives in Education*, 42(1), 177-197. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i1.7219>
- Moon, B., Saw, G., & McCluskey, J. (2020). Teacher victimization and turnover: Focusing on different types and multiple victimization. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(3), 406-420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2020.1725529>

- Mosito, C., & Sitoyi, S. M. (2024). School violence and its impact on educators' well-being. *Perspectives in Education*, 42(1), 131-147. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i1.7215>
- Motsei, N., & Nkomo, S. M. (2016). Antecedents of bullying in the South African workplace: Societal context matters. *Africa Journal of Management*, 2(1), 50-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322373.2015.1126500>
- Mwita, K. (2022). Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research in social science studies. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(6), 618–625. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i6.1920>
- Nathan, G. (2017). Meaningfulness at work: Well-being, employee and dignity in the workplace. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 15(1), 2-34. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.22998.86084>
- Naeem, M., & Ozuem, W. (2021). Understanding misinformation and rumors that generated panic buying as a social practice during COVID-19 pandemic: evidence from Twitter, YouTube and focus group interviews. *Information Technology and People*, 35(7), 2140–2166. <https://doi.org/10.1108/itp-01-2021-0061>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A Step-by-Step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Neall, A. M., Li, Y., & Tuckey, M. R. (2021). Organisational justice and workplace bullying: Lessons learned from externally referred complaints and investigations. *Societies*, 11(4), 143. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11040143>
- Nguyen, T., Malik, A., & Budhwar, P. (2021). Knowledge hiding in organizational crisis: The moderating role of leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, 139, 161-172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.09.026>
- Nelson, E. (2016). Re-thinking power in learners voice as games of truth: Dealing/playing your hand. *Pedagogy Culture and Society*, 25(2), 181-194.

- Nielsen, M. B., & Einarsen, S. V. (2018). What we know, what we do not know, and what we should and could have known about workplace bullying: An overview of the literature and agenda for future research. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 42, 71-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.06.007>
- Nielsen, M. B., Finne, L. B., Parveen, S., & Einarsen, S. V. (2022). Assessing workplace bullying and its outcomes: the paradoxical role of perceived power imbalance between target and perpetrator. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.907204>
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2025). Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 28(4), 206-208. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2024104232>
- Norman, K., Pearson, L., & Knight, K. (2022). How to undertake annual appraisals and ongoing performance reviews. *Nursing Management*, 30(2), 28-33. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nm.2022.e2065>
- Nurhasanah, N., Erwin, E., & Nugraha, T. (2024). Principal's visionary leadership in improving PAI educators' pedagogic competence in the era of Society 5.0. *Arfannur: Journal of Islamic Education*, 5(2), 79–86. <https://doi.org/10.24260/arfannur.v5i2.3010>
- Occupational Health and Safety Act. (1993). Act No. 85 of 1993. <https://www.gov.za/>. See Republic of South Africa.
- Ogunfowora, B., Stackhouse, M., Maers, A., Varty, C., Hwang, C., & Choi, J. (2021). The impact of team moral disengagement composition on team performance: The roles of team cooperation, team interpersonal deviance, and collective extraversion. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 36(3), 479-494. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-02009688-2>
- Okeke, C., & Simphiwe, W. (2024). Educators' lived experiences of school violence and their coping strategies. *Perspectives in Education*, 42(1), 148-160. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i1.7210>

- Orunbon, N. O., & Ibikunle, G. A. (2023). Principals' toxic leadership behaviour and educators' workplace incivility in public senior secondary schools, Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 3(2), 202-213. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454ri.eduline171escartin7>
- Oyewobi, L., Okanlawon, T., Medayese, S., Ogunbode, E., & Jimoh, R. (2024). Is pursuing a PhD without theoretical and conceptual framework a journey without roadmap? *Environmental Technology and Science Journal*, 15(2), 138-149. <https://doi.org/10.4314/etsj.v15i2.15>
- Özer, G., & Escartín, J. (2023). The making and breaking of workplace bullying perpetration: A systematic review on the antecedents, moderators, mediators, outcomes of perpetration and suggestions for organizations. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 69, 3-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2023.101823>
- Padayachee, A. S., & Gcelu, N. (2022). Collaboration: The key to managing discipline in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(4), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n4a2139>
- Papadakis, S., Gözümlü, A. İ. C., Kaya, Ü. Ü., Kalogiannakis, M., & Karaköse, T. (2024). Examining the validity and reliability of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale in the use of ICT at home for preschool distance education (TSES-ICT-PDE) among Greek preschool educators: A comparative study with Turkey. In T. Karaköse, S. Papadakis, & M. Kalogiannakis (Eds.), *Advances in digital education and learning* (pp. 1–30). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50139-5_1
- Park, Y. S., Konge, L., & Artino, A. R. (2020). The positivism paradigm of research. *Academic Medicine*, 95(5), 690-694. <https://doi.org/10.1097/acm.0000000000003093>
- Pasikowski, S. (2024). Snowball sampling and its non-trivial nature. *Prsegląd Badań Edukacyjnych*, 2(43), 105-120. <https://doi.org/10.12775/pbe.2023.030>
- Patton, C. M., & Broward, J. (2023). The Giants and Forerunners of Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and their Predecessors. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(4), 79-94. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/13600>

