The experience of cyberbullying and its role in the cyber-victim-bully cycle amongst late adolescents

by

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DECLARATION

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I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



16/07/2020

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Dedication

To the Lord God Almighty

For giving me hope and strength to stand in the midst of everything. I would not be alive if it was not for your Grace and Love

To my grandmother Esnat Waziweyi and my mother Elizabeth Waziweyi, my aunts and uncles; Francisca, Jessica, Rose, Alice, Mirika, Frederick, Abel, Waziweyi, Benjamin and Cecelia

I value the hope you have instilled in me and the strong genes I inherited, that keep "pushing forward"

To my siblings

Tessal, Abigail, Neal and Linah (sister-in-law)

Who have been there from the beginning and will always be there to see me through

My husband

Edison Gunda

Who has been my pillar

My daughter

Ndanatswa

My son,

Nzwisisi

And niece

Kundai

For giving me another chance to pass on my legacy

I BELIEVE THIS WILL INSPIRE YOU TO GO BIGGER IN LIFE AND NEVER GIVE UP NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION LOOKS LIKE.

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Abstract

Digital technologies have enabled adolescents to engage in cyberbullying, but not much was known about how and why adolescents who were cybervictims became cyberbullies. This study investigated why and how these cybervictims became cyberbullies. Eight participants were interviewed using the Phenomenological Hermeneutics approach. These lived experiences were analysed according to the three steps of the Phenomenological Hermeneutics approach. Three themes and one reflective theme accompanied by sub-themes emerged from the data analysis. As evident from the findings, participants were initiated into cyberbullying activities by their modified photos and insults. Thereafter, these participants experienced overwhelming negative thoughts and emotions. In isolation, participants protected themselves by engaging in cyberbullying. The comprehensive understanding of the cyber-victim-bullying cycle exemplify a need by the cybervictims to protect themselves from overwhelming negative emotions. This study has provided this crucial aspect which influences the cyber-victim-bully cycle; therefore, appropriate measures can be taken to address the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

Key terms

Anonymity, cyberbullying, cybervictim, cyber-victim-bully, cyber-victim-bully cycle, disinhibition, invisibility, late adolescents, perpetrator, reciprocal effects.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The rise of the use of internet and increasing media technology has witnessed increasing incidents of cyberbullying. Even though the virtual world of social networking, instant messaging, and blogging requires less physical activities, it creates platforms for young people to engage in cyberbullying activities (Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, 2009). Bullying is a massive problem amongst children, adolescents, and adults around the world (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). This behaviour is defined as repeated and unprovoked attacks against a more powerless victim and could be verbal, social, emotional, and/or physical in nature (Gredler, 2003). Recently, bullying through media technology (e.g., smartphones, tablets, iPads, and computers), known as cyberbullying, has become popular (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). It is prevalent mostly through media platforms such as social networking sites, emails, or instant messaging, but since it occurs in cyberspace, it is rarely noticed (Huang & Chou, 2010).

Studies on cyberbullying have revealed that victims of cyberbullying are experiencing psychological problems. Some of these victims experience anxiety and humiliation, while others experience high-stress levels, increased suicide rates and depressive moods (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). The psychological effects mentioned above, have prompted parents, network service providers, and information and communication technology (ICT) companies to address cyberbullying. However, cyberbullying incidents are rising (Jackson & Cohen, 2012). This might be because schools and governments have merely adapted measures to address cyberbullying (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012).

In 2016, Kyobe, Oosterwky, and Kabiawu investigated mobile bullying and victimisation in the Western Cape high schools. They discovered that cyberbullying among adolescents has increased. Furthermore, a cycle was identified where some adolescents were engaging in cyberbullying as both cybervictims and cyberbullies (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). The controversies above and the seriousness of how the cyber-victim-bully cycle might be a factor in the increasing rates of cyberbullying has motivated this study.

1.2 Research Problem

Many quantitative studies have reported the prevalence of the victim-bully cycle when studying other components of cyberbullying amongst younger children in schools (Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Twyman, Saylor, Taylor & Comeaux, 2010). These studies have discovered that a cycle exists of some victims of cyberbullying becoming cyberbullies themselves. Yet, most studies from South Africa and many other countries, have not focused on the experiences of cyberbullied victims and how these experiences might have influenced cyberbullying behaviour. In studies of such behaviour amongst early and middle-aged adolescents in schools, many gaps related to the victim-bully cycle were identified, including victims' experiences of cyberbullying and what triggered their responses during these events (Cassidy et al., 2009; Huang & Chou, 2010). This may be the case because researchers seem to rely on small samples that are easily available and using research instruments that do not allow the respondents to describe their situations when they investigate cyberbullying. These instruments simplify and reduce the complexity of cyberbullying and its effects on people's lives. Consequently, not much has been revealed on the lived experiences of late adolescents who were both victims of cyberbullying and cyberbullies themselves. Therefore, researchers should focus on investigating why and how cyberbullying

occurs (Parada, Marsh & Craven, 2004) because there is no explanation given as to why the cyber-victim-bully cycle exists (MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher & Rucker, 2002; Parada et al., 2004).

1.2.1 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the current study was to investigate how being a cyberbullying victim can influence victims to become a cyberbully as experienced by late adolescents in South Africa. The first objective of this investigation was to understand the lived experiences of cyberbullied victims, and how these experiences played a role in influencing the victims to become cyberbullies. These lived experiences referred to the first-hand accounts and impressions of living as a cyber-victim-bully, and the choices the individuals made while involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Secondly, the findings of the study were used to make recommendations that could inform the compiling of school policies, parenting practices, and skills development initiatives addressing cyberbullying.

1.2.2 Research Question

Considering the research problem as well as the aim and objectives of this specific study, the overall research question to address was: What were the subjective experiences of late adolescents involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle?

The sub-questions that unpacked the main question were**:**

- What happened during the cyberbullying incidents?

How did the participants experience cyberbullying as victims?

- How did the experience of being cyberbullied influence the victims into becoming cyberbullies?

1.3 Literature survey

Exposure to cyberbullying through smartphones, iPads, tablets, and computers by denigration, flaming, trolling, ratting, happy slapping, and impersonation is increasing cyberbullying behaviour (Chisolm, 2014). This type of cyberbullying behaviour has become problematic as victims are learning more about how to use online devices to engage in online harassment at home or school (Martin, 2015).

Contributing factors influencing cyberbullying behaviour include exposure to cyberbullying (Desai, 2014), substance abuse, sexual activities, delinquent behaviour (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017) and knowledge on how to use electronic devices (Bannink, Broeren, Van De Looij - Jansen, De Waart & Raat, 2014). Lack of parental supervision and the lack of school policies addressing cyberbullying exacerbates cyberbullying amongst adolescents (Chen et al., 2015).

As a consequence of cyberbullying, some victims of cyberbullying even end their lives, while others experience psychological problems (Desai, 2014). Betts, Gkimitzoudis, Spenser, and Baguley (2016) state that experiencing bullying is likely to influence victims' thoughts, leading to mistrust that impacts negatively on adjustment at school, while Jackson and Cohen (2012) reported hopelessness and helplessness, few friends, and rejection in victims of cyberbullying.

The cyber-victim-bully cycle, as indicated above, might cause victims to engage in cyberbullying behaviour; therefore, it can be a cause or an effect of cyberbullying (Cassidy, Faucher & Jackson, 2013). The most common effect of cyberbullying reported is that cyberbullied individuals may become cyberbullies themselves. Some children indicated that they engaged in cyberbullying activities in retaliation to the humiliation they have been caused by the cyberbully (Li, 2006). Patchin and Hinduja (2015) discovered that a significant number of cyberbullying victims ended up engaging in cyberbullying activities. This contributed to the number of cyberbullying activities among adolescents.

Cassim (2013) posited that legislation addressing cyberbullying is needed urgently. Law enforcers, the prosecuting department, schools, and parents, should have enough information on how to deal with cyberbullying incidents (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The online disinhibition theory states that because there is an absence of physical conduct online, some people behave differently from how they would behave when in the presence of others. Individuals become rude, cruel, and critical during online conversations because they do not have face to face contact with the person they are communicating with. A person can be anonymous and invisible online. As a result, such people do not take responsibility for their behaviour, or minimise the cyberbullying effects on others. All this behaviour can be understood by using the disinhibition effect (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). Online anonymity help create the disinhibition effect because users can choose not to use their names or personal information. This decreases personal responsibility. Furthermore, the invisibility factor creates a

platform for individuals to express themselves in ways they do not usually do, at the same time, escaping the responsibility of their actions. Disinhibition loosens social restrictions and inhibition that would not be normally present during physical interactions. Additionally, the online perpetrator is not exposed to the victim's reactions or responses; therefore, the aggressor does not feel guilty about their behaviour since they do not see the responses of their targets (Suler, 2004).

In addition, the reciprocal effects model further explains why the cyber-victim-bully cycle may continue to be evident. Prior investigations on bullying behaviour discovered that there are individuals that fit into both categories of being labelled a bully and/or a victim. In such cases, these individuals cannot be labelled pure bullies or pure victims as they have participated in both roles. On the one hand, they are the victims, and on the other, they are the bullies. Therefore, in such instances, the categories of bullies and victims cannot be distinguished or separated because these categories depend on each other. A bully is labelled a bully because there is a victim, and a victim is labelled a victim because there is a bully (Parada et al., 2004). Applying the same principles of the reciprocal effects model on the cyber-victim-bully cycle, it is evident that victims of cyberbullying might also be the perpetrators of cyberbullying (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). With the disinhibition effects explained above, it might be easy to reciprocate aggression when responsibility is displaced. Individuals behave in more aggressive ways since they are spared self-prohibiting reactions. The reciprocal model states that the way people behave is because of having experienced the same phenomenon themselves (Ma, 2001). As studies have indicated (O'Mara, Marsh, Craven & Debus, 2006; Valentine & Dubois, 2005), some adolescents develop views that if one acts with aggression towards him or her, they will do the same. This means that some

adolescents might engage in cyberbullying behaviour because other individuals have cyberbullied them; hence the cyber-victim-bully cycle is continued.

The above theories formed the basis for investigating the cyber-victim-bully cycle to gain a better understanding of adolescents engaging in cyberbullying.

1.5 Significance of the study

While cyberbullying has been occurring for a long time, issues around it are still being debated and investigated (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). As a result, amongst many cyberbullying studies, there are only a few reports on cybervictims being cyberbullies as well. Even though schools, social media sites, network companies, and government have the same topic, namely "cyberbullying", on their agendas, there are not many intervention strategies to properly address this phenomenon. There is still work that needs to be done to determine the appropriate means of resolving the aspects that influence cyberbullying behaviour amongst children (Cassim, 2013). The current study has provided the crucial aspect which interplays and influences the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Appropriate measures can be taken to address the cyber-victim-bully cycle based on the evidence provided.

Schools across the globe are still struggling to form effective strategies that assist them in addressing cyberbullying behaviour (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). It is to be noted that even though cyberbullying happens in cyberspace, it causes massive disruption in the schooling environment, forcing schools to act (Chen et al., 2015).

The study is significant because it unpacked an aspect of cyberbullying behaviour that has been highlighted as a contributor to such behaviour. The current study generated knowledge that can be used to provide schools and policymakers with ground knowledge required for drafting policies for individuals facilitating both roles in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

It is known that some adolescents engage in cyberbullying because of being exposed to cyberbullying, but more research is needed to understand why some adolescents end up cyberbullying after being victims of cyberbullying themselves. Through the current study, the gap between what is known about the factors contributing to cyberbullying behaviour with reference to the cyber-victim-bully cycle was narrowed. Therefore, this subgroup cannot be ignored when developing strategies that address cyberbullying behaviour amongst adolescents.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Research paradigm

It is necessary to investigate the social and environmental influences as experienced by the participants to understand how complicated cyberbullying can be. In this study, it was achieved by using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research for this specific study would enable an understanding of how the cyber-victim-bully cycle might enhance cyberbullying behaviour amongst adolescents (Cassidy et al., 2009; Martin, 2015; Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009). Therefore, the current study followed a cross-sectional qualitative design embedded in the interpretative paradigm of qualitative research as the philosophical assumptions, namely the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, of this paradigm aligned with the aims of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Aligned with the interpretative paradigm, the reality of this study existed from the lived experiences of cyberbullied individuals who became cyberbullies.

1.6.2 Research Methodology: Phenomenological Hermeneutics

The interpretative research methodology of choice for this study was Phenomenological Hermeneutics. This methodology was suitable as it allowed the investigation of in-depth accounts of lived experiences (Creswell, 2014).

Being embedded in the interpretative paradigm, Phenomenological Hermeneutics is an approach to qualitative analysis with a psychological interest in how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. Hermeneutics is a form of phenomenology that orients the researcher towards interpreting the "texts" of life (hermeneutical) and lived experiences (phenomenology) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, Phenomenological Hermeneutics focuses on interpreting a phenomenon in a specific context. It aims to understand the person and how they are connected to the world through the meanings they make. Therefore, the data gathered should be detailed, reflective, and in the first-person language. This provides a phenomenologically focused approach to interpreting these accounts (Laverty, 2017).

According to Phenomenological Hermeneutics, understanding the underlying knowledge in a text means that the researcher must read, reflect, and interpret the text. This process of understanding the text is the hermeneutical circle. Ricoeur's (1981) notion of understanding the text was used to create the hermeneutical circle that emphasised interpretation, reflective writing, and reading of the text (Ghasemi, Taghinejad, Kabiri & Imani, 2011). These lived experiences in the form of text were interpreted to obtain meaning. There is a need to obtain the common meaning

of our lived experiences because this enables us to be knowledgeable about a phenomenon (Sloan, Bowe & Bowe, 2014). This approach was most suitable for the study because individuals' experiences were the primary source of information. The in-depth accounts of their experiences allowed for an in-depth analysis of each account that provided answers to the research questions and insight into being victims of cyberbullying and, in turn, becoming cyberbullies (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

1.6.3 Research design

1.6.3.1 Population and sampling

The population of the current study was early adults from Germiston aged 19 to 20 years, who have been victims of cyberbullying during late adolescents and who, in turn, became cyberbullies. Germiston is a town in the Gauteng Province of South Africa and was easily accessible to the researcher; hence the sample was drawn from there.

Young adults can reflect on the complexities of their adolescent experiences commonly associated with their transition to adulthood (for example, cyberbullying). They can communicate these experiences, and their reflections can show what happened in their lives as late adolescents (Cote & Bynner, 2008; Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer & Erickson, 2005). As a result, 19 and 20-year-olds were a suitable population for this study as they can reflect on their late adolescents' cyberbullying experiences without being too far removed in time from these experiences.

Eight participants who agreed on being audio recorded were interviewed. The participants were recruited using posters distributed at shopping centers, community halls, churches, and other

community centers in the region. A non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling, was used to select the sample. This approach to sampling allowed the researcher to select cyber-victim-bully participants with the required characteristics as indicated above; hence it was anticipated that eight would be in accordance with a phenomenological study (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). After eight interviews have been conducted (both male and female), data saturation was achieved for the study, and then the interviews ended.

1.6.4.1 Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data at the hand of an interview schedule (see Appendix A). This approach allowed the researcher to probe for more information from the participants as required by a Phenomenological Hermeneutical study. The questions were open-ended and covered aspects such as the participants' understanding of cyberbullying, their experiences of being cyberbullied, the effects of these experiences on the participant as well as the feelings, thoughts, and responses it generated and how it was dealt with.

The interviews were audio recorded by a digital audio recorder, while the researcher took field notes highlighting key aspects of the interviews. The data were transcribed by the researcher for analyses. Data were analysed using the Phenomenological Hermeneutical method. During the interpretation process, the researcher moved through the three methodological steps of the Phenomenological Hermeneutical method (Ricoeur, 1976). The first step was to develop a naïve understanding of the data, followed by thematic structural analysis of the data and then by a comprehensive understanding (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

1.7 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data and interpretation is the extent to which the findings represent reality (Waltz, Strickland & Lenz, 2016), and this was established by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These are discussed in-depth in Chapter 4.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was issued on 19 June 2019 by the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa. Thereafter, informed consent was obtained from the participants after the researcher had explained the research and the implications of participating in the study.

Qualitative methods collect data through human interaction. In these human engagements, risks emerge that might include embarrassment, anger, violation of privacy, misunderstandings, and conflicts in opinion and values. Researchers should be able to navigate ethical issues that arise when conducting research (American Psychological Association, 2017). How this was achieved in the current study as well as how the researcher dealt with her own biases, was discussed in Chapter 4.

1.9 Definition of terms

The following terms were crucial for this research study. Therefore, they were briefly defined below:

Cyberbullying: It is bullying instigated by the use of electronic devices to harass others (Badenhorst, 2011).