- Patton, D. U., Hong, J. S., Patel, S., & Kral, M. J. (2015). A systematic review of research strategies used in qualitative studies on school bullying and victimization. *Trauma Violence & Abuse*, 18(1), 3-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838015588502>
- Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2020). What motivates people to teach, and why they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1), 3-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2019.1589417>
- Pervin, N., & Mokhtar, M. (2022). The Interpretivist research paradigm: A subjective notion of a social context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i2/12938>
- Petrova, E. (2024). Abuse through power and control in human societies – essence, characteristics and effects. *Revista Academiei Forțelor Terestre*, 29(4), 522-532. <https://doi.org/10.2478/raft-2024-0054>
- Pinho, M., & Colston, B. (2025). Perceptions of fairness, inclusion and safety: the differential impact of contrasting experiences on academics and professional services staff. *Journal of Management & Governance*, 29(3), 815-847. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-024-09721-s>
- Pokharel, A., Forester, J., Lejano, R. P., Kan, W. S., Heinilä, A., Mattila, H., Manouchehrifar, B., & Baird-Sars, B. (2024). On theories and practices of collective action and sustained cooperation. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 25(3), 409–447. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2024.2379727>
- Portelada, A., Candeias, A., & João, A. L. (2024). Teacher well-being under threat: The consequences of workplace bullying from preschool to higher education. *Education Sciences*, 14(11), 1 - 13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14111175>
- Potter, W. J. (2017). Epistemology. *The International Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*, 11 (9), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0084>
- Powell, A. & Henry, N. (2016). Technology-facilitated sexual violence: A literature review of empirical research. *Trauma Violence & Abuse*, 19(2), 195–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016650189>

- Prasetia, I., & Akrim, N. (2024). The impact of teacher empowerment on school effectiveness: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 11(4), 655-666. <https://doi.org/10.20448/jeelr.v11i4.6056>
- Pulla, V., & Carter, E. (2018). Employing interpretivism in social work research. *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice*, 6(1), 9-14. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ijrh.2018.060102>
- Rajalingam, D., Nymoen, I., Nyberg, H., Nielsen, M. B., Einarsen, S. V., & Gjerstad, J. (2021). Workplace bullying increases the risk of anxiety through a stress-induced β 2adrenergic receptor mechanism: A multisource study employing an animal model, cell culture experiments and human data. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 94(8), 1905-1915. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00420-021-01718-7>
- Rasa, B., Ahmed, A., Subair, S., & Moueed, A. (2019). Linking workplace deviance and abusive supervision: Moderating role of positive psychological capital. *International Journal of Organisational Leadership*, 8(1), 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2020.60472>
- Reisert, H., Pham, D., Rapoport, E., & Adesman, A. (2023). Associations between bullying and condition severity among youth with chronic health conditions. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 73(2), 279–287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.03.004>
- Republic of South Africa. (1993). *Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993*. Available online at: <https://www.gov.za/>
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1997). *Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997*. Government Gazette, 18491. [South African Government website](#)
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1998). *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*. Government Gazette, 18491. Department of Employment and Labour. [South African Government website](#)

- Resnik, D. B. (2018). Privacy and confidentiality. The Ethics of Research with Human Subjects. *International library of ethics, law, and the new medicine*, 74(5) ,149-163). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68756-8_6
- Ridge, D., Broom, A., Kokanović, R., Siebland, S., & Hill, N. (2017). Depression at work, authenticity in question: Experiencing, concealing, and revealing. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health Illness and Medicine*, 23(3), 344-361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459317739437>
- Rosander, M., Salin, M., & Blomberg, A. (2021). Mental health problems as a risk factor for workplace bullying: The protective effect of a well-functioning organisation. *Annals of Work Exposures and Health*, 65(9), 1096-1106. <https://doi.org/10.1093/annweh/wxab040>
- Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualising reliability and validity in qualitative research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4), 432-451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042>
- Sakçak, A., Arslan, Y., & Polat, S. (2021). Favouritism behaviours of school principals: Educators' perceptions on the causes and consequences of favouritism in Turkey. *Educational Studies*, 49(6), 877-895. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.1917340>
- Salawu, R. O., Salawu, M. K., & Bolatito, A. S. (2023b). Comparative analysis of university accreditation systems in Nigeria, Egypt, Malawi and Japan: Lessons for regulatory authorities. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 11(11), 2–29. <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v11i11.1550>
- Salin, D. (2021). Workplace bullying and gender: An overview of empirical findings. In P. D'Crus, E. Noronha, & E. Harthill (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace bullying, emotional abuse and harassment*, 3(3) ,331-361. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-130218-3_12
- Sambo, J., & Govender, S. (2023). Influence of teacher-targeted bullying behaviour on educators in selected schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Learning*

Teaching and Educational Research, 22(6), 20-44.

<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.6.2>

Sargioti, A., Kuldass, S., Foody, M., Otero, P. V., Kinahan, A., Canning, C., Heaney, D., & Norman, J. O. (2023). Dublin anti-bullying self-efficacy models and scales: Development and validation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 38(7-8), 5748-5773.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605221127193>

Scheeler, M. C., Markelz, A., Taylor, J. C., Deshpande, D. S., & Wolfe, P. (2021). Teacher workplace bullying: How pervasive is the problem? *Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 45(2), 123-

140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064211015698>

Schmidt, T. (2023). Education, skills and social justice in a polarising world: Between technical elites and welfare vocationalism. *International Journal of Training Research*,

21(1), 67-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2022.2105930>

Schrøder-Hansen, K., & Hansen, A. (2022). Performance management trends: Reflections on the redesigns big companies have been doing lately. *International Journal of*

Productivity and Performance Management, 72(5), 1201-1220.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijppm-07-2021-0391>

See, B. H., Morris, R., Gorard, S., & Soufi, N. E. (2020). What works in attracting and retaining educators in challenging schools and areas. *Oxford Review of Education*,

46(6), 678-697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1775566>

Seherrie, A. C. (2023). *Toward an innovative cooperative learning framework to counterbalance the effects of overcrowded classrooms*. Axiom Academic Publishers.

<https://doi.org/10.62869/001c.123561>

Sibisi, N. N., Ngubane, L., Mpofu, S. F., & Nyambuya, V. P. (2025). Exploring the perceptions and experiences of learners and educators on bullying and cyberbullying in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal. *Perspectives in Education*, 43(4), 113-134.

<https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v43i4.8482>

- Sileyew, K. J. (2019). Research design and methodology. In Intech Open eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.85731>
- Sinfield, G., Goldspink, S., & Wilson, C. (2023). Waiting in the wings: The enactment of a descriptive phenomenology study. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231207012>.
- Sinha, V. (2024). The blind HR: Why do people leave managers not companies? A case of inconsistency in performance appraisal and performance outcome. *Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies*, 14(4), 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-11-2023-0436>
- Siregar, B. A., & Suma, D. (2025). Investigating workplace bullying: A mediated moderation study of burnout and turnover intention. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, Article a2928. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2928>
- Smit, D. M. (2021). The double punch of workplace bullying/harassment leading to depression: Legal and other measures to help South African employers ward off a fatal blow. *Law, Democracy & Development*, 25. https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-49072021000100002&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en
- Sol, K., & Heng, K. (2022). Understanding epistemology and its key approaches in research. *Cambodian Journal of Educational Research*, 2(2), 80-99. <https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2022.02.02.05>
- South African Council for Educators (SACE). (2022). *Code of professional ethics*. [Reprinted April 2022]. https://www.sace.org.za/assets/documents/uploads/sace_48175-2022-05-09133889%20%20SACE%20%20ETHICS%20%2004%2005%202022%2012%20page.pdf
- South African Poultry Association. Annual Report 2023. <https://www.sapoultry.co.za/wpcontent/uploads/2024/07/SAPA-AR-2023.pdf>.
- Stratton, S. J. (2024). Purposeful sampling: Advantages and pitfalls. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 39(2), 121-122. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sst1049023x24000281>