Cyber-victim-bully cycle: A series of actions in which a victim of cyberbullying becomes a cyberbully (Cassidy et al., 2009).

Disinhibition: A psychological trait that frees people from normal behaviour (Suler, 2004).

Dissociative anonymity: When an individual's name is not known, or maybe their real name is not revealed when they interact online (Suler, 2004).

Invisibility: The inability to be seen in your environment (Suler, 2004).

Late adolescents: Individuals from 16 years of age to 20 years of age.

Perpetration: The act of committing an act that is harmful to others (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014).

Reciprocal: Responding to action with the same action initially demonstrated in social interaction (Parada et al., 2004).

Victimisation: The process of targeting an individual for unjust acts (Gredler, 2003).

Young adults: Individuals from 19 to 20 years of age.

With these crucial terms briefly described above, the next paragraph discussed the summary of this chapter as well as the outline of this research study.

1.10 Outline of the research study

The remainder of the current study is structured as follows.

Chapter two contains the literature review that discusses research that has been produced by other authors on the issues of cyberbullying. This chapter shows that the research topic forms part of a larger and broader literature. **Chapter three** presents the theoretical framework of the study. In this chapter, the model and theory that assisted in understanding the phenomenon are explained and aligned with the aims of the study. **Chapter four** outlines the research method of the current study. It deals with the research design, which in this case, is qualitative research design, the sampling techniques, the sample size, the research technique, and methods of data collection, and the data analysis. Trustworthiness is crucial in this chapter for the research to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, while reflexivity is also addressed. The findings of the study are discussed in **Chapter five**. **Chapter six** discusses the results in alignment with the research and design. **Chapter seven** presents the reflection of the study, the strengths, and limitations of the study as well as the recommendations for future research.

1.11 Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter discussed the orientation of the study which include the basic issues and views of the study such as background information, the importance of the research, the research problem, aims, objectives, research questions and significance of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this review was to provide a comprehensive overview of the cyber-victim-bully cycle that has often been reported on. Most of these studies conducted on cyberbullying followed a quantitative research approach. One of the studies was by Scholtz, Turha, and Johnston (2015) who discovered that the respondents had engaged in cyberbullying as both bullies and victims. Kyobe et al. (2016) also indicated in their study that victims of cyberbullying retaliated when they had been targeted, whilst Betts, Spencer, and Gardener (2017) investigated the impact of cyberbullying (when respondents engaged as bully-victims), on learning and schools. Many of these studies were investigating different aspects surrounding cyberbullying amongst adolescents globally. Their results found significant information about the cyber-victim-bully cycle and how it increases the rates of cyberbullying incidents amongst students (Swearer & Hymel, 2015).

It was intensely displayed, after studying the cyberbullying literature, that many adolescents were engaging in cyberbullying because of being exposed to cyberbullying. Furthermore, most studies indicated that adolescents engaged in cyberbullying out of revenge, because they felt the cyberbully deserved it or because others were doing it (Hicks, Skoog & Crews, 2015; Sabella, Patchin & Hinduja, 2013; Slonje, Smith & Frisén, 2013).

When cross-checking the literature, the researcher read through the findings of the studies on cyberbullying. This was done to understand the results of cyberbullying studies. In studying these findings, the researcher discovered that most of the results reported a significant percentage of cybervictims who were engaging in cyberbullying activities as both victims and bullies. This

process clarified that there were not many explanations elaborating on the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Not much has been done to clarify why and how the cyber-victim-bully cycle was common amongst adolescents. This raises concerns about aspects that enhance cyberbullying as the researcher tried to understand the reasons behind adolescents' engagement in cyberbullying and how the whole process of the cyber-victim-bully cycle unfolds, hence the need for more qualitative research.

In South Africa, cyberbullying is evident in the limited research studies (Oosterwky, 2013), which are also mostly quantitative in nature. The prevalence rates of cyberbullying incidents amongst adolescents vary from study to study. It is uncertain as to how many adolescents engage in cyberbullying activities or are subjected to it, but the cyber-victim-bully cycle has contributed significantly to the increasing incidents of cyberbullying (Badenhorst, 2011).

It has been explained by many authors that cyberbullying and traditional bullying are different. This is because cyberbullying perpetrators might be physically separated from the online victim, allowing the online bully to have an outlet. There is evidence that youths around the world are being cyberbullied using electronic devices. Since there is no visible reaction and individuals can be anonymous during cyberbullying activities, it is most likely that perpetrators of cyberbullying are able to say mean things without any fear of overdoing it (Cassidy et al., 2009; Mishna et al., 2009; Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009; Watts, Wagner, Velasquez & Behrens, 2017). The perpetrator can form new online identities to harass and threaten their victims. However, it has been noted that in such incidents, victims do not urgently disclose their ordeal to adults. Victims believe that cyberbullying cases do not have substantiated evidence to demonstrate its

occurrence or to identify the perpetrator (Mishna et al., 2009), yet it may lead to psychological or emotional effects (Nartgun & Cicioglu, 2015).

The objective of this chapter is, therefore, to converge on the aspects that are related to the subjective realities of cyber-victim-bullies. The chapter intends to incorporate the history of cyberbullying and the occurrence of cyberbullying incidents derived from studies around the world and in South Africa, to exemplify the cyber-victim-bully cycle and its influence on cyberbullying behaviour.

2.2 The history of cyberbullying

In the past, bullying was not a major concern. For many years, bullying did not receive much attention. However, children began to commit suicide because of being bullied. Such impacts of bullying could no longer be ignored, and bullying became prioritised (Goodno, 2011). Research on bullying was initiated to address these intense consequences. As a result, the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual added bullying as a symptom of conduct disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Bullying was investigated as early as 1979 by Dan Olweus. During these early years, Olweus discovered that aggressive behaviour towards others (bullying) starts when individuals are young, and some individuals can still maintain such aggressive behaviour when they are older. As Olweus progressed in his investigation on aggressive behaviour, he finally defined bullying as repeated and unprovoked attacks against a more defenceless victim, which can be verbal, social, emotional and/or physical in nature (Gredler, 2003). In 2004, Elinoff, Chafouleas, and Sassu came

up with a description of bullying. They defined it as some antagonistic, violent act that can be both direct and indirect, aimed at an individual or group seen as weak. This definition includes the same elements that Olweus had indicated earlier in his definition. These include aggression, having a target that is deemed as weak, and repeated actions. However, Olweus was more specific on the type of aggression, while Elinoff, Chafouleas, and Sassu explained the types of aggression as direct or indirect. With time, Langos (2012) expanded on the definition of bullying and described bullying as a violent behaviour that intends to constantly harm the targets perceived as weak. It can be physical or non-physical in form. It is also emphasised in Langos' definition that it is constant aggressive acts against an individual that is seen as weak. In his definition, there was no specification on the types of aggressive behaviours, as Olweus (1992) had done earlier. Langos, however, classified these acts as physical or non-physical. Therefore, the element of repeated aggression and targeting a weak individual is common in all definitions. The major differences are evident when explaining the forms of aggressive acts regarded as bullying. Holfeld and Leadbeater (2015) have also defined bullying as constant hostile practices to targeted individuals that can be physical, verbal, social and emotional. Their definition did not deem the victim as weak but places emphasis on the repeated nature of the harmful acts as well. It is then evident that bullying is repeated acts of aggression towards an individual. These acts are displayed by the bully to harm the targeted individuals.

The introduction of technology had advanced human social interactions. As a result, online social interactions are now common in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, these online social interactions have brought another form of bullying that can only happen online. This type of bullying entails the use of electronic media devices by certain individuals connected on social

media platforms, to display aggressive behaviour towards others (Grigg, 2012). Below is a discussion on cyberbullying.

2.2.1 Defining Cyberbullying

In defining cyberbullying, the core elements discussed earlier that define bullying are incorporated within several descriptions of cyberbullying definitions, in attempting to define cyberbullying. The only difference that was noted between bullying and cyberbullying was that cyberbullying occurred in cyberspace with the use of information communication technology (ICT) to constantly express violent behaviour. Patchin and Hinduja (2015) have defined cyberbullying as using emails, text messages, instant messaging, or other means to harass others online. Goodno (2011) explained that adolescents use electronic devices to intentionally victimize their peers. The above definition does not fully explain what cyberbullying is but has elements of online aggression stated in it. However, Nartgun and Cicioglu (2015) have also defined cyberbullying as consistent violent acts by one or more people using electronic media towards a weak target. The above definition by Nartgun and Cicioglu (2015) incorporated a lot of elements that were addressed in this study that include intent, repetition, harmfulness of the acts by one or more people against anyone, using media technology aimed at a defenceless target. As a result, Nartgun and Cicioglu's (2015) definition was employed as the definition of cyberbullying for this research. This definition explicitly explains that victims of cyberbullying cannot escape the experience of cyberbullying as continuous advancement in electronic devices has increased online connectivity. This further complicates the cyberbullying situation.

Vandebosch and Cleemput (2008) found that there are different views about cyberbullying amongst adolescents regardless of the definitions above. However, for adolescents to classify an act as cyberbullying, the act by the cyberbully should show that he/she wanted to harm the victim and should indicate that it happened more than once.

The intention for cyberbullies to harm their victims can be difficult to prove. Intending to harm others must be determined by a sensible person and their perception of the cyberbully's behaviour. However, the concept of power imbalance is difficult to prove since the perpetrator might not be known (Langos, 2012). Gredler (2003) indicates that power imbalance demonstrates that the victim is not able to put an end to the bullying situation, thus cyberbullying meets the criteria of it being intentionally harmful to the victims. Like bullying, cyberbullying occurs in a social context, often involving many students that are connected on social media (Denny et al., 2015). Bullying through electronic media can reach many people at once, and as a result, young people today are vulnerable to cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2014) because of being invisible to each other (Voggeser, Singh & Göritz, 2018).

2.2.1.1 Online presence

To fully describe cyberbullying, it is necessary to explain how people are connected in cyberspace. It has been reported by Internet Usage Statistics (2018), that Internet connectivity was accessed by an estimated 40% of the world population. The number has increased significantly over the past decade, with children being amongst the users of the internet. In their recent update, Internet Usage Statistics (2019) reported that in Africa, mainly youths were connected to the internet. It is reported that when children have free access to online content (Srivastava, 2017);

they can easily browse the internet and understand how to use the applications on online sites (Chassiakos, Radesky, Christakis, Moreno & Cross, 2016). As the availability of ICT and internet connectivity has become easy even in South Africa, young people can experience cyberbullying on the many platforms they engage in with their peers. Perpetrators of cyberbullying have a limitless pool of victims and space to carry out their aggressive online behaviour (Phyfer, Burton & Leoschut, 2016).

2.2.2 The cyber-victim-bully cycle

By understanding that the bullying situation can accumulate into many problems such as the bully-victim cycle, it is apparent that the cyber-victim-bully cycle can also unfold amongst young people. This then means that cybervictims might end up engaging in cyberbullying as both cyberbullies and cybervictims (Odora & Matoti, 2015). As children access the internet to socialize, they become targets of cyberbullying. However, with such knowledge of some online engagements, some children continue to engage on these sites, resulting in some of them engaging in cyberbullying as well. Similarly, studies on traditional bullying that found the bully-victim cycle in the bullying situation indicate that the bully-victim cycle occurs when an individual engages in bullying as both a perpetrator and a victim of bullying. These incidents have also been reported in cyberbullying, as cybervictims have reported having cyberbullied others as well. In these studies of online bullying, it was discovered that there were many bully-victims. These online bully-victims also experience both sides of the bullying situation and are able to switch roles in their bullying encounters (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012; Namane & Kyobe, 2017). Additionally, it was found that identifying individuals in a bully-victim cycle is difficult

because they fit in both profiles of a bully and a victim, and their circumstances and behaviour are unique (Tokunaga, 2010).

Since cyberbullying is another type of bullying, and the bully-victim cycle is evident in bullying studies, there is evidence of the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Desai (2014) investigated college bullying and included cyberbullying as a type of bullying. The study discovered that students who bullied others either online or offline had been bullied before. Even though the study did not focus on cyberbullying alone, it revealed that in every form of bullying, individuals could adopt both roles of being bullies or victims, hence clearly demonstrating the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Furthermore, in South Africa, it has been discovered that victims of cyberbullying had also cyberbullied others. Even though there is not much literature on the cyber-victim-bully cycle, it has been demonstrated in previous studies that some cybervictims had cyberbullied too (Kyobe, Oosterwyk & Kabiawu, 2016; Scholtz et al., 2015).

Twemlow, Sacco, and Williams' (1994) explanation of the bully-victim cycle denotes that the bullying cycle occurs in social interactions. The roles in the bully-victim cycle are connected depending on the individual's response to the bullying situation. As a result, the social nature of bullying indicates that victims are victims because they have been bullied and bullies are bullies because they have victimized others (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson & Waterhouse, 2012). However, victims can become bullies if they decide to engage in bullying behaviour, whilst bullies can be targeted, thus becoming victims as well. Twemlow (1995a, 1995b) added that each party stands on the ever-changing relationship with the other person; therefore, the bully-victim cycle does not exist if the involved parties have not experienced both roles. Moreover, this cycle is fuelled by

projective identification and counter-identification. As such, Olweus (1992) saw a need to create a separate profile for this subgroup that investigated behaviours specific to bully-victims in bullying situations.

2.2.2.1 General characteristics of cyber-victim-bullies

Different findings emerge from research conducted by various researchers because the profiles of such individuals include characteristics of cyberbullies as well as that of cybervictims. With reference to research done on cyberbullying, it was apparent from the research findings that like cyberbullies, cyber-victim-bullies have elevated self-esteem and confidence, but they might not be accepted by others because they might not be perceived as strong (Seixas & Nicholas-Fisher, 2013). It is reported that cyber-victim-bullies are more confident than cybervictims, yet their level of confidence seemed to be lower than cyberbullies (Namane & Kyobe, 2017; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Since cyber-victim-bullies have a combination of the emotional and behavioural problems presented by both cyberbullies and cybervictims, they might experience psychological and social negative encounters that might result in deep emotional challenges, not being accepted, losing close friends and being deviant (Namane & Kyobe, 2017).

Studies also claim that cyber-victim-bullies might abuse substances (Bussey, Fitzpatrick & Ram an, 2015; Waasdorp, O'Brennan, Gulemetova & Bradshaw, 2013). Cyber-victim-bullies are lonelier and easily annoyed than cyberbullies, resulting in impetuous behaviour (Seixas & Nicholas-Fisher, 2013). They also seem to be more disturbed than cyberbullies in their psychosocial interactions and have emotional difficulties because of emotional distress (Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk & Solomon, 2010). Roeleveld (2011) alludes that students that have

emotional challenges might engage in cyberbullying because it has been discovered that individuals with emotional challenges might act aggressively. Such acts of aggression might lead to other cyberbullying activities from other students, as they retaliate. This emotional response of cybervictims can further escalate, leading other students to engage in cyberbullying activities too. The back and forth situation might increase hostility resulting in more forceful attacks (Mishna et al., 2009). In these incidents, cybervictims become vindictive as they engage in cyberbullying activities (Hicks & Crews, 2015). Popovac and Leoschut (2012) also argued that it is common for cybervictims to perpetuate violent behaviour because they feel they have the right to bring justice to their unfair treatment. It is also claimed that such individuals identify with the perpetrators of cyberbullying when they are in the company of their peers.

2.3 Features of cyberspace that influence cyberbullying

It has been argued that the features of cyberspace influence cyberbullying; therefore, these aspects, namely deindividuation; difficult for adults to monitor; and the viral nature of the internet, are discussed below.

2.3.1 Deindividuation

Human beings can scrutinize their interactions and behaviours with others because of their sense of individuality and self-awareness. Even if they see themselves as different from others, they embrace their uniqueness (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Thus, the concept of individuality has grounded the meaning and development of the term deindividuation. This explains how some individuals are immersed in group interactions. When an individual is no longer self-aware, he/she feels less responsible for their actions (Grinnell, 2018). Deindividuation overrules an individual's

self-awareness; thus, activities will be done collectively in a group. This level of collective mentality overthrows critical thinking and individual expression. If there are consequences in a group, they are felt by the whole group; hence, no individual can take responsibility on their own. In other words, it will be a shared responsibility. Shared responsibility brings some level of comfort; therefore, people in a group distance themselves from full responsibility for their actions (Hogg & Tindale, 2001). This is the reason why it has been stated that cyberspace groups might instigate deindividuation in both destructive and non-destructive group settings (Brady, Gantman & Van Bavel, 2019).