- Subedi, K. K. P. (2020). Theoretical perspective of bullying. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research*, 10(8), 83-85.
https://www.ijhsr.org/IJHSR_Vol.10_Issue.8_Aug2020/14.pdf.
- Sultoni, I. G. (2023). Transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour of virtual teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia: The mediating role of job satisfaction. *Educational Process International Journal*, 12(3), 56-78.
<https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2023.123.3>
- Tabancalı, E. (2018). Nepotism in primary schools. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(2), 162-175. <https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2018.02.011>
- meTarigan, A., Gustomo, A., & Bangun, Y. R. (2023). Enhancing fairness in performance appraisals: A conceptual framework through a systematic literature review. *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research*, 2(3), 202-228.
<https://doi.org/10.56868/jadhur.v2i3.176>
- Tian, Y., Yang, J., Huang, F., Zhang, X., Wang, X., Fan, L., Du, W., & Xue, H. (2023). An analysis of the association between school bullying prevention and control measures and secondary school learners' bullying behaviour in the Jiangsu Province. *Behavioural Sciences*, 13(11), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13110954>
- Ting, H., Memon, M. A., Thurasamy, R., & Cheah, J. H. (2025). Snowball sampling: A review and guidelines for survey research. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 15(1), 1-15. <https://ajbr.co.ns/ajbr/ajbr250186.pdf>
- Topsakal, Y., Dinç, A., & Özcan, E. (2024). The impact of nepotism on employee organisational attitudes in accommodation enterprises. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(1), 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20240102>.
- Tshangana, N., Nomtshongwana, T. A., & Buka, A. M. (2023). Teaching experiences with overcrowded classrooms in primary schools in the OR Tambo Coastal District of South Africa. *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences*, 936-946.
<https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2023483>

- Turin, T. C., Raihan, M., & Chowdhury, N. (2024). Paradigms of approaches to research. *Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Journal*, 17(2), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.3329/bsmmuj.v17i2.73973>
- Ugwu, C. N., & Eze Val, H. U. (2023). Qualitative research. *DOSR Journal of Computer and Applied Sciences*, 8(1), 20-35. https://www.academia.edu/97734487/Qualitative_Research
- Uwaezuoke, I. M. (2022). Managing secondary education to tackle the 21st century development challenges. *Human Nature Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 61–68. <https://doi.org/10.71016/hnjss/crgnk323>
- Van Wyk, A. (2023). Leadership practices to mitigate violence and promote social justice in South African schools. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 5(3), 180-194. <https://doi.org/10.46303/repam.2023.34>.
- Venketsamy, R. (2023). Exploring the teacher-learner ratio and its effect on invitational teaching and learning: A South African study. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 11(1), 33-43. <https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.1237615>
- Ventista, O., & Brown, C. (2023). Educators' professional learning and its impact on learners' learning outcomes: Findings from a systematic review. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 8(1), 100565. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100565>
- Vijayakumar, G., & Rajagopal, S. (2024). Addressing workplace bullying: Protecting human rights in the modern workplace. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, 18(2), e04994. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n2-054>
- Wang, L., Lu, L., Wu, W., & Luo, S. (2022). Workplace ostracism and employee wellbeing: A conservation of resource perspective. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 1075682. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1075682>
- William, J. (2024). Influence of power dynamics and organisational justice on conflict outcomes and satisfaction in India. *Journal of Conflict Management*, 4(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jcm.2385>
- Williamson, F., & Lester, J. N. (2024). Language and psychosocial oppression:

Methodological approaches, challenges, and opportunities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2024.2371361>

Willie, M. M. (2023). Distinguishing between population and target population: A mini review. *Surgery Research Journal*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.33425/2768-0428.1027>

World Health Organisation (WHO). (2023). *Preventing and responding to sexual misconduct: WHO's three-year strategy 2023–2025*. Available online at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240069039>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2019, May 21). *Monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565707>

Woudstra, M. H., Van Rensburg, E. J., Visser, M., & Jordaan, J. (2018). Learner-to-teacher bullying as a potential factor influencing educators' mental health. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n1a1358>

Yao, L., Ayub, A., Ishaq, M., Arif, S., Fatima, T., & Sohail, H. M. (2022). Workplace ostracism and employee silence in service organisations: The moderating role of negative reciprocity beliefs. *International Journal of Manpower*, 43(6), 1378-1404. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijm-04-2021-0261>

Ylönen, M., & Aven, T. (2023). A framework for understanding risk based on the concepts of ontology and epistemology. *Journal of Risk Research*, 26(6), 581-593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2023.2194892>

Zahid, A., & Nauman, S. (2023). Does workplace incivility spur deviant behaviours: Roles of interpersonal conflict and organisational climate. *Personnel Review*, 53(1), 247-265. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-01-2022-0058>

Zahid, A., Rehman, S., Rafiq, M., & Cheema, S. M. (2021). A study on workplace ostracism on work productive behaviour of employees with mediating effect of emotional intelligence. *Review of Applied Management and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.47067/ramss.v4i1.97>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE – POST LEVEL 2 TO 3 EDUCATORS

Research question: *What is the nature of workplace bullying perpetrated by Senior School Management towards post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg*

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Background Information

What is your gender and ethnic background?

Could you provide a brief overview of your role and duties in the school?

How long have you been employed as an educator at your current position level?

How would you describe the management structure at your school?

Section B: Understanding Workplace Bullying

How would you describe "workplace bullying" within a school environment in your own terms?

From your perspective, which types of bullying (such as verbal, psychological, or professional sabotage) are most prevalent from management to educators?

In your opinion, how often do you believe these behaviours take place in your school?

What types of behaviours or actions from management do you view as bullying in the workplace?

In what ways does bullying from management vary from standard conflict or performance evaluations?

Section C: Organisational and Systemic Factors

In what ways does the culture or environment of the school impact the chances of bullying by management?

Do you believe that ambiguous job roles or a lack of anti-bullying policies lead to conflicts that can escalate into bullying?

How do the disciplinary or grievance processes in your school influence the handling of bullying cases?

Are there imbalances of power in decision-making that you think may lead to bullying?

Section D: External factors

What influence do external elements like Department of Education policies, lack of resources, or community expectations have on management's behaviour toward educators?

Do competitive dynamics among schools affect the way management engages with staff?

Section E: Forms of workplace bullying

What types of bullying have you either encountered personally or seen from management?

Can you provide any instances of psychological or emotional bullying by those in management?

Have you faced or witnessed bullying that impacts your professional role, including denial of promotions, biased evaluations, or micro-managing by the management?

How frequently do these behaviours occur in your school environment?

Section F: Patterns and Characteristics

Are there particular circumstances or moments when management bullying is more prevalent?

Does the bullying seem to be aimed at certain individuals or groups (for example, depending on their position, experience, personality, or performance)?

How would you characterize the tone or language shown by management during instances of bullying?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE – POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS

Research Focus: *Factors contributing to workplace bullying experienced by Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools perpetrated by management in Cosmo City, Johannesburg*

Section A: Contributing Factors Related to Management

1. What do you think is contributing to this workplace bullying?
2. Do you think that the pressure to achieve academic goals or fulfil administrative requirements impacts the way management interacts with educators? Please elaborate.
3. In what ways do you think the personal attitudes or personality traits of managers contribute to instances of bullying?
4. How does the management handle or react to complaints?

Section B : Contributing Factors Related to the Work Environment

1. How will you describe communication within your school environment?
2. Do educators feel comfortable enough to raise concerns even in the staff briefing?
3. Have you observed any pattern of hostility or ill treatment towards other educators?
Please elaborate
4. Is there any unhealthy competition between educators?

Section : Training workshops

1. Are there any workshops provided in the school to prevent bullying?
 2. What additional support does the school provide to bullying victims?
-

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE: POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS

Research Focus: *Impact of workplace bullying perpetrated by management on the daily lives of Post-level 1 to 3 educators in secondary schools of Cosmo City, Johannesburg.*

Section A: Personal Experiences and Observations

Can you provide an instance where you observed an educator being mistreated by the management without referring to any specific individuals?

In your opinion, what were the key reasons that led to that situation?

How did this experience impact the educator's job performance or overall well-being?

Were there any measures taken to address the situation?

Are there any resources available within the school to assist educators in handling this behavior?

How does being bullied at work affect your emotions throughout the day? (e.g., anxious, stressed, demotivated)

Have you noticed any shifts in your confidence or self-esteem due to bullying?