Concepts that describe deindividuation in the context of cyberbullying suggest that individuals tend to lose themselves when they are in a group setting based in cyberspace. In these online groups, individuals act and do what they would not otherwise do because they feel removed from the responsibilities of their actions. Being in an online group reduces individuals' self-awareness and self-restraint because they become less of an individual. With cyberbullying activities, youth who go online or spent most of their time in cyberspace may feel as if they are part of a group and not an individual (Décieux, Heinen & Willems, 2018).

2.3.2 Difficult for adults to monitor

Online content is not easy to constantly keep track of for parents and educators. Most of the information is personal; hence, if adults do not know how to gain access to certain online accounts or are not connected to the adolescents' online social groups, there is no track of what these young people are doing. Personal messages through text and emails are only viewed by the sender and the recipient; therefore, no individual can keep track of or remove offensive dialogue

from online content that they are not part of (Cloquell, 2015). Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) discovered that when children's online activities are not regularly monitored, it was more likely that cyberbullying activities would occur. Because of the difficulties in supervising online activities in certain areas such as the bathroom or an empty classroom, unruly online behaviour might occur. It is also difficult for many people to know what is happening in cyberspace because some people are not well versed in using a smartphone or cannot manoeuvre the internet with ease. Sites are created that adults are not even aware of, increasing the challenges that parents already have when tracking their children's online activities (Waasdorp et al., 2013).

In South Africa, a study by van der Merwe (2013) discovered that children browsed the internet unmonitored, thus creating a huge space for children to exercise unruly online behaviour without fear of getting caught. Furthermore, many researchers have emphasized that the consistent upgrading of technological innovations means that research, legislation, schools, and parents have a difficult and challenging time when they try to monitor children's online activities (Bauman, 2013).

2.3.3 Viral nature of the internet

The internet can be termed viral because it has the potential of spreading to an endless audience. Content on the internet can be distributed to anyone connected to the person sending the content. There is no limit to the number of people that can receive the content. (Wegge, Vandebosch, Eggermont & Pabian, 2016). The distribution of online information can be accomplished by the touch of a button called 'send.' Just like a virus that can reproduce more viruses with the same genetic make-up as the original virus, so does the internet reproduce the

same content if copied. This explains how information is moved and distributed in cyberspace. Information is sent to thousands, if not millions of accounts that are connected to the sender and the receivers of the content (Smith, 2013).

Viral media, like social networking sites, use the online audience to spread information online. Once the information is online, it can be subject to being removed, altered, retrieved, or saved by anyone. In schooling environments, online content can be spread to all learners connected to the sender. If the information is harmful, the consequences can be felt again and again because the information can resurface anytime. Whatever content that is posted online, will be there permanently. Even if the person that posted a photo, video, blog, or email decides to delete it from one site, it can be in many other sites; therefore, it will still be online (Eskey, Taylor & Eskey, 2014). It gets complicated if some people in the social networking sites are extremely knowledgeable in technical know-how because these individuals can apply their skills to alter information about a person, therefore misleading others (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017).

2.4 Types of cyberbullying activities in the cyber-victim-bully cycle

The above features of cyberspace are known to influence the spread of cyberbullying activities. However, there are many activities that can extensively expose adolescents to cyberbullying. The discussion below will explore the direct and indirect ways of cyberbullying.

2.4.1 Direct cyberbullying

Direct cyberbullying occurs when bullies directly contact the victim, either through a text or multimedia message, instant message, post on social media, phone call, or e-mail (Hong, Kim,

Thornberg, Kang & Morgan, 2018; Langos, 2012). When the cyberbully uses electronic communication devices in incidents of direct cyberbullying, they aim to get a direct and sudden reaction from the victim. Direct cyberbullying, like instant messages and webcams, claim seven times more victims than any other form of direct cyberbullying (Rice et al., 2015). To elaborate more on the above media platforms that play a significant role in direct cyberbullying, platforms most common in direct cyberbullying activities will be discussed below.

2.4.1.1 Chat-rooms

Chat-rooms are designed to engage more than two people in a conversation as many people can interact in chat-rooms, making it possible for many people to communicate at that very same time (Van Ouytsel, Walrave, Ponnet & Temple, 2016). Chat-rooms share information amongst groups of people because users in a chat-room are connected via a shared internet or any other similar connections. With regards to cyberbullying occurring in chat-rooms, adolescents come together to write and post degrading comments about the victim. Students use what is called a slam book or create posts that have demeaning information aimed at humiliating the victim (Bullock, Wong-Lo & Gable, 2011; Nuccitelli, 2012; Ong'ong'o, 2019).

2.4.1.2 Trolling

Individuals that troll, initiate arguments on online social networking sites causing confusion and misunderstandings between individuals that are connected at that time. This particular individual might post demeaning content to stir up conflict with the intent of provoking readers into displaying emotional responses (Snakenborg, Van Acker & Gable, 2011). When individuals engage in cyberbullying by trolling, the cybervictim will be a participant in the

discussion where the cyberbully attempts to create arguments that provoke reactions from other participants against the original receiver who is now the victim (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). The message might be directed to one or more people in the discussion. Once the message has been sent in the group, arguments begin with other members of the group either attacking the victim or adding more information to the original post or comments. The message becomes a subject of discussion (Snakenborg et al., 2011). The flow of the online discussion is disrupted, and controversies are created that might continue for a long time to come. Since the cybervictim is part of the discussion, insults could be exchanged between the original victim and the original perpetrator, with others joining in to support whomever they like (Sabella et al., 2013).

2.4.1.3 Happy slapping

Happy slapping involves one or more people attacking a victim while others record the assault on their electronic devices. Though happy slapping usually refers to acts that were less violent such as hitting or slapping the victim, it is now evident that extremely serious behaviours such as punching someone and sharing it online have been classified as happy slapping (Sabella et al., 2013). In cyberbullying activities, perpetrators physically attack or humiliate the victims while others record and upload it online (Nuccitelli, 2012). This form of cyberbullying could be very violent because it involves the victim being directly and brutally assaulted, while others stand on the sideways, and others record and distribute that violent content. Most children get involved in this type of cyberbullying activity either as distributors of the violent content or as commentators of the uploaded content (Chan, La Greca & Peugh, 2019).

2.4.1.4 Instant messaging

Instant messaging exposes students to cyberbullying when perpetrators send angry, hateful, or threatening messages to victims, trick victims into revealing their passwords, or use their account to harass others. Instant messaging can be used to spread rumours, call victims' names, or make degrading comments (Yilmaz, 2010).

Some cyberbullies use different sim cards and destroy them soon after they have used them, making it hard for victims to trace it back to them. Cyberbullies with technical knowledge hide their identities by using a voice-to-text computer application, creating an intimidating message (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Snakenborg et al., 2011). Some perpetrators modify images, thus placing the victim in a compromising, inappropriate or embarrassing position and then posting or texting the content to others (Bullock et al., 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).

2.4.1.5 E-mails

In terms of cyberbullying activities, some cyberbullies copy confidential emails, hack into the victims' accounts, copy confidential emails, and harass contacts that the victims have in the address book. The cyberbully makes it seem as if it was the victim who is sending the e-mails to the recipients (Sabella et al., 2013). Other perpetrators cyber-stalk and repeatedly harass their victims through e-mails (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Willard, 2006). They might not be online when the cyberbullying incidents happen; thus, it might be a while before they notice what has been happening in their absence (Agatston, Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

2.4.2 Indirect cyberbullying

Indirect cyberbullying incidents entail the online exchange of information not being sent directly to the victim. Information is spread about the victim on platforms known to the cyberbully and others without the victim's knowledge. Indirect cyberbullying activities include sending messages on social media platforms like Facebook without the victim's knowledge (Li & Lambert, 2012). Recipients can either download and resend the information to more people, or edit, comment and send it to other users on social media sites. Once the sender clicks the send button, they no longer have control over who will get the information or how they will use it (Calmaestra et al., 2016; Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, Crago & Theodorakis, 2016).

There are different situations where victims of cyberbullying can experience indirect forms of cyberbullying. Below are the activities associated with indirect cyberbullying.

2.4.2.1 Online gaming

The online gaming environment is pivotal in the occurrence of cyberbullying amongst children. These games that are developed to be played online have many players from all over the world (Srivastava, 2017; Wade & Beran, 2011). Once a player is connected online, their track record is seen by other players. Such information might lead to players cyberbullying each other. This means that these games can be used to create fear and confusion, lock others out of the game, delete the history of other players in the game, or ignore the victims (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Victims can be subject to insults and degradation. Rumours about victims can be spread to others so that others can refuse to play with them. This results in the victim being isolated without

knowing why they are receiving such treatments (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). Thus, it is to be understood that gaming cyberbullies show their dominance by creating confusion amongst other players. They also use verbal abuse, threats and profane language, to maintain their dominance and position in the game; thus, victims live in fear of the cyberbullies resulting in the victims not performing to their fullest capabilities (Eroglu, Aktepe, Akbaba, Isik & Ozkorumak, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Wade & Beran, 2011; Walker, Craven & Tokunaga, 2012).

2.4.2.2 Creating sites

There are many sites that are created online. Some sites like the Ugly Meter, a smartphone application available from the Apple store, is used to scan a picture into the cyberbully's phone, and others rate the picture according to categories that are meant to dehumanize the target (Chisolm, 2014). Categories include next to die, who is the fattest, or ugliest. In this form of cyberbullying, more people get involved in cyberbullying incidents, and anyone with the specific web address can visit the site and engage in cyberbullying (Chisolm, 2014; Kubiszewski, Fontaine, Potard & Auzoult, 2015; Snakenborg et al., 2011). Some cyberbullies can create their own sites to harass victims. When the site is created, anyone with a web address can vote on the different categories created by the perpetrators (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Bullock et al., 2011). Some have the capacity to upload any content of the victim to rate their moves, sounds, and physical characteristics (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Nuccitelli, 2012).

A cyberbully might create a fake profile about a victim, populate it with hurtful comments, fake information, and images (Snakenborg et al., 2011). In these incidents, the victim's

relationships are tracked, or the victim is tricked into a relationship using a false identity to emotionally wound and humiliate them (Chisolm, 2014).

2.4.2.3 Photo-shopping

Photo-shopping involves the victim's photo being modified, manipulated, or altered using software programmes to adjust an image. These software programmes can place the victim in an embarrassing or harmful position. In the past, digital alterations were done on computers, but now alterations can be done on smartphones if an individual uses Adobe Photoshop or any other editing software that is available to them. Photos are edited and posted to others or sent for public viewing (Agatston et al., 2007; Willard, 2006). The image can be copied to other users, shared on online platforms, recaptioned, tagged, and commented on by others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). When discreet changes are made by cyberbullies to images, others interpret or judge the image according to the false representation by the cyberbully. This indirect way of cyberbullying uses psychological, emotional, and social aggression to manipulate or overpower victims (Simmons, 2002).

2.4.2.4 Cyberbullying by proxy

Cyberbullying by proxy occurs when a cyberbully pretends to be the victim and then insults other people online. Other people online might think the victim is the one sending the offensive information; therefore, the victim will be insulted by others. This act potentially creates many cyberbullies that target one or more victims at once (Saunders & Varma, 2015). Perpetrators can open the victims' social networking page and change the victims' profile content by adding offensive information. The cyberbully can resort to remote controlling their victims' computers if

they do not have the knowledge on how to access the victims' files. When a cyberbully has web-based access to the remote-controlled computer, the connection can be established anywhere, allowing the cyberbully to control the victim's computer (Cross et al., 2016). Perpetrators who can gain access to the victim's computer are able to share private information, images, or videos about the victim. In Kenya, it was reported that predators of cyberbullying used WhatsApp to cyber-stalk their victims. Victims were lured into a group, and their privacy was intruded (Ong'ong'o, 2019).

2.4.2.5 Emails in indirect cyberbullying

When engaging in indirect cyberbullying using emails, cyberbullies gossip about the victims behind their backs, and the victims are not aware of the gossip. The victim might realize it later, but the damage might be irreversible (Gusler & Kiang, 2017). Cyberbullies can email cruel gossip, derogatory statements or unfounded rumours about a victim with the intent of humiliating the victim, damaging the victim's reputation or ruining friendships (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Kubiszewski et al., 2015; Nuccitelli, 2012; von Marées & Petermann, 2012). Some perpetrators use the chatting option provided by electronic mails, to chat with others about possible untrue stories (Agatston et al., 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). This is done to cause social or psychological harm to the victims in online public spaces (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).

2.5 Predictors of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be predicted by several factors that will be explained below. It is to be understood that there are different factors that influence cyberbullying perpetration. These factors have been known to predict if an individual is likely to cyberbully others or not. The most common factors that seem to influence cyberbullying perpetration, namely being a victim of cyberbullying,

moral disengagement, emotional problems, lacking social norms, parenting practices, and social connections and being different, will now be discussed below.

2.5.1 Being a victim of cyberbullying

There are many factors that put a child at risk of being exposed to cyberbullying behaviour. Individuals have been cyberbullied because of unique characteristics they have (Betts et al., 2017; DePaolis & Williford, 2018). Individuals have been cyberbullied because they were homosexual, had disabilities, were from different religions or races, or were socially withdrawn. There are many reasons why individuals are cyberbullied (Cassidy et al., 2009; Hemphill & Heerde, 2014; Keum & Miller, 2018). Having experienced cyberbullying, some victims end up engaging in cyberbullying as well. It is evident that most victims of cyberbullying have cyberbullied as well, and perpetrators of cyberbullying also report that they have been bullied before they became cyberbullies. Therefore, being a victim of cyberbullying can predict cyberbullying behaviour amongst some victims as they are exposed to cyberbullying by their experiences (Li, 2006; Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Thomas, Weinstein & Selman, 2016).

2.5.2 Moral disengagement

Moral disengagement is when negative effects are taken lightly, and the real level of damage that an action has caused is underreported by individuals that have caused harm to others. People who perform acts that are harmful to others, and undermine the damage that their acts cause, escape taking responsibility for their actions. Such individuals focus on the positive experiences produced by their actions while disregarding the negative experiences that might have caused damage to others (Farrington & Loeber, 2000). As a result of underreported acts of their

harmful behaviour by the perpetrator, effects are magnified to the victims. If a person understands that their actions are visible to others, he/she might refrain from indulging in acts that are harmful to others (Hui-Lien, Chien & Chao-Hsiu, 2016). There is a sense of moral sensitivity and self-censure that is active when an individual realizes that their actions are seen by others and can cause harm. Thus, if people realize that their behaviour has caused harm or will cause harm, they morally engage with others, therefore reducing harmful behaviour. However, if people disregard other people's pain, they will continue causing harm to others (moral disengagement) (Hemphil, Heerde & Herrenkohl, 2011). Moral disengagement has been discovered to be related to some of the social and cognitive variables relevant to cyberbullying behaviour (Barkoukis, Lazuras, Ourda & Tsorbatzoudis, 2016).

2.5.3 Emotional problems

It is to be noted that most people who engage in cyberbullying have emotional problems. It has been found that people who suffer from emotional problems like depression concede their feelings, and they might express these feelings in less favourable ways. These emotions can be expressed towards others in some form of aggression. Studies indicate that when adolescents are experiencing emotional problems, and experience hopelessness, they might engage in cyberbullying (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Alternatively, they may be more likely to display their anger by engaging in aggressive behaviours. A researcher who hypothesised that emotional problems such as anxiety and distress amongst adolescents led to aggressive behaviour concluded that emotional problems do sometimes lead to aggressive behaviour. There is a link between emotional problems like depression and cyberbullying behaviour (Ayas & Deniz, 2013). Mishna et al. (2012) described that people that have emotional problems might probably be involved in

violent acts such as cyberbullying. However, it is to be noted that most depressed people do not cyberbully others. Other adolescents who are depressed are more isolated from their peers and are not violent. Sometimes depression can lead to experiencing low self-esteem. Thus, these adolescents that experience low self-esteem might be easily pressured by peers to engage in cyberbullying behaviour. Depression, anxiety, low self- esteem, and self-reported emotional problems have been found to influence students' involvement in cyberbullying activities (Betts et al., 2016).

2.5.4 Social norms, parenting practices, and social connections

Individuals that are grounded in social networks and traditional social values such as respect for others rarely participate in cyberbullying activities (Lee, Hong, Resko & Tripodi, 2017). These findings are similar to Inguglia, Ingoglia, Liga, Lo Coco, and Lo Cricchio (2015), who also indicated that individuals with strong social connections do not engage in cyberbullying behaviour. However, it is to note that there are some controversial findings that found that exercising strict rules when raising children, do not guarantee that a child will act in an acceptable manner. Some children from a strict background have been reported to participate in cyberbullying. Those that have flexible parental routines were reported to engage in less cyberbullying acts (Navarro & Serna, 2016). Adolescents that are brought up in strict environments were reported to be negative towards their parents, and they did not want to identify with them. These adolescents were reported to be violent towards their peers. They lacked trust in their parents and did not develop strong ties with them (Betts, Houston, Steer & Gardner, 2017). This eventually led to rebellious activities that oppose traditional social norms.

Another dynamic noted when dealing with adolescents is that adolescents are not afraid of the authority exercised by their parents. This can result in these adolescents behaving in a socially unaccepted way. This means that they will spend more time outside the home environment, engaging with peers; thus, home restrictions do not affect them. Social norms, practiced at home, might not be effectively extended to resolve cyberbullying behaviour among adolescents (Lwin, Li & Ang, 2012). As Ho, Chen, and Ng (2017) explain that individuals with less favourable attitudes will probably participate in cyberbullying activities. Those that are expected to act favourably by significant others will most likely not behave badly and are less likely to express violent behaviour like cyberbullying.

The different findings above indicate that there are a lot of factors that influence adolescents to disregard social norms.

2.6 Effects of cyberbullying on victims

There is evidence that cyberbullying has effects on the victims of cyberbullying. Below is a discussion on the effects of cyberbullying.

2.6.1 The cyber-victim-bully effect

The cyber-victim-bully effect is a continuing cycle of cyberbullying (Zhou, Liu, Niu, Sun & Fan, 2017). Being a cybervictim was found to be almost equally prevalent in becoming a cyberbully (Cassidy et al., 2009). Thus, the consequences will be that cybervictims adapt to both roles. These victims of cyberbullying could adopt technological defence, that is, they end up using

technology to aggressively defend themselves (Mishna et al., 2012; Sleglova & Cerna, 2011; Thomas et al., 2016).

2.6.2 Social exclusion

It was discovered that cyberbullying experiences lead to various changes in the victim's social behaviour (Sourander et al., 2010). Some victims of cyberbullying were reported to develop ways of addressing the effects of cyberbullying. Li and Beran (2005) reported that there was a likelihood that cyberbullying victims were withdrawn from social interactions. Cybervictims experience disruptions in their adolescent social relationships. It is to be noted that targets of cyberbullying were reported to keeping to themselves and isolating themselves from their parents and peers (Brighi et al., 2012). This means that they had fewer friends (Olweus, 2012; Wang, Nansel & Iannotti, 2011). Wang et al. (2011) as well as Price and Dalgleish (2010), added that cybervictims could not socially engage with peers. Most importantly, the effects of cyberbullying on adolescents' psychosocial problems have been reported (Fredstrom, Adams & Gilman, 2011). Macháčková et al. (2013) found that adolescence that experienced cyberbullying did not trust others in their social interactions. This led victims to experience elevated social anxiety (Dehue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008).

2.6.3 Academic performance

Being a cybervictim has been reported to negatively affect young people's school performance. There are several reasons why cybervictims have difficulties in their studies (Wright, 2019). When cyberbullying occurs during school years, it disrupts young people. As a result, cybervictims are dispassionate about school (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Li & Beran, 2005; West,

2015). Other victims are distracted and have difficulties concentrating in class because of the cyberbullying experience. This affects their marks, and most cybervictims struggle to excel and advance to higher grades. School achievement is also affected when cybervictims are constantly absent from school (Yousef & Bellamy, 2015). This affects the cybervictim's academic performance, and there is reported low school attachment (Machackova, Dedkova, Sevcikova & Cerna, 2015). Cybervictims have been reported as doubting their intellectual capabilities; thus, their grades were negatively affected (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Li & Beran, 2005).

2.6.4 Low self-esteem

Victims of cyberbullying have been reported to experience low self-esteem (Citron, 2014; Goodno, 2011). Firstly, humiliating and degrading content, which is predominantly sensitive and private to the victims, is shared online. When such information is disclosed in an online public space, victims can experience low self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Gonzales and Hancock (2010) discovered that their participants' level of self-esteem rose when they saw the Facebook profile they had created or when they were editing these profiles. Therefore, when individuals' right to choose a photo to share online is violated, victims experience low self-esteem. Other studies have discovered that cyberbullying caused low self-esteem in victims of cyberbullying (Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic & Salame, 2015; Adomi, Eriki, Tiemo & Akpojotor, 2016). According to the above researchers, this low self-esteem can lead to lower social acceptability and low levels of self-confidence.

2.6.5 Emotional difficulties

The effects of cyberbullying on victims include emotional difficulties (Wright, 2019). Being continually cyberbullied can be stressful for some children (Rigby, 2017). Mishna et al. (2010) discovered that 7.0% of the 49.5% of respondents who were cyberbullied, felt sad. In 2012, Patchin and Hinduja found that cyberbullying victims added another 1.0% of variance discussed in symptoms of depression. Furthermore, Baker and Tanrikulu (2010) as well as Swearer and Hymel (2015) reported that cybervictims experienced high levels of child reported depression than those that had not experienced cyberbullying. In South Africa, it was reported that female victims of cyberbullying who were older, experienced emotional distress. These victims felt sad and depressed (Tustin, Zulu & Basson, 2014). Cybervictims that were at risk of psychological distress were 33.9% (Lonigro, Schneider, Laghi, Baiocco, Pallini & Brunner, 2015; Schneider, O'Donnel, Stueve & Coulter, 2012). These cybervictims were more likely to experience significant depressive symptoms than individuals who have not experienced cyberbullying. Cybervictims who experienced mixed emotions became angry and frustrated by the offender's behaviour; thus, Mishna et al. (2010) reported that out of the 49.5% of those who were distressed because they were being cyberbullied, 16.0% felt angry.

2.6.6 Suicide

Cyberbullying can cause irreversible damage to children's minds and spiritual well-being. The effects can be so severe that it can lead victims to take their own lives (Laubscher & Van Vollenhoven, 2015). Cybervictims who develop psychological problems like depression might think of taking their lives (Bauman, Toomey & Walker, 2013). In South Africa, cybervictims were reported to have attempted suicide (Laubscher & Van Vollenhoven, 2015). In other parts of the

world, Patchin and Hinduja (2010) reported that students affected by cyberbullying were 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide than those that did not experience cyberbullying. In addition, Hinduja and Patchin (2013) discovered that cybervictims were possibly more preoccupied with ending their lives or even try to commit suicide than individuals that have never been exposed to cyberbullying activities. The link between cyberbullying and suicide was more evident among cybervictims than cyberbullies. Furthermore, cybervictims almost had doubled in percentage of attempted suicide (1.9 times) in comparison to cyberbullies who were reported to attempt suicide at a rate of 1.5 times. Baldry, Farrington & Sorrention (2016), also reported that cyber victimization was linked to suicidal ideation, and suicidal attempts amongst American high school students, similar to Heltzel, 2014's findings that found a link between cyber victimization and suicidal behaviour. Contrary to the above findings, in the Netherlands, there was no positive relationship between cyberbullying and suicide ideation. It was, however, linked to mental health challenges in young females and not young males, as girls experience relational victimisation, which can significantly influence mental health challenges (Bannink et al., 2014).

2.6.7 Physiological problems associated with anxiety

Studies have discovered that victims of cyberbullying experience additional physiological health-related ailments (Heltzel, 2014; Watts et al., 2017). These physical health problems associated with being victims of cyberbullying include the inability to sleep, headaches, dizziness, and stomach aches. These symptoms were linked to how many times individuals experienced cyberbullying (Aricak, 2009; Stickley et al., 2013). It is to be noted that there is not much information on how cyberbullying impacts on adolescents' physical health. However, the information available shows that cyberbullying and psychosomatic difficulties are associated with

anxiety (Timmons & Margolin, 2015). American youths who were victims of cyberbullying experienced more severe anxiety and physical health concerns such as problems with sleeping, headache, poor appetite, and skin problems (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Similar results were found by Beckman, Hagquist and Hellström (2012). Thus, it can be safely stated that physical health challenges were associated with cyberbullying experiences.

2.6.8 Non-disclosure

Another concerning effect of cyberbullying is not being able to disclose one's ordeal. It is not easy for victims of cyberbullying to disclose their cyberbullying experiences. This could be due to the fact that victims do not want to get in trouble or to seem helpless when asking for help from others. Cybervictims rarely report the incidents to anyone (Huang & Chou, 2010; Li, 2005), and of the teenagers that know the perpetrators, or someone involved in cyberbullying, fewer would inform a parent or a teacher (Aricak et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Thus, cyberbullying continues to happen in the shadow, resulting in endless negative consequences. Additionally, some adolescents assume that their parents do not have the means to help them, nor would they be able to resolve the problem they would have encountered online. Some teachers are not willing to address incidents of cyberbullying if they have occurred outside the school (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015), and sometimes teachers do not know that cyberbullying is occurring as students do not even report such incidents (Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Li, 2006). In the United Kingdom, cyber harassment goes unreported because victims do not go to the police (Citron, 2014).

2.7 Summary of Chapter 2

The gaps in the cyberbullying literature and the occurrence of cyberbullying are evident. Cyberbullying studies have many concepts that explain the different roles and influences of such roles in cyberbullying encounters. These concepts shed light on the practices of cyberbullying. It is to be noted that cyber-victim-bullies and their behaviour change in the cyberbullying situation.

The information on how the cyber-victim-bully cycle unfolds will help in understanding what causes the cyber-victim-bully cycle to continue and other related factors of cyber-victim-bully behaviour. The review of literature that attempts to explain the different aspects of cyberbullying has raised issues regarding the factors that influence the individual's engagement in cyberbullying behaviour. These concepts reveal that individuals felt that they wanted revenge and sought justice because the cyberbully deserved it, felt free to do anything online because there is no reaction from the victims (Hicks & Crews, 2015), lack of parental guidance and self-control or not using the guidance provided, low self-esteem, the school environment, their age/grade, and the desire or urge to retaliate. These factors could be identified and noted as the basis for understanding this phenomenon, namely the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

Following the literature review, the researcher has also not found many studies on cyber-victim-bully behaviour but mostly the causes and relationships within concepts used to explain cyberbullying. There is also limited literature that applies theories explaining this category of individuals. Rather, they explain cyberbullies and cybervictims as the main categories, alongside the influences, impact, and remedial actions that apply to these categories. It is vital that

information is gathered and used when studying cyberbullying so that there is a contribution to the body of knowledge when referring to this subgroup.

The current chapter looked at the history of cyberbullying and the evolution of the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The chapter then delved into the cyber-victim-bully role and the general characteristics of cyber-victim-bullies. The section detained various media technologies and the platform that enable the cyber-victim-bully cycle to occur. The occurrence, predictors, and the effects of cyberbullying were also addressed. It is to be noted that most information about the cyber-victim-bully cycle was derived from the cyberbullying literature that indicated that the cyber-victim-bully cycle existed as well as from the literature on the bully-victim cycle. This shows that there is not much literature on the cyber-victim-bully cycle and the classification of cyber-victim-bullies.

The next chapter will present the theoretical framework that applies and describes the cyber-victim-bully behaviour amongst South Africa’s late adolescents.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The presumed influence behind the cyber-victim-bully cycle can best be understood in light of the reciprocal effects model and the disinhibition theory. The research problem of the current study illustrates the need to use qualitative research to investigate how and why the cyber-victim-bully cycle occurs. This chapter exemplify the relationship between the problem statement and the above-mentioned model and theory.

The reciprocal relationship of being a cybervictim and cyberbully that is mostly evident in quantitative studies (Seixas & Nicholas-Fisher, 2013), together with the disinhibition theory, provide a framework for understanding the experiences of cyber-victim-bullies. The above-mentioned model and the theory demonstrate how being a cybervictim can influence victims into becoming cyberbullies. As such, the reciprocal effects model explains why and how some individuals in social interactions, who are victims of cyberbullying, might end up engaging in the same cyberbullying behaviour. Because cyberbullying unfolds in online social interactions, it is important to understand the online environment and how social interactions occur by using the disinhibition theory. By using the disinhibition theory, it is implied that if individuals are disinhibited online, they can reciprocate the same action they have been exposed to. The reciprocal effects model and disinhibition theory set the foundation for the theoretical framework of the current study and provide a deeper understanding of the cyber-victim-bully cycle during late adolescence. Below is the discussion of the reciprocal effects model and the disinhibition theory that informed this study.

3.2 Reciprocal Effects Model

Parada, Marsh, and Craven (2004) were amongst the pioneers who explained and uncovered the empirical evidence for the reciprocal effects model. The reciprocal effects model explains that reciprocity is a social norm of responding to action with the same action initially demonstrated in social interaction. These actions can either be good or bad. A condition set by the reciprocal effects model posits that individuals can influence each other's behaviour if they socially interact.

The reciprocal effects of behaviour within social interaction mean that individuals would demonstrate the same behaviour. As discovered in many studies, there are reciprocal effects of many behaviours. The reciprocal effects model has a broad scope and has been applied in adolescent studies in order to understand more about adolescents' involvement in theft, use of marijuana and drugs, self-concept and achievement, alcohol, crime, and delinquency (Kulis et al., 2019; O'Mara et al, 2006; Valentine & Dubois, 2005).

The reciprocal effects model posits that negative emotions are triggered by negative experiences. Furthermore, the model posits that these negative emotions result in negative responses by the victim, such as victimising behaviour (O'Mara et al, 2006; You & Yoon, 2016). Moreover, the effects of being victimised influence victims to victimise others through orientating victims to such behaviours. As a result, the implication of the negative effects of being victimised is that the effects cause reciprocation of victimising behaviour. In other words, being victimised is posited to influence the perpetration of victimising behaviour, especially when individuals experience aggression in their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, it was discovered that

when one experiences aggression, it might lead him/her to be aggressive to others, and being aggressive to others may lead to those people experiencing aggression (Marsh et al., 2016). The initial victim will begin to victimise the perpetrator and/or other victims as well. These two concepts, namely being a victim and victimising, are believed to be linked by reciprocal effects over time. When an individual respond with negative behaviour, he/she might have experienced negative behaviour. For example, in incidents of verbal victimisation, it was reported that young people who engaged in bullying behaviour would be victims of verbal bullying as well. Moreover, if one is victimised and experiences negative effects, it provokes victimising behaviour and contributes to subsequent victimising behaviour (Stubbs, 2018).

3.2.1 Reciprocal Effects in the cyber-victim-bully cycle

Victimisation is the process of targeting an individual with unjust acts (Gredler, 2003). There are many victims of abuse, exploitation, and bullying. There are reported reciprocal effects of victimisation when the victims of unjust acts are groomed to become victimisers. When individuals target their peers, it leads to aggression, and this aggression leads to peer aggression by the victims (Cooley, Andrew, Frazer & Brown, 2017). For instance, the effects of being victims and bullies in bullying incidents include the inability to control oneself, increased aggressive behaviour, and increased stress over one's physical appearance (You & Yoon, 2016). The most common effects of being victimised are anger, fear, shock, and insecurity. Contemporary studies using the reciprocal effects model have stated that when victims have fear, mistrust, anxiety, and have difficulties coping with life, they respond to aggression with aggression. Because victimisation is a consequence of social behaviour, it is to be understood that victims of bullying behaviour might be compiled to protect themselves from behaviour that is associated with the

negative effects. It is assumed that as a means of protecting themselves, victims of bullying behaviour can be aggressive, and can experience emotional problems (Glassner & Cho, 2018; Shapland & Hall, 2007). When victims are singled out in social environments, such victims are more inclined to protect themselves. In such circumstances, victims focus on protecting themselves, therefore, adjusting their behaviour to fulfil the act. Some victims adapt to the act experienced earlier, whether in bullying incidents or abuse. If such victims are capable of reciprocating victimising behaviour to others, they are more inclined to behave as such (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Therefore, victims that have participated in bullying behaviour may continue with the behaviour consistently (Parada et al., 2004; Merrill & Hanson, 2016).

The reciprocal effects model has explained bullying behaviour by stating that a victim of bullying can experience both roles as a victim of bullying behaviour and as a perpetrator of bullying behaviour. Therefore, the two roles of being a victim of bullying behaviour and a perpetrator of bullying behaviour can influence the change of roles amongst individuals engaging in bullying behaviour. Moreover, being physically bullied early in life can significantly leave an imprint of bullying behaviour to the victim. This experience ultimately affects the behaviour of the victim. As such, the bully and victims' roles could not be separated but rather should be understood as mutually reinforcing roles that do not exist without the other (Marsh, Parada, Craven & Finger, 2004; Marsh et al., 2016).