Are there any times when you find yourself thinking about incidents of bullying outside of working hours? And how do you deal with them?

Section B : Impact on Work and Well-being

In what ways does this kind of bullying impact your effectiveness as an educator and your ability to manage your work?

In what manner has bullying at work impacted your mental or emotional health?

Does it have an effect on your interactions with colleagues or learners? In what ways does bullying from management impact your willingness to come to work each day?

Have you observed any changes in your teaching effectiveness or preparation as a result of bullying?

How does it influence your involvement in staff meetings, school events, or the decision-making process?

Section C: Physical and Health-related Effects

Have you experienced any physical issues (such as headaches, tiredness, or difficulty sleeping) associated with bullying episodes?

Has bullying at work influenced your general health or energy levels?

Section D: Social and Personal Life

In what ways does workplace bullying impact your relationship with family or friends?

Do you struggle to separate work stress from your personal life?

Has bullying influenced your social engagements or your desire to interact with others?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE: ADDRESSING WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATED BY MANAGEMENT AGAINST POST-LEVEL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF COSMO CITY, JOHANNESBURG.

Section A: Awareness and Recognition

What steps can be taken to increase educators' and management's understanding of what defines workplace bullying?

In your view, how essential is it to establish clear definitions and policies regarding workplace bullying in educational institutions?

Section B: Policy and Procedural Solutions

What policies or rules do you suggest should be put in place to prevent workplace bullying in schools?

In what ways can the current grievance or reporting mechanisms be enhanced to effectively reduce bullying?

What responsibilities should the Department of Education have in the prevention and management of bullying by the Senior School Management?

Section C: Training and Team Building

What type of training should be offered to school managers to encourage respectful leadership and communication?

In what ways can educators be trained or empowered to effectively address incidents of bullying?

Section D: Support Systems

What types of support (emotional, legal, professional) do educators require when dealing with bullying in the workplace?

In what ways can schools foster a supportive atmosphere where educators feel secure in voicing their concerns?

Section E: Community and Stakeholder Involvement

In what ways can school governing bodies and community members contribute to the prevention of workplace bullying?

Do you believe that outside mediators or counsellors could assist in resolving bullying incidents? If so, how?

Section F: Personal Suggestions

What do you think is the key change needed to put an end to bullying by management?

If you had the power, what particular measures would you implement to prevent bullying in your school?

Section G : Recommendations

What strategies do you believe could reduce management-related workplace bullying in schools?

What types of training, policies, or support mechanisms would be effective in preventing these occurrences?

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Title of the Study:

Workplace Bullying perpetrated towards Post-level 1 to 3 educators by management in Cosmo City township schools

1. Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores workplace bullying experienced by educators in secondary schools. Before you decide to participate, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and what your participation will involve. Please read the information below carefully.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the nature, contributing factors, and effects of workplace bullying experienced by educators. The findings will be used for academic research purposes and may contribute to improving working conditions in schools.

3. Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview. The interview will focus on your experiences and perceptions of workplace interactions and may take approximately 30–60 minutes. With your permission, the interview may be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy of the information provided.

4. Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or negative consequences. You may also decline to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering.

5. Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and the name of your school will not appear in the research report. Pseudonyms or codes will

be used instead. Data collected will be stored securely, and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to it.

6. Risks

There are no known physical risks associated with participating in this study. However, discussing workplace experiences may cause emotional discomfort. You may pause or stop the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

7. Benefits

While there may be no direct personal benefit to you, your participation may contribute to a better understanding of workplace bullying in schools and help inform policies and support systems for educators.

8. Data Storage

All data (audio recordings and transcripts) will be stored securely on a password protected device and/or locked cabinet. The data will be kept for a specified period (e.g., five years) and then safely destroyed according to research guidelines.

9. Permission to Record

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree to the interview being audio-recorded

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

10. Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name : _____

Participant Signature : _____ Date: _____

Researcher Name : _____

Researcher Signature : _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	20 February 2026
Validity of Research Approval:	09 February 2026 – 30 September 2026 2025/734
Name of Researcher:	Gaehose LG
Address of Researcher:	5 Tallin Crescent Cosmo City / Ext 9
Telephone Number:	073 018 1491
Email address:	khensani.gaehose@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Workplace bullying perpetrated by management towards post-level one to three educators in Cosmo City township schools
Name of University:	UNISA
Type of qualification	Masters
Methodology	Qualitative
Number and type of schools:	4 Secondary Schools
District/s/HQ	Johannesburg North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Faith Tshabalala'.