Given the need to acquire knowledge about the antecedents of both being victimised and victimising others, the reciprocal effects model is of theoretical importance. As a result, the investigation dug deeper into how being a victim of cyberbullying might influence some

individuals to become a cyberbully using the reciprocal effects model. This was motivated by the claims that there are reciprocal effects on bullying behaviour. Furthermore, it was evident that in online bullying, a relationship exists between being a victim of cyberbullying and being a perpetrator of cyberbullying. This indicates that being a victim of online bullying impacts on some individuals becoming perpetrators of online bullying (Ma, 2001; Shin & Ahn, 2015). The negative effects of being a victim of bullying, and such individuals perpetrating this bullying behaviour is because of the reciprocal effects of being victimised. These effects tend to influence each other, ending in reciprocal relationships. Thus, being a victim of cyberbullying and being a perpetrator of cyberbullying influence each other reciprocally (Averdijk, 2011).

3.3 The Disinhibition Theory

In addition to the reciprocal effects model, the current study is also informed by the disinhibition theory (Suler, 2004) as it offers additional insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Disinhibition describes how individuals might be unaware of their behaviour and environment because of an external stimulus (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). It is seen as a psychological trait that frees people from normal behaviour. This is because restrictions that hinder a person from behaving in an acceptable manner are removed, allowing the person to behave extremely good or bad (Suler, 2004). Therefore, when disinhibited, people can be freed from the normal routine, hence, influencing their behaviour. Sometimes people become extremely good, going out of their way to help other people, for instance, excessively donating or trying to heal someone. This is known as benign disinhibition. In such a state, individuals attempt to understand themselves and solve problems in a healthy way. On the other hand, toxic disinhibition can be adverse because people become extremely mean, which could include using rude language, harsh

criticism, hatred, threats, or anger. Some individuals explore the dark side of the internet, interacting in platforms that they would not interact in. This type of disinhibition does not facilitate healthy interactions (Chen, 2019).

Suler (2004) conceptualised a theory that outlines the six factors that constitute the disinhibition theory in cyberspace, thereby unpacking the disinhibition theory. It is to be understood that not all the factors of Suler's disinhibition theory are related to unruly online behaviour. In one or more stages of processing one's online experience, it often may result in maladaptive responses such as cyberbullying. Therefore, Suler's (2004) disinhibition theory can contribute to understanding why and how some individuals fail to accurately encode and interpret their online interactions. To date, and to the knowledge of the current researcher, the disinhibition theory has never been used to explain a study investigating the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Below is the discussion of the six factors that influence online disinhibition.

3.3.1 Factor 1: Dissociative anonymity

Individuals have the opportunity to interact with others without revealing their true identity in cyberspace. When online individuals are disinhibited, they can have two identities online and offline. This factor is termed dissociative anonymity (Suler, 2004). In this state of disinhibition, individuals feel less connected to the physical persona, and they separate consequences of their online actions from their actions in the physical world. Therefore, these individuals can live different lives online and offline.

Earlier theories and recent studies on social psychology and communication have revealed that, because of deindividuation processes, anonymity is linked to aggressive behaviour.

Furthermore, dissociative anonymity can influence deindividuation and toxic disinhibition (Diener, 1976; Wu, Lin & Shih, 2017). It has been noted that online bullying behaviour can be influenced by anonymity. As a result, these individuals are prone to utilising anonymity when engaging in cyberbullying as well as provoking cyberbullying behaviour. Moreover, cyberbullying can be predicted if positive attitudes towards anonymity are high. Furthermore, instant messaging was linked to cyberbullying behavior because of anonymity (Barlett, Gentile & Chew, 2016)

3.3.2 Factor 2: Invisibility

In cyberspace, individuals are disinhibited because there is no physical engagement online. The lack of physical engagement enables individuals to express irregular behaviour. This behaviour is different from that expressed during physical engagement because of a lack of physical cues like display of reactions, eye contact, appearance, or how they sound. The lack of physical engagement has been termed invisibility (Suler, 2004). The absence of non-verbal cues was discovered to have a direct influence on disinhibition and cyberbullying (Casale, Fiovaranti & Caplan, 2015).

3.3.3 Factor 3: Asynchronicity

People that do not interact in real-time take more time to realise how others respond to them. Personal conversations allow people to respond quickly and personally recognise each other. The disinhibition theory considers asynchronicity as contributing to disinhibition because individuals do not interact in real-time in cyberspace (Suler, 2004). With asynchronicity, people are unaware of each other, and this influences how they interact with each other. On the other hand, people that are aware of each other are mindful of what they say in the presence of others

because they will get a quick response. Wu et al. (2017) have discovered that asynchronicity influenced toxic disinhibition; hence it is associated with unruly online behaviour.

3.3.4 Factor 4: Solipsistic introjection

Suler (2004) states that when individuals feel that they can hear someone's voice as they read a message, they are experiencing solipsistic introjection. As this occurs, individuals may create real individuals in their minds from online messages. This created person becomes a person that can have real conversations with these individuals experiencing solipsistic introjection anytime they want to. Such individuals imagine interacting with these personas formed in their minds, and they experience real conversations with these imaginary personas. During this time, these individuals are disinhibited, and their interaction with the personas in their minds becomes real to them. However, there is no link found between solipsistic introjection and toxic disinhibition.

3.3.5 Factor 5: Dissociative imagination

Certain individuals create their own world that is not real. As they begin to interact in this imaginary world, they no longer regard values in the real world. This is called dissociative imagination (Suler, 2004). In the imaginary online world, there are no boundaries, and people can act as they like, and in unusual ways that are not possible in real life. However, some individuals are able to go back to their physical interactions as if the imaginary world never existed. Other people struggle to separate the online imaginary world and the real world; therefore, they continue to act the same way they do both in the imaginary world and the physical world. This means the individuals are disinhibited (Suler, 2004). Wu et al. (2017) have discovered that dissociative

imagination influences toxic disinhibition as well, and individuals experiencing dissociative imagination exercise bad online behaviour because they do not observe boundaries.

3.3.6 Factor 6: Minimization of status and authority

The cyberspace environment has been described by Suler (2004) as lacking authority figures that enforce rules and the law. As such, individuals engaging online do so in a manner that they see fit. Contrary to real life where figures of authority ensure that people behave morally towards each other or have influence over others, cyberspace has no status that is superior to others. Moreover, in real life, there are moral ways of behaving towards one another. If anyone's behaviour is contrary to the set rules and laws, they are held accountable by figures of authority. This regulated process of enforcing good behaviour is not present in cyberspace; hence everyone can act and do as they please. When status and authority is minimised, individuals are disinhibited; therefore, they can say and do as they please. However, minimised authority and status have also not been linked with toxic disinhibition and cyberbullying.

3.4 The theory and model in the present study

Because the cyber-victim-bully cycle does not occur in physical space, but in cyberspace, it is presumed to be influenced by disinhibition. The assumptions posed by some of the factors of online disinhibition are believed to be essential in explaining cyberbullying behaviour. Because it is now possible to harm another person that is close to you in proximity without being able to observe the act of harm, young people might be influenced by it. It is not to preclude that disinhibition is the only explanation of how late adolescents are influenced to behave unruly online. It is, however, the best theory to explain the cyber-victim-bully cycle amongst late

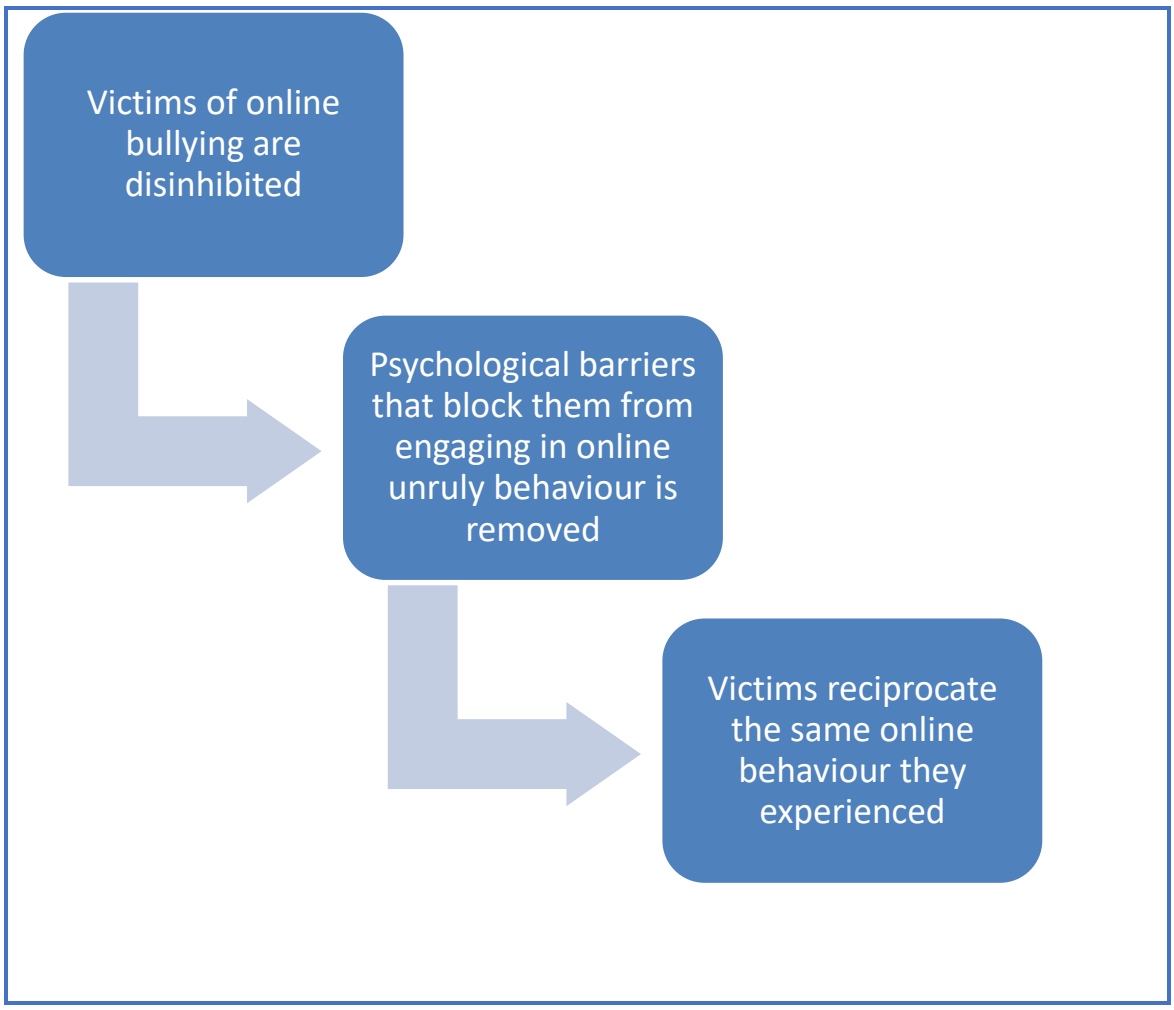
adolescents. This is because it describes most of the factors that might disinhibit young people when they engage in cyberspace. Moreover, to better understand the influence behind the cyber-victim-bully cycle, attention was focused on identifying factors that influence toxic disinhibition, thereby loosening the psychological barriers that block the release of inner feelings and needs of those that engage in cyberspace. It is to be understood that several factors might be influencing such behaviour, and when these factors interact with each other, it might result in adverse effects. Extensive research that has explored the effects of cyberbullying on children and adolescence indicated how cyberbullying affects the cybervictims and the cyberbullies negatively. Specific to these studies, the current researcher proposes disinhibition as influencing the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

Since social media platforms are regarded as platforms for social engagement, the behaviours experienced on online platforms do have reciprocal effects (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). With this in mind, if an individual experience something bad in their online interactions, such experiences might lead to reciprocation of the behaviour. The effects of being targeted through online aggression might result in the victims being disinhibited and engaging in the same bad behaviour. For some people, being a target of online aggression provokes them to retaliate or protect themselves, thus leading victims to employ the aggressive acts experienced as their defence. Regular experiences of cyberbullying have been reported to expose victims to anonymity, invisibility, or asynchronicity and, in turn, influence the victims to use these factors as they engage in cyberbullying as well, thus reciprocating the online behaviour (Barlett et al, 2016).

The disinhibition theory argued above explains the occurrence of bullying in cyberspace, while the reciprocal effects model demonstrates the reciprocity of online behaviour. The model and theory above informed this investigation that was qualitative in nature, to understand the experiences of late adolescents who were cyberbullied. As a conceptual framework was required to investigate both cyberbullying perpetration, and being a victim of cyberbullying (McArdle, 2009), the model and theory were combined into a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework was used to investigate the concepts as well as the reciprocal nature of cyberbullying (see Figure 1).

Therefore, the conceptual framework informed the researcher's line of interviewing around the cyber-victim-bully cycle. As a result, interview questions were framed to probe deeper into the cyberbullying experiences of late adolescents. The line of questions gradually unpacked the role of online social interactions in reciprocal behaviour, moreover, unveiling the unique cyberbullying experiences, its effects, and the aftermath. This, in turn, shaped the narratives that explained the presumed reciprocal effects of online behaviour with reference to cyberbullying behaviour (see the next page).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (by the researcher)



In this regard, the reciprocal effects model and the disinhibition theory combined have been framed to inform this study. This means that when victims of cyberbullying are freed from normal behaviour (disinhibited) online, because of factors such as dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, and dissociative imagination, victims are freed to reciprocate the online bullying behaviour they have experienced. It is to be noted that when some individuals are exposed to unruly online behaviour, disinhibition enables them to demonstrate the same behaviour they have been exposed to, without restriction, which illustrates this model. As a result, unruly online

behaviours such as cyberbullying can be reciprocated by individuals exposed to cyberbullying because of disinhibition.

3.5 Summary of Chapter 3

The present chapter has demonstrated the assumptions of the reciprocal effects model and the disinhibition theory and how it can help to investigate the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Additional consideration of this well-established reciprocal effects model and disinhibition theory facilitates a more comprehensive understanding when learning about the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Because of the relative scarcity of information on the cyber-victim-bully cycle among late adolescents, there seems to be an incomplete understanding regarding behaviours that occur in the cyber-victim-bully cycle that the reciprocal effects model can explain. Furthermore, because of the advances in technology that have created more opportunities to carry out bullying behaviours online (Ellison & Boyd, 2013), the disinhibition theory further explains behaviours that manifest in cyberspace such as cyberbullying. Moreover, many people that interact in cyberspace might feel freed to do many things that they would not do in the physical world because they are disinhibited (Suler, 2004).

The next chapter discusses the research methodology of this study. This will include, amongst others, the design, with reference to the paradigm of the study, sampling, data collection, and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

4. 1 Introduction

It is vital to understand the philosophical assumptions of the current study to conduct and evaluate the research. Therefore, this chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and methodological underpinnings of the current study according to the interpretative paradigm. The choice of Phenomenological Hermeneutics as the research methodology is discussed in more depth as well as the research design that includes the approach to sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, an illustration of the modes to ensure trustworthiness as well as ethical standards, is provided.

4.2 Research paradigm

The interpretative paradigm, in which the current study is embedded, assumes that truth is formed socially and experientially. When meaning is made from these social and experiential events, truth is understood. For many truths to be obtained, interpretivists should have a contextual background of the environments they are gathering data from. This will assist interpretivists when they make sense of the data. The core belief of the interpretative paradigm is that reality is constructed through individuals' social and experiential encounters. This paradigm understands how individuals make sense of their human experience (Cho, 2018; Silverman, 2016; Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

Researchers using the interpretive paradigm try to understand how individuals make sense of their human experience (Silverman, 2016; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Therefore, interpretivist's approaches make sense of individuals' thinking and meaning-making related to the context they

live in. Moreover, “meaning” is based on how the individuals under investigation make sense of their environment. Emphasis is placed on understanding individuals and how they interpret the world around them (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Willis, 2007). Having understood the philosophical assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, the reality of this study exists from the lived experiences of young adults, who, as late adolescents, were cyberbullied and consequently cyberbullied. Even though there are many truths, reality can be described and formed through interactions related to the adolescents’ experiences of cyberbullying. The experience of being cyberbullied might have influenced the participants to cyberbully; therefore, an interpretative paradigm was needed to portray the lived experiences of the cyber-victim-bullies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The ontology and epistemology of the interpretative paradigm align with the aim of the study, namely that it is to understand the lived experiences of cyber-victim-bullies. The interpretative paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology and a relativist ontology (Davidson & Valle, 2016). The methodology of choice for the current study that is supported by the interpretative paradigm is Phenomenological Hermeneutics.

4.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The ontology of the interpretative paradigm assumes that truth is subjective and varies from one individual to another, which implies many realities. The interaction of objects with meaning is the bases of understanding a truth (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Crotty, 1998; Frowe, 2001). Therefore, truth depends on how individuals make sense of their own experiences. Furthermore, the use of language enables individuals to express their truth to others (Davidson & Valle, 2016).