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. A letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners who are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one hardcover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr. David Bapela
CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 23/02/2026

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2/2

APPENDIX G: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM



College of Education _ERC

Date: 29/01/2026

Dear: Ms LEBOGANG GLADNES GAEHOSE

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
29/01/2026 to 29/01/2029**

NHREC Registration # : (If applicable)
Ref #: 10045
Name: Ms LEBOGANG GLADNES GAEHOSE
Student #: 64673677
Staff #:

Researcher: Ms LEBOGANG GLADNES GAEHOSE

Cosmo City Secondary one 2322 Kenya and Angola Crescent
Roodepoort

64673677mylife@unisa.ac.za 0730181491

Supervisor: Dr Thulani Chauke chautk2@unisa.ac.za

Co-Supervisor:

Co-Researcher(s):

Email address:

**WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATED BY MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POSTLEVEL 1 TO 3
EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY SCHOOLS, CITY OF JOHANNESBURG.**

Qualification: MED

Thank you for the application for research ethics approval by the College of Education _ERC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for **three years**.

The **medium risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Education _ERC in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising during the undertaking of the research study that may affect the ethical integrity of the study, including those involving research participants, third parties, or juristic persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC without delay.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that may affect study-related risks to research participants, juristic or third persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research study complies with all applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Where applicable, adherence to the following South African legislation is essential: the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the National Health Act (No. 61 of 2003)
6. Future use of this research data is permitted only in de-identified form and only for secondary research with objectives similar to those of the original study. Any secondary use involving identifiable human data will require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue beyond the stated expiry date (29/01/2029). A completed Research Ethics Progress Report must be submitted as an application for renewal and is subject to approval by the Research Ethics Committee. A Close-Out Report must be submitted upon completion of the research study.
8. The College of Education _ERC may require the submission of regular progress reports on an **annual** basis, in alignment with Section 7.2 of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics (2024).

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from the research participants and Unisa.
2. Research data must be stored in compliance with the university's research data management policy for a period of up to 15 years.
3. When publishing the results, the researcher must take appropriate precautions to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants, juristic persons, third parties, and the university, in accordance with institutional policies and ethical standards.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication Practices, specifically Principle 7 on Social Awareness, must be ensured. This principle states: 'Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups, or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible.' The University of South Africa (Unisa) accepts no liability for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 10045 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof Justin Oswin August
Chair of College of Education _ERC
E-mail: augusjo@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Education
E-mail: qakisme@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

Similarity Report	
PAPER NAME	AUTHOR
WORKPLACE BULLYING PERPETRATED BY MANAGEMENT TOWARDS POSTLEV EL 1 TO 3 EDUCATORS IN COSMO CITY SCHOOLS%2C CITY OF JOHANNESBURG ..docx	LEBOGANG GLADNES GAEHOSE
WORD COUNT	CHARACTER COUNT
44622 Words	251717 Characters
PAGE COUNT	FILE SIZE
136 Pages	283.4KB
SUBMISSION DATE	REPORT DATE
Apr 28, 2026 9:19 AM GMT+2	Apr 28, 2026 9:27 AM GMT+2
8% Overall Similarity	
The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.	
• 2% Internet database • 5% Publications database • Crossref database • Crossref Posted Content database • 7% Submitted Works database	
Excluded from Similarity Report	
• Manually excluded sources	

APPENDIX I: UPDATED EDITING CERTIFICATE



CAROL JANSEN LANGUAGE EDITING

SERVICES

Hyde Park Estate

Faerie Glen

0081

18 May 2026

To whom it may concern

Certification of language editing done.

I hereby declare that I have edited the dissertation entitled: "Workplace bullying perpetrated by management towards post-level 1 to 3 educators in Cosmo City Schools, City of Johannesburg." By Lebogang Gladness Gaehose.

I am an experienced language practitioner who has edited many theses and dissertations for Unisa, the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), and the University of Pretoria.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Jansen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carol Jansen

Associate member of the Professional Editors' Guild

Language practitioner

Cell no: 082 9200312

MA (Linguistics Stellenbosch University)

BEd (Unisa)

BBibl (Hons) (Unisa)

HEd (Unisa)

HDipl(Bibl) (Unisa)

BA (AfrIII & Eng111) (Unisa)