Social interactions influence how individuals make sense of the events they encounter. This assumption of a subjectivist epistemology influences how researchers make meaning of their data collected through social interactions with participants (Mills, Birks, Mills & Birks, 2017). Therefore, in the current study, the social world can only be understood through the experiences of adolescents in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The knowledge of this phenomenon will be discovered by the interpretation of the lived experiences of the cyber-victim-bullies. The cyber-victim-bully cycle demonstrates the way in which adolescents relate to the phenomena, namely cyberbullying. From this perspective, the cyber-victim-bully cycle is a human experience, created by how we understand the interpretation of the phenomena as presented through the adolescents' experiences in the cyber-victim-bully cycle (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), thus demonstrating the epistemological stance of the study.

4.2.2 Methodology: Phenomenological Hermeneutics

Phenomenological Hermeneutical methodology, as a qualitative approach to research (Creswell & Poth, 2018), proceeds on the assumption that understanding the world requires an understanding of experiences from an interpretative stance. Phenomenological Hermeneutics is interpretative and, therefore, the hermeneutical approach focuses on interpreting a phenomenon in a specific context. Its interest is understanding how individuals are related to the environments they live in (and the things in it which matter to them) through the meanings they make (Ghasemi et al., 2011).

Therefore, a phenomenological study is phenomenological-hermeneutical if the meaning of a phenomenon is studied and revealed through the interpretation of a written text (Ricoeur,

1976). To understand text, the researcher must go back and forth in the hermeneutical circle of reading, reflecting, and interpreting in order to interpret the text for meaning. Thus, experiences are crucial when a researcher enters this circle of interpretation (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Qualitative researchers elicit and engage with the experiences of those who are already immersed in a linguistic, relational, cultural, and physical world of the phenomenon under investigation (Ghasemi et al., 2011; Kearney, 2017). Researchers have to be able to make meaning of the participants' experiences to fully grasp the participants' intended meaning. For this to be effectively implemented, researchers must identify and reflect upon their own experiences and assumptions, therefore making the experiences about the participants' views and not the researcher's views (Ricoeur, 1976).

4.3 Research design

An interpretive frame of reference came into view and showed that within the interpretative approach, subjective experiences of cyber-victim-bullies are authentic and should be regarded as such, taking the above into consideration. This consideration for subjective experiences then suggests the ontological perspective of this study, and the intended discernment of human experience indicates the epistemology of the research.

4.3.1 Qualitative cross-sectional study

This qualitative study followed a cross-sectional design as it investigated a phenomenon at a specific point in time. The data was collected at the same time from people who have experienced the same phenomenon even though they differed from key factors of interest such as age, income

levels, or geographic location (Laverty, 2017). As demonstrated above, the experiences from cyber-victim-bullies have substantiated the use of a qualitative cross-sectional design to achieve the objectives of the study. Data collection was done using semi-structured interviews, while a phenomenological hermeneutical approach for data analysis was employed. With this perspective, the study was designed and conducted, as explained in the next section.

4.3.2 Population

In the current study, the population was young adults – aged 19 to 20 years – from Germiston, in the Gauteng province of South Africa, who were victims of cyberbullying as late adolescents, and in-turn became cyberbullies during their late adolescent phase. They could belong to any gender group and were able to speak English.

The reason for the age range of the population is that young adults can reflect on the complexities of their adolescent experiences commonly associated with their transition to adulthood. In other words, they can narrate their late adolescent cyberbullying experiences and give essential meaning to the phenomenon under investigation (Eliason, Mortimer & Vuolo, 2015). These reflections painted a picture of what happened in the lives of these participants during their school years, making 19- and 20-year olds a suitable population for this study.

4.3.3 The sample and sampling techniques

The lived experiences of young adults who have been cyber-victim-bullies during their late adolescent years were needed to answer the research questions. Therefore, a sample was selected that could provide insights into the cyber-victim-bully cycle. In discussing the sample, the

following sections explain the sample and sampling technique, the sample size, and the selection of the final sample.

The qualitative nature of this investigation led to the utilisation of a non-probability sampling technique. Specifically, purposive sampling was used to select a sample according to the purpose of the study and knowledge of the target population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Tourangeau, Johnson, Wolter & Bates, 2014). Furthermore, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to make her own judgment in selecting participants that were most suitable to answer the research questions (Chaudhuri, 2018).

A Phenomenological Hermeneutical study requires a small sample (Creswell, 2014). As such, the researcher aimed for a minimum of eight participants (Chaudhuri, 2018), and data saturation. Data saturation was reached during the data collection phase when a total of eight participants were interviewed.

Posters (see Appendix C) were used to recruit participants. These posters that were distributed, invited individuals interested in participating in a research study that is related to cyberbullying to be part of this specific research. Permission to distribute posters was obtained from the relevant councilors and property owners. These posters were distributed at shopping centers, community halls, churches, and other community centers within Germiston. The posters had basic information about the study and contact information of the researcher. Contact information of the researcher enabled potential participants to communicate their interest to the researcher. A total of twelve responses were received, and an initial telephonic discussion was

conducted with potential participants. This discussion provided a more informed description of the study that included the aims and objectives of the study, an approximation of the time that could be spent in the interview, and clarity on how anonymity will be ensured. However, rapport was not established at this stage.

The researcher asked the potential participants two questions during the initial discussion to determine whether they formed part of the cyber-victim-bully cycle, namely: Have you ever experienced cyberbullying? Did you, for any reason, go online and react negatively to this cyberbullying experience? If the respondent answered positively to both questions, the researcher asked the individual if he/she wanted to participate in the study. Upon agreeing to participate, the study was further explained to the participants concerning informed consent and non-disclosure agreement forms. In this regard, eight participants were suited for the cyber-victim-bully profile. The relevant forms were signed before the interview commenced. The interviews took place at the participants' places of convenience, yet the researcher considered a place that was safe.

4.4 Data collection

Germiston was selected as the region from which participants were drawn as the area was familiar to the researcher and easily accessible. Furthermore, it was assumed that cyberbullying was not geographically restricted as the technology through which cyberbullying takes place, is readily available across South Africa.

Using the English language as the language for interviews had removed translation complexities for both the participants and the researcher. Therefore, the participants had to be conversant in English to such an extent that they could express themselves sufficiently.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for the current study (see Appendix A for the interview schedule). People tell their stories through narration. Interviews encourage participants to recall important information, feelings, and expressions, to enhance the quality of the data collected. Therefore, the data in this study consisted of accounts of the interviewees' lived experiences (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). Extracting meaning from lived experiences requires that texts that can be interpreted have to be produced (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Ricoeur, 1998). These semi-structured interviews were used to acquire quality evidence that was transcribed into rich text to be later analysed and build a convincing and credible answer to the research questions that were posed (Prochaska, 2017). Therefore, relevant information was gathered on the experiences of young adults that sufficiently contributed to answering the research questions. The researcher arranged the questions from simple to complex, allowing the research participants to gradually adapt to the complexity of the questions (Saunders et al., 2015).

From the audio recording of the interviews, interview texts were created through transcriptions of the interaction between the researcher as the interviewer and the participants as the interviewees. During the interviews, the interviewer obtained the information from the participants through the use of an interview schedule (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The participants narrated how they lived as victims of cyberbullying and being cyberbullies. The cyber-victim-bullies shared their cyberbullying experiences at the hand of cyberbullying incidents. They explained how the roles in the cyber-victim-bully cycle changed and how they were intertwined.

The main objective was to gather information about participants' lived experiences as victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. Having written text about these encounters helped the researcher to understand more about these experiences (Kearney, 2017; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Thus, the researcher asked the participants about their experiences and probed according to the way the participants narrated their stories while trying not to interrupt the natural flow of the accounts.

4.4.1 Reflection of the interview process

Before signing the informed consent, the researcher made sure to determine how the participants were feeling about the interview by observing their body language. When participants walked into the venue where the interviews took place and indicated that they were comfortable sharing their stories, the interview session commenced. The researcher could easily assure the participants to feel free to share as much information as they could. She also observed if the participants were comfortable with the interview process. If they were not comfortable, the interview could stop at any time (Sloan et al., 2014), hence, allowing the research participants to share more intimate information and follow questions as they were being asked. As recommended by Saunders et al. (2016), during the interviews, the researcher took field notes on the behaviour and reaction displayed by participants as well as the feelings and thoughts of the researcher. These notes assisted the researcher during the interpretation of the data. The participants believed in their stories and that they were important for the research.

The researcher was attentive, kept nodding her head, and maintained eye contact when communicating and encouraging the flow of communication. Prochaska (2017) believes that in the interview situation, researchers should pay attention and constantly monitor the situation.

Therefore, the researcher was aware of the interchange in the relationship between each participant and the researcher, thus enriching the data via the flow of conversation and information sharing.

4.4.2 Pre-testing of the interview schedule

Pretesting, a trial run of a research tool (Sarantakos, 2013), was done in this study. One participant was interviewed to provide additional exposure for the researcher in using the research tool and interviewing skills. This interview was also used to ensure that the questions were clear and were understood by the research participants. Problems noted with wording were rectified, and the time that the interview would last was determined. It was noted that the participant would give brief answers like “yes I was cyberbullied and it was bad”, without giving enough details. Therefore, the researcher learned to be vigilant and ask as many follow-up questions as possible to get the participant to talk. The researcher was sensitive and constantly reminded the participants that their information was confidential. However, this interview was not included in the data analysis for the study because it did not meet the requirements of the study (there was not much information provided by the participant).

4.5 Data analysis: Phenomenological hermeneutic method

The phenomenological hermeneutic method was developed by Lindseth and Norberg (2004) through the application of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation. This theory is aimed at understanding written text. Ricoeur (1976) explained that once researchers engage with written text, they should be able to explain their understanding of the text. This enables the reader to interact with the researchers’ thoughts as the reader engages with the text to understand the meaning or the interpretation of the text by the researcher. It is to be understood that the world has

various meanings and that realities are constructed by individuals, hence being able to explain these realities in the form of the text brings forth meaning that has been constructed. The text is better comprehended by language structures, reflections, understanding, and the person reading the text. This includes the verbal and non-verbal expressions that are observed and written down. These cues are important when reflecting on how the reader understands the text. It is believed that this approach would direct the reader into interpreting the text, thus the beginning of a naive understanding. This interpretation process occurs in a continuous cycle of going back and forth with the text to develop meaning. When developing meaning, the researcher enters the hermeneutical circle through reading, reflective writing, and interpretation of the text. By embracing the knowledge above, Lindseth and Norberg (2004) developed the Phenomenological Hermeneutic method, with three stages of interpreting the text. As such, it was chosen for the data analysis in this study and guided the interpretation of the study (Laverty, 2017). Below are the three steps followed when analysing data using the Phenomenological Hermeneutic method of Lindseth and Norberg (2004).

4.5.1 Stages of the Phenomenological Hermeneutic method of data analysis

The Phenomenological Hermeneutic method moves through three steps of interpreting the written text. This forms the basis of the data analysis process that determines the findings. The stages include a naïve reading that guides the thematic structural analysis, and then the interpretation process (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Therefore, showing the reflection of the data analysis process as it is applied in the current study, follows below.

4.5.1.1 Stage one: Naïve reading

This initial stage of the Phenomenological Hermeneutic method entails a naïve reading of the text. This refers to the text being read several times to help the researcher grasp its meaning (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

The researcher in the current study had her assumptions about the text. To prevent bias, the researcher interacted and merged all ideas that were evident. As the researcher read the text, she made meaning of it and was clear on how to explain the written text, thus, gained insight into the narrated experiences. The naïve understanding of the written text was conveyed in easily understandable language to enable readers to make sense of these lived experiences (Davidson & Valle, 2016; Ricoeur, 1976, 1998). During this stage, the researcher integrated the meanings from the written text by simplifying the narrated experiences. The findings from this initial stage were confirmed in the second stage of data analysis, namely, thematic structural analysis (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

4.5.1.2 Stage two: Thematic structural analysis

In the second stage of the data analysis, the researcher spent more time interacting with the data intensively. She emerged herself in the data for a long time, reading between the lines for common concepts of the written text. While rereading the text repeatedly, several meanings evolved. Since words might carry several meanings, it was necessary that the researcher contextualised the text, to avoid misinterpretation of the text. When the text had been contextualised, a meaning was chosen that brought forth interpretation (Sloan et al., 2014). Therefore, the context of the cyber-victim-bully cycle was grounded, so that meaning was

developed according to the encounters. The researcher engaged with her thoughts as she re-read the text and derived meaning. Thus, the researcher deduced knowledge from the encounters.

In the current study, the transcribed interviews were read several times, and they were placed in categories that communicated distinct concepts. These categories were formed from one or more sentences (Henricson, Segesten, Berglund & Määttä, 2009). In order to group common meanings together, a thematic structural analysis was used. It was important to note that long sentences were needed during this process, as they clearly convey the experiences that are being narrated. As the researcher read and understood the text, similar lived experiences and meanings were grouped together to form sub-themes. Similar sub-themes were further identified and grouped together to form themes. Themes were used to further scrutinise and understand the intended meaning. Once the sub-themes were clearly stated and validated against the naïve understanding, these sub-themes were broken down into the four main themes (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

4.5.1.3 Stage three: Comprehensive understanding

During this stage, the researcher engaged with the themes extracted from steps 1 and 2 on a level of questioning the real meaning that was retained from the naïve understanding and the thematic structural analysis. The researcher read the written text, keeping in mind the research questions, naïve understanding, and findings from the thematic structural analysis. This process unfolded more and more meaning as the researcher continued to engage with the written text. When the researcher questioned the text, new experiences emerged, leading to an understanding of the participants' world, new experiences, and meanings. Sub-themes and themes already created

in step 2 were formulated in relation to the research questions and the context of the study (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Previous assumptions about the text were incorporated with the meaning of the text because pre-understanding cannot be separated from how text is interpreted (Sloan et al., 2014).

4.5.2 Formulating the findings in a Phenomenological Hermeneutical way

The Phenomenological Hermeneutic method requires the researcher to be creative with language, entailing that a rich vocabulary is required (Davidson & Valle, 2016). In this study, the vocabulary is, however, simplified to everyday language for easy understanding. The language that is used to express the themes must be simple because the language that is used to express the experiences is simple as well. Therefore, the language portrayed meaning that is rich and reflective of the text, even though it is conveyed in a non-complex way (Sloan et al., 2014).

4.6 Trustworthiness

Having demonstrated how the research was conducted, there is a need to further exemplify the trustworthiness of the whole process. Qualitative research ensures validity and reliability through trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of the data and interpretation demonstrates how reality is represented in the findings (Waltz et al., 2016). In qualitative research, this is guaranteed by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These concepts were addressed below.

4.6.1 Credibility

Because credibility is where the findings need to make sense and accurately reveal the participants' reality (Silverman, 2016; Waltz et al., 2016), the researcher adopted a research method that is well established in a qualitative investigation, namely Phenomenological Hermeneutics. This approach contributes to credibility as specific procedures are followed to make sure that data was analysed according to the research method stated above. This method has been successful in other qualitative studies; hence its credibility is high.

The researcher's line of questioning was the same in the interview sessions, and the way data was analysed was according to the Phenomenological Hermeneutic method. This helped the researcher to relate her findings obtained through a well-established research method, to an existing body of knowledge, by making sense of the findings.

Purposive sampling contributed to relevant data being gathered. Four themes emerged from the data emanating from the participants' accounts to ensure authenticity. The researcher built a rapport with the participants to provide an adequate understanding of the social context of the participants, as well as to build trust. In addition, honesty was encouraged, and participants were informed that there were no wrong answers to the questions that were being asked. Probing was done to acquire more detailed answers, bringing clarity to the issues being discussed. This ensured more detailed descriptions of these lived experiences.

4.6.2 Transferability

To ensure that the findings and conclusions of the study could be used by other researchers to explain cyberbullying behaviour in their studies, or when drafting school policies, the researcher ensured that information about the participants, their demography, and interview questions was provided. Details were provided about the context of the study to enable readers to make judgements on whether they could transfer the findings and conclusions to other situations. Background of the phenomenon investigated is aimed towards allowing readers to interact with the phenomenon described, thereafter, compare it with their own experiences. A steady accumulation of similar studies enables transferability over time (Waltz et al., 2016); therefore, the researcher ensured this contributed towards this possibility by thoroughly describing the sample, the sample size and the sampling process that were followed.

4.6.3 Dependability

Details about the processes followed in the study were reported to address dependability, thereby ensuring that a similar study can be done again. Thus, the research design clearly stated all research practices followed. The research design and its execution were explained. The operational details of data gathering and an explanation of what was done during the research process was provided, as well as a reflective appraisal of the study.

4.6.4 Confirmability

The extent to which the researcher addresses his or her own attitudes to ensure confirmability (also known as audibility) should be observed. In this regard, the researcher followed the values of Phenomenological Hermeneutics to avoid going out of the

phenomenological context. Therefore, the researcher constantly went back to the written text and audio recordings of the interviews so that she could interpret the written text according to the participants' realities and not include her own views. Reasons for making decisions and methods adopted were explained in the study; thus, the reasons for using the approach above were explained. Theories were thoroughly discussed, supporting or dismissing the previously stated claims in the study, and content was addressed in the ongoing reflective commentary. The researcher looked at the findings and interpreted these findings in connection to the theories. The audit trail tracing the course of the research step-by-step through including data collection steps, data analysis, and formulation of recommendations were shown.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Researchers using qualitative methods directly engage with people. In such social engagements, there are possibilities of risks such as overwhelming emotions, misunderstandings, or violation of privacy (Waltz, Stickland & Lenz, 2010). Researchers should be able to navigate sensitivity to ethical issues that arise when conducting research. Below is a discussion on these ethical issues.

4.7.1 Ethical clearance

Before undertaking this study, the first research step was to obtain ethical clearance from the College of Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa. Thereafter, informed consent was obtained from the participants after the researcher had explained the research objectives and the implications of participating in this specific research study.

4.7.2 Researcher competence

The researcher upheld her professional values as a psychologist in training and conducted her study with integrity and according to the ethical standards of psychologists. She was well-versed with issues related to competence, advertising, public statements, and fees related to the study (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002). The researcher had to be competent in oral and written communication, develop interviewing skills and be competent in analysing data.

The researcher was mentored by experienced qualitative researchers and practised interviewing to ensure that she mastered the concepts in interviewing. A pilot interview was conducted in preparation for the interviews to assess the risks, as well as to prepare the researcher for the main interviews (Waltz, Stickland & Lenz, 2010).

The researcher was able to keep data in a locked safe and identities of the participants were not revealed because pseudonyms were used when referring to participants. The researcher was able to build rapport and ensure that participants felt safe to reveal their intimate life experiences. Empathy, respect, allowing space for sadness and upset, demonstrating interest when interviews were narrated, being non-judgemental, and active listening were practised (Waltz et al., 2016).

The researcher acquired analytical skills through practicing the three steps indicated by the Phenomenological Hermeneutics method and research findings were presented as such (Waltz et al., 2016). The researcher analysed pieces of text from newspapers and novels according to the above-mentioned steps.

4.7.3 Participants

Waltz et al. (2016) explain that participants need to be informed of the steps involved in the study. The researcher informed the participants of potential risks and benefits, measures taken to disseminating data, privacy, confidentiality and limits to these issues. This was framed accordingly, adequately, concisely, cogently and appropriately to the participants' level of comprehension.

Participation was voluntary and purposive sampling was used to recruit individuals who volunteered to be part of the study (Waltz et al., 2016). The researcher did not solicit private information from clients. The participants were referred to UNISA counselling services so that they could receive guidance on how to deal with anger as well as finding better ways of dealing with cyberbullying.

In all forms of research, the welfare of participants is crucial (Waltz et al., 2016); therefore, participants were not exploited as the researcher constantly appraised the emotional well-being of participants. The researcher made sure that the research agenda was clearly understood by the participants to avoid conflict of interest. (Waltz et al., 2016).

4.7.4 Ethical Standards for Psychologists

There are five principles that guide psychologists when performing their duties. Below is a discussion of these five principles.

4.7.4.1 Beneficence and non-maleficence

Psychologists must perform work that is of benefit to their participants, and that does not harm anyone in the process of carrying out that work (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002). Likewise, in the current study, the well-being of the participants was well regarded. The researcher made sure that she engaged with participants in good mental and physical health to avoid emotional harm. The researcher did not use her role as a researcher to manipulate participants into giving information that they did not want to disclose or influenced their response in the interview sessions. Therefore, participants were asked to feel free to stop narrating their stories. If they were overwhelmed, they could stop the interview at any time. Participants were constantly appraised as the researcher monitored their emotional response as the interview progressed. The researcher made sure that the participants felt safe and that they understood that they were not being interrogated.

4.7.4.2 Fidelity and responsibility

Professionals are encouraged to build an environment based upon trust, regarding communities they engage with through ethical practices and being accountable. Psychologists are connected through their profession and must act with integrity (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002).

Therefore, the researcher did not take more than one role as a researcher and a counsellor. The researcher gained knowledge from other professionals with more experience in fidelity and responsibility issues. The researcher took the responsibility of this study through the process of acquiring ethical clearance at UNISA, prior to carrying out the research. This ensured that the

study was ethical and adhered to the academic standards of the field of psychology. As such, the researcher was required to follow the ethical standards stipulated at UNISA, more so, the Department of Psychology.

Informed consent was obtained with integrity before the interviews were conducted, according to the principles of research. Details of the study were presented to the participants, including but not limited to, the objective of the study, the procedures followed, benefits and potential risks associated with the study, and the participants' right to decline to participate and withdraw (when they feel emotionally overwhelmed). Participants were not paid to take part in the study; rather, they were given refreshments. Participants were informed that everyone that participated in the study would be presented with a summary of the study, and the participants were free to ask questions. Original data was presented to the researcher's supervisor after collecting the interviews to be reviewed.

4.7.4.3 Integrity

The integrity principle of the APA advocates that psychologists must be honest and transparent in their practices. That is, psychologists should not take advantage of others or act malicious (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002).

The researcher disclosed true information to the participants before signing the consent and non-disclosure forms. The participants were well informed of the study and were willing to participate in this study. The researcher did not agree to anything she could not see through or any

activity that was against the ethical standards of psychologists. Data was not forged, and interviews were audio recorded to prove that these interviews were conducted. The researcher was truthful in her social engagement with the participants about her level of competence and when advertising the study. The advertisement, initial discussion, and informed consent form accurately and honestly described the study to potential participants. There was a reflective commentary (see Appendix D) that recorded the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and emotions when she collected, analysed, and linked data to the theories. This indicates the level of honesty and good conduct adhered to by the researcher.

4.7.4.4 Justice

People should get the best services available in the psychology field. Therefore, there should not be any bias from the psychologist. Psychologists must constantly upgrade their standards so that they can best serve the people in their communities (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002).

The researcher did not discriminate against participants in any way, and the selection process followed the same procedures for all the participants without being judgmental.

To avoid bias, the researcher constantly had internal dialogue and self-evaluation (Bradbury-Jones, 2007). The researcher was aware of differences between her and the participants in beliefs and values so that she would not be judgemental towards the participants and their experiences. The researcher's phenomenological attitude ensured that she refrained from making judgements about the factual. This was accomplished by bracketing through narrating the lived

experience (Ghasemi et al., 2011). All preconceptions were addressed by detaching the researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon through literature review, from the data, as well as an understanding of issues and reactions of participants when handling the data. There was a consistent debriefing of the researcher by a research psychologist to avoid misconceptions from the researcher's worldview, influencing the whole research process. As the researcher coded and interpreted the data, the research psychologist would question why the researcher interpreted the text in such a manner, hence addressing issues of misconceptions. Transparent reporting of decisions and rationale helped to ensure reflexivity.

4.7.4.5 Respect for people's rights and dignity

Psychologists need to be cautious when engaging in professional interactions taking steps to address situations as they unfold. Psychologists should also respect how different people are, in terms of race or economic status, keeping in mind that everyone is equally important (American Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2002).

The researcher was aware that participants came from different backgrounds; hence their experiences would be different. She avoided practices that would offend the individuals' cultural beliefs or background by being knowledgeable about the participants' beliefs, cultures, socio-economic status, and race. Therefore, she valued the individual stories and experiences. The researcher maintained confidentiality, as discussed in Sections 4.7.2 and 4.7.3. The research questions were evaluated for any biases in the pre-test, and the English that was used was clear and accommodated everyone.

4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter provided an overview of the research design of the current study. It described the research paradigm and design, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, ethical consideration, and standards. The next chapter, Chapter Five, will provide the research findings.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This study embarked on the subjective experiences of victims of cyberbullying who had become cyberbullies. Themes and sub-themes which transpired from the data are explored in this chapter according to the three stages of the Phenomenological Hermeneutical method, namely naïve understanding, thematic structural analysis, and comprehensive understanding. Below are the research findings, according to these three stages.

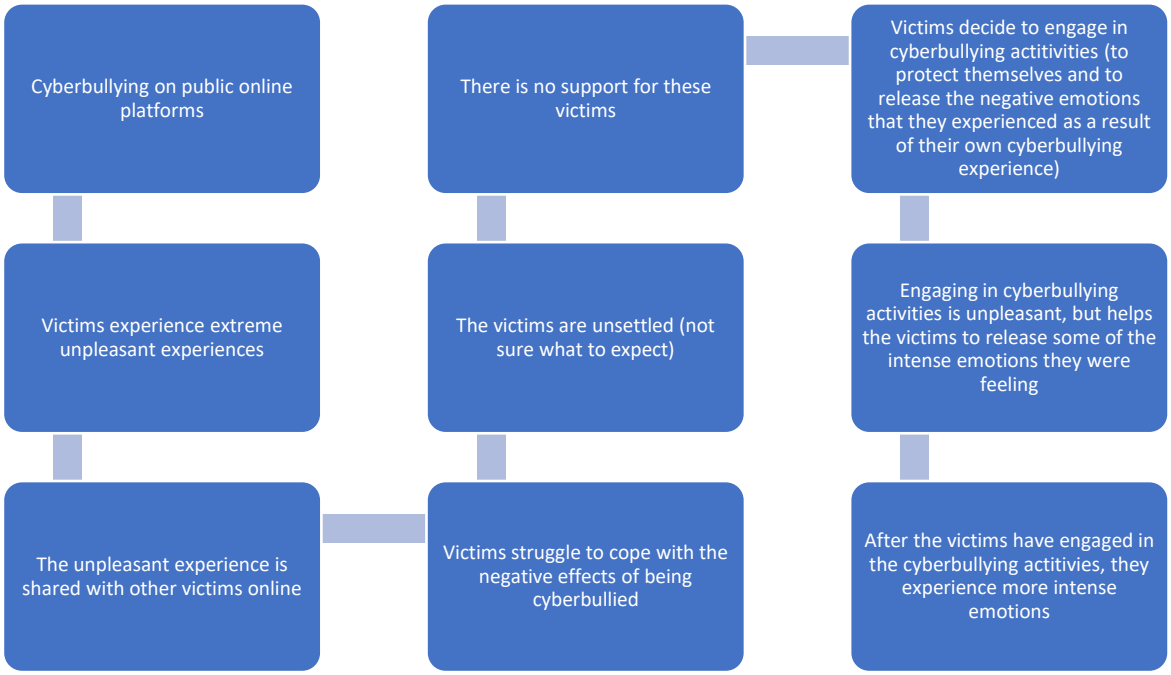
5.2 Stage one: Naïve understanding

According to the Phenomenological Hermeneutical method, the first stage of reporting research findings is called naïve understanding. At this stage, findings are reported as understood by the researcher after reading the data several times (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). As such, the cyber-victim-bully cycle was understood as unfolding due to a series of events that the participants had gone through. From the naïve understanding of the data, the participants were subjected to cyberbullying, and their experiences were very unpleasant. The incidents unfolded on a public online platform. Therefore, the online content was shared amongst other learners that were connected to the participants' accounts on the internet. As a result, the participants experienced intense negative emotions. These negative emotions affected their schoolwork as they were unsettled and constantly thinking about the cyberbullying experiences. The participants did not receive emotional support; moreover, they struggled to cope with the cyberbullying experiences. As such, the participants went through an emotional roller coaster making decisions by themselves on how to deal with cyberbullying.

As a result of the decisions made by the participants, cyberbullying activities continued because the participants had decided to cyberbully as well. According to the participants, they were protecting themselves when they engaged in cyberbullying activities. It seemed unpleasant for the participants to engage in the cycle of cyberbullying; however, the participants found themselves tangled in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Overwhelming emotions and thoughts about being publicly humiliated online seemed to take over the participants' thoughts, hence engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle helped participants to cope with the intense emotions they were experiencing after being cyberbullied. Therefore, it was necessary for the participants to engage in cyberbullying activities; otherwise, they would have drowned in these negative emotions. The thought of seeing others experience the same pain that the participants had felt, gave the participants feelings of accomplishment, and loosened the intense emotions that were building up after they had been bullied online.

Despite engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle, participants' involvement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle caused more negative emotions than they could handle. This hints on interventions that can assist those trapped in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The irony of engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle is revealed when participants expressed discomfort upon disclosing their cyberbullying experiences and, yet the participants appeared to be at ease when they carefully narrated their experiences. Below is a visual representation of the naïve understanding (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Naïve reading



5.3 Stage two: Thematic structural analysis

The second step of data analysis, namely thematic structural analysis, was done to display the truthfulness of the experiences and the naïve interpretation and to deepen the meaning of the cyber-victim-bully cycle (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). In this step of the data analysis, the researcher withheld her pre-understanding of the cyber-victim-bully cycle discussed under Step 1. As such, data was reread without reference to the naïve understanding mentioned above. The researcher searched for new meaning in light of the key elements that occurred. Data was read several times, and thereafter it was coded according to key elements that reoccurred throughout these experiences. Rereading the data clarified most of the common factors that were reoccurring; hence the researcher was able to adapt emerging sub-themes. Through data analysis, the sub-themes were clustered according to similar ideas that were aligned to form themes. During this process, the researcher went back to the naïve interpretation and relooked at it to see if the meaning

obtained before the coding of the data was accurate and in alignment with the emerging themes and sub-themes.

From the data, the participants seemed to have unique online experiences because these experiences belonged to the participants, and they were their realities. From the data, it was evident that there were a series of events that the participants underwent that transformed them from being cyberbullying victims to becoming cyberbullying perpetrators. The participants had their moments when they were either cyberbullied or were the cyberbullies themselves. The events that unfolded and the reactions to these events led the participants to become cyberbullies. Therefore, becoming a cyberbully meant that the cyberbullying attack had caused a reaction that left the cybervictim engaging in the same cyberbullying behaviour as that demonstrated by the original cyberbully. Moreover, through the experiences of being cyberbullied, the skills of cyberbullying were handed down from the cyberbully to the cybervictim.

From the data, the researcher extracted four themes with sub-themes that captured perspectives of the phenomenon of the cyber-victim-bully cycle with reference to late adolescents. Each theme could be understood to represent a sub-phenomenon of the cyber-victim-bully cycle. These themes and sub-themes, taken together, give shape to the cyber-victim-bully cycle and how it influences the victims to engage in cyberbullying. These themes reflect the thoughts and emotional processes that participants went through in the cyber-victim-bully cycle as experienced by late adolescents.

To understand the themes, sub-themes that demonstrate a series of events that include negative thoughts, emotions, and a need to protect oneself emerged from the data forming the themes. These themes were “The initiation”, “Emotional turmoil”, and “Self-protection.” There was one reflective theme, namely “The Aftermath”, that emerged from the data. The sub-themes that are the building blocks of the theme “The initiation” are “The attack”, “right next to you”, and “getting imposed popularity”. The sub-themes that are building blocks to “Emotional turmoil” are “being dehumanised”, “being isolated”, and “being strained”. The theme “Self-protection” has no sub-themes, and the sub-themes that are building blocks to “The aftermath” are “unresolved emotions”, “continued isolation”, “more of us”, and “moving on”. As such, these sub-themes were under discussion to help shed light on the cyber-victim-bully cycle’s long-term effects. Below is a visual representation and a discussion of the themes and sub-themes (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Themes and sub-themes



5.3.1 Theme 1: The initiation

The theme “The initiation” that emerged from the data revealed how the participants began their journey into the cyberbullying world. Key to this theme is the action that was taken against the participants, the context in which the action was taken, and the results of the action taken against the participants. The building blocks of this theme are the three sub-themes, namely “The attack”, “right next to you”, and “getting imposed popularity”.

5.3.1.1 The attack

The sub-theme “The attack” demonstrates how the participants were subjected to aggressive direct online confrontations. The experience began with being directly cyberbullied. The most crucial point to be considered is the fact that the online attacks were directly aimed at the participants. In other words, the original cyberbullies, launched online attacks in public spaces, to upset the participants. The data showed that picture modification, and insulting words were common online weapons used by late adolescents to cyberbully the participants. The participants shared that they were harassed online with their pictures that had been modified to look somewhat undesirable and/or with insulting words. As revealed in the quotations from the data:

> Then they take my pictures, they put [them] on Facebook, then they say […] how can a cool nice guy, date such a dog? They cartooned my nose. [Participant 1]
>
> Then someone edited my profile picture to nudity without […] my knowledge. [Participant 2]
>
> I posted a picture of myself online […] so there was this girl who commented and said that I am ugly and I am fat, like a pig. [Participant 6]

> The problem with images [are that] they stay on Facebook forever, and then they morph into something else. [Participant 4]

These online harassments as described above, were clearly aimed at the participants as the cyberbullies altered photos and/or commented negatively on their Facebook accounts. This shows that cyberbullies used content that was undesirable to cause their targets to experience negative emotions. Furthermore, they post in on online public platforms where others connected to their targets could see and continue to upset these victims.

5.3.1.2 Right next to you

The sub-theme "right next to you" emerged from the data and described the context in which the initial attack occurred as amongst learners that were near each other. These learners also shared the content on an online social network platform. As understood from the participants, the cyberbullying incidents occurred when they were at school, in class, or around the school premises. This emphasizes the nature of cyberspace that allows information to flow from one person to the other. As a result, these victims fell prey to a perpetrator that was near them. As it is evident from the data:

> But what I understand is they were girls in my class, who use to say we will deal with you, so definitely I suspect them, and I know it's them! [Participant 1]
>
> For example, in the cyberbullying thing, it's a group that, it was a Facebook class, it's a class Facebook page, it was a public platform, so everyone in the class could see what was happening. [Participant 3]

> I had this friend of mine she was a very close friend […] she went online, and she wrote some secret about me. [Participant 7]
>
> Yes, especially in class, children do bad things on Whatsapp, like bullying. [Participant 8]

Moreover, the participants shared online friends with the presumed perpetrators. These perpetrators could keep track of the participants' online activities and made comments on their online posts. That could be the reason why the participants assumed that they knew the perpetrator. In cyberspace, individuals that have registered accounts on the same platform can view each other's posts and comments. Thus, the cyberbullies might be right next to their victims.

5.3.1.3 Getting imposed popularity

The sub-theme "getting imposed popularity" describes how these online harassments unwillingly made the participants well known amongst their online peers. This sub-theme refers to how the participants' altered information was spread amongst many other learners without having consent from the participants. The popularity was imposed on the participants by the cyberbullies; however, they were popular for the most undesirable and inaccurate information about them. This sub-theme demonstrates how online harassment has the potential of quickly spreading to an infinite audience in the school environment. In this case, the cyberbullying incidents, with undesirable content about the participants, were spread fast amongst the online learners. This was described by the participants as follow:

> When now you go back to school, people are giving you names, [other learners], and [they] sometimes print those things and bring them to school. [Participant 4]
>
> So even people in the class would say, "I want to know this person. Who is this person?" [Participant 7]

The negative content about the participants easily spread amongst the learners making the participants the center of attention at the school. Everyone was looking for the person who was harassed online. Everyone that had seen the post and/or commented wanted an opportunity to meet the person. As such, the participants' privacy was violated.

These online harassment incidents were aggressive and sudden. This shocked the participants and caused them to experience negative emotions, as discussed below.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Emotional turmoil

The second theme, namely "emotional turmoil," describes the different emotions and overwhelming thoughts that the participants experienced after being cyberbullied. The participants experienced different negative emotions. Three sub-themes were the building blocks to the theme "emotional turmoil", namely "being dehumanised", "being isolated", and "being strained". These sub-themes are discussed below.

5.3.2.1 Being dehumanised

The sub-theme "being dehumanised" describes the extent to which being degraded overwhelmed the participants' thoughts after they were cyberbullied. As a result, participants had

difficulties staying focused because of shock, humiliation, and disappointment. It is clear from the data that the participants felt dehumanised as a result of the extensive, humiliating personal content that the cyberbully posted on a public online platform. Therefore, the participants viewed themselves as grossly degraded amongst their peers. As a result, the participants struggled to concentrate when they were at school. These dehumanising cyberbullying incidents distracted the participants. Thus, when they were embarrassed, the participants expressed that they were unsettled because their image had been tarnished:

> It was an embarrassment. [Participant 2]
>
> Just to hide away, so that people don't remember the post. [Participant 6]
>
> I am getting shamed [...] it's really, really horrible because you are ashamed. [Participant 4]

The evidence from the data depicts that the participants became so preoccupied with the degrading cyberbullying experiences that they spent most of their time thinking about it. The preoccupation of the mind occurred as a result of the cyberbullying experiences replaying in the participants' minds. This is illustrated by the following quotations from the interviews:

> I feel like I am seeing myself in that photo, everyone is looking at me like that […] sometimes I focus on my tasks, sometimes I lose my mind when I think about it then I will just blown away, just like that [….] when you are walking when you are crossing the road, you don't focus, just like that. [Participant 1]

> I felt uncomfortable, humiliated, and stressed. I stopped going to extra lessons because I could not concentrate. I was not able to do my schoolwork when my teacher was in front of the class teaching, I didn't hear anything. [Participant 8]

The dehumanising cyberbullying experiences distracted the participants such that they lost focus when doing things that needed the participants to be extra cautious or to pay extra attention, thus putting these young lives in great danger. Some participants tried to commit suicide, whilst others, for example, were distracted when crossing the road. This occurred at a critical stage in their lives when concentration was important for academic learning. This meant that they could not keep up with their schoolwork because of a lack of concentration. The reoccurring thoughts about their dehumanising cyberbullying experiences made the participants anxious. Being anxious depicted fear by the participants. This anxiety was confirmed when the participants admitted to fearing about their reputation and being uncertain of what was going to be posted about them online again. As noted by the following quotations:

> [Be]cause there will also gonna be that person who knows them, and they show it to them, and then you get into trouble, and your image is shattered and destroyed. [Participant 7]

> Maybe worrying about your reputation, you know, like, people, you don't know what people are saying and who has their ear. [Participant 3]

The fear of not knowing what is going to be shared about the participants as well as not knowing where that information may end up, showed how the participants did not want to encounter another degrading online experience.

5.3.2.2 Being isolated

The sub-theme "being isolated" refers to how the participants isolated themselves after being dehumanised by the cyberbullying experiences. The participants withdrew from social interactions online and offline. According to these participants, they were trying to avoid reoccurring cyberbullying encounters. As a result, the cybervictims distanced themselves from their peers. This implied that the cybervictims would stay away from school or stay in class alone whilst others were outside at break time, just to avoid being around others. Participant 6 narrated that:

> It made me to isolate myself. Most of the time, I was staying in classes not going out much because I was scared of being teased more and more and more.

For cybervictims, it was better to be far away from peers because they believed that being alone could reduce continuous online and offline harassment. Therefore, these cybervictims stayed alone and continued to experience the intense negative emotions on their own. No one seemed to understand the emotional complications that came as a result of being a cybervictim. The cybervictims avoided social encounters with peers and did not speak to anyone about what happened; therefore, they suffered in silence. This isolation led cybervictims to experience emotional turmoil.

5.3.2.3 Being strained

The sub-theme "being strained" demonstrates the emotional burden that the cybervictims experienced as a result of the online harassment. It explains the different emotions that put intense strain on the participants. The cyberbullying experiences made the participants feel deeply sad and robbed the participants of their joy at school. To add to the sadness, the participants had no control over the online harassment. The inability to be in control of the online harassment stressed the participants. To the participants, they had failed to control their online interactions; hence they were emotionally strained. As a result, the participants became stressed, as indicated below:

> We had to deal with it in person because online, you wouldn't know […] at the end of the day if it happens and you know, or you think you know, the person who did it you have to deal with it in person because online you don't have control. [Participant 5]
>
> I confronted her. Then her friends they intervened, and they made it worse. [Participant 6]
>
> Yes, it was difficult for me to control my anger, and then she replied and swore back at me. I also replied back and swore again at her. [Participant 8]

To add to the emotional turmoil was the realisation from the participants that their relationships with other people around them could be tainted. Their social relations changed at school, at home, and online. Thus, being judged by others, made it even harder for the participants to deal with the emotional effects of online harassment, hence putting more strain on the participants.

The emotional strain mentioned above mounted up and overwhelmed the participants. The elicitation of strong statements, such as “Like when you are feeling a burden...” from participant 1 and participant 5 pleading with the perpetrator he did not know to stop harassing him online, “Yeah, you don’t know who is doing it, but you are pleading to whoever…” reveals how emotionally overwhelmed the participants were.

Moreover, this emotional strain impacted on the normal routines of the participants. It is paramount to understand that the mixed emotions altered the way the participants behaved; thus, the participants faced dilemmas that led them into desperate attempts to protect themselves.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Self-protection

The participants had to deal with their emotional turmoil so that they could claim back the control they felt they were losing. The third theme, “self-protection”, explains how the victims of cyberbullying protected themselves from the overwhelming negative emotions that they felt after the cyberbullying experiences. The events described above overwhelmed the participants to such an extent that they had to stand up for themselves. In this state of emotional turmoil, the participants engaged in cyberbullying out of a need to protect their emotional well-being. It is important to note that the participants experienced anger they had not experienced before. It is evident that the anger that the participants experienced was so intense that there was a need to urgently deal with it to avoid being overwhelmed. Because of a lack of experience in dealing with anger, the cybervictims dealt with anger by engaging in cyberbullying activities similar to their own experiences of being victims of cyberbullying.

Even though engaging in cyberbullying was not the only option that the participants had to consider when dealing with their cyberbullying experiences, anger made it possible for the participants to decide to engage in cyberbullying. The moment the participants cyberbullied others, they had become cyber-victim-bullies. The cyber-victim-bully cycle continued without disruptions, claiming more victims. Participant 7 explained that getting back was the only way that would satisfy her as well as address the anger she felt. Other insights from the interviews included:

> When she also gets angry, she again come back and create another post, you also create another post, sooo, it's not even meaningless, just the cycle goes around, and you are not solving anything…[Participant 1]
>
> I think I became a very angry person […] it wasn't easy, but I guess the anger kind of drove me. [Participant 2]
>
> That gives you mixed emotions, first you become sad, then you become angry, and then you decide on doing something extreme and stupid. [Participant 6]

As the participants stated, they cyberbullied others because they wanted to get rid of their own anger. Therefore, they perceived engaging in cyberbullying as a way to satisfy the newly emerged need to protect themselves. By defending their emotional well-being, the cyber-victim-bullies inherited the legacy of cyberbullying behaviour and were able to justify their cyberbullying behaviour as such. This would then be the appropriate explanation when trying to understand the cyber-victim-bullies' behaviour. To explain their involvement in cyberbullying activities, the participants shared their views below.

> In my exchanges, I was just standing up for myself. [Participant 4]
>
> You fight back, because that is just [...] no one wants to be shamed in public, so you would rather shame the other person [...] it's a psy…, no one like being proven wrong, its like your husband telling you that you are wrong in a supermarket. How are you going to react, even if you are wrong? You are going to defend yourself, even if there is nothing to defend [Participant 3]

Therefore, cyberbullying behaviour is depicted as a natural act by human beings to stand up against a perceived threat. As evident from the data, this cyberbullying behaviour restored some confidence in the participants because they were able to demonstrate that they could stand up for themselves in a public online platform. It gave them some sense of independence and satisfaction that they could stand up against their peers that had wronged them. In a way, they could identify and fit with their peers even though the behaviour was wrong.

5.3.4 Theme 4: The aftermath

The theme "the aftermath" describes how the situation was for the participants after engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. From the data, it emerged that engaging in cyberbullying did not address the emotional problems that the participants encountered after being victims of cyberbullying. As a result, the participants experienced more negative emotions on their own. However, they continued with their lives the best way they knew how. Most participants indicated that they stopped engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle because they saw no meaning in these cyberbullying activities. These participants had realised that being in the cyber-victim-bully cycle brought them more emotional problems; hence it was better for them to stop engaging in such

activities. Furthermore, these participants have not moved past the consequences of their actions. To expand this theme, the sub-themes, namely “unresolved emotions”, “continued isolation”, “more of us”, and “moving on” will continuously build on the theme. These sub-themes are elaborated below.

5.3.4.1 Unresolved emotions

The sub-theme “unresolved emotions” emerged to explain how the participants’ engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle failed to resolve the overwhelming emotions. In other words, the participants believed that when others experienced what they had experienced, the negative emotional problems they were experiencing would be resolved. This sub-theme described how the participants’ engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle failed to deal with the negative emotions that they had experienced after being cyberbullied. Feelings of hopelessness emerged from the data because continuous victimization extinguished all hope of ever being free from online harassment; hence the participants felt helpless. They realized that they were not going to solve the effects of being cyberbullied by cyberbullying as well. They had entered a cycle of endless online harassment. The problem proved to be greater than their emotional capacity and maturity. This further impacted negatively on the participants’ self-esteem. As evident from the data:

> I confronted her then her friends they intervened, and they made it worse, so I then decided, let me keep quiet, and just delete the picture. [Participant 6]

> So normally what helps is to deal with it in person. Participant 5

It's like I tried to also cyberbully her, but it does…doesn't take away the pain. [Participant 1]

The participants did not solve their emotional problems by engaging in cyberbullying activities; therefore, they continuously isolated themselves, as discussed below.

5.3.4.2 Continued isolation

The sub-theme "continued isolation" described how the participants continued to battle with negative emotions alone, after engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. As depicted from the data, the participants continued to experience negative emotions that they could not share with anyone. They continued to suffer in silence, and they did not receive any emotional support because no one knew what they were going through as they engaged in the cyber-victim-bully cycle as cyberbullies. The ambivalent struggles that resulted in the participants fearing to share their emotions with others raised issues of trust. Mistrust of the people around the participants was key in illustrating how the participants did not seek help in dealing with such negative emotions. In emotional isolation, the new cyberbullies continued to suffer alone. It is also clear that people around the participants could not detect that the participants were socially withdrawn. As Participant 1 would state:

My biggest challenge is, I was scared to share with someone.

Participant 2 narrated that,

Well, I couldn't share with anyone because I was afraid that they would judge me.

And Participant 8 stated that:

> No, I didn't share because people might judge me, and I was afraid because I didn't trust anyone.

The fact that they did not know how others would react when they disclosed their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle contributed significantly towards participants further isolating themselves in an attempt to protect themselves.

5.3.4.3 Moving on

The sub-theme "moving on" describes how most participants have continued with their lives after engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. By the time of the interviews, most participants still experienced negative emotions despite stopping cyberbullying behaviours. The participants have not dealt with these negative emotions properly. The participants carry on with their lives, but the negative emotions that manifested because of their cyberbullying engagements linger on. Participant 2 stated that:

> I think I have dealt with the challenges, I am coping and maybe I [...] I kind of repenting now.

The participant has learned how to cope with the negative emotions but has not dealt with the long-term effects of engaging in such aggressive online behaviour. Other participants are also learning to survive with the negative emotions that came as a result of their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. No participant received emotional therapy on how to process all the

emotions mentioned above. Therefore, there was not much healing from traumatic cyberbullying experiences. Participant 6 admitted that:

> I think the social media creators, they need really to have such platforms that can assist, […] maybe in terms of counselling.

Whilst Participant 1 said that:

> I am just focusing on what people said that I can live my positive life.

As evident from the data, the participants have dealt with the negative emotions the best way they know how to. Even if they do seem to be moving on with their lives, emotional burdens were expressed by the participants. The emotional wounds have not healed, and "a silent cry for help could be heard".

5.3.4.4 More of us

The sub-theme "more of us" refers to the individuals that the participants know have gone through the cyber-victim-bully cycle and/or are still in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. This sub-theme that emerged from the data showed that the pool of individuals that have engaged in the cyber-victim-bully cycle is quite large. As highlighted from the data, participants directly or indirectly revealed that there were many other learners involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. They engaged in the cyber-victim-bully cycle either as a group or individuals in the school premises. It is paramount to highlight this from the participants:

> Normally I see it happening every day, what I did, and I really regret it [Participant 5].

He even stated that he watched his neighbour go through the same ordeal,

> It happened twice, it was the other guy, he was my neighbour. It also happened to him. [Participant 5]

The participant could relate the cyberbullying incidents to people that were around him. Even participant 1 narrated that:

> I feel like, most people are experiencing the same situation I am, but they are not able to share, so that's what pains me that other people are also feeling the same pain I felt

The same experience she went through was still happening to other people she knew at that very moment. This indicates that cyberbullying is common amongst late adolescents, and the cyber-victim-bully cycle is occurring within the school premises. It is apparent that the schooling environment has become a place where online harassments are occurring amongst young people. With the new cyber-victim-bully becoming the initiator of cyberbullying to a new cybervictim and, in turn, the new cybervictim becomes the new cyber-victim-bully. This enhances cyberbullying behavior in schools.

5.4 Stage three: Comprehensive understanding

In this step of the phenomenological hermeneutic method, the researcher is required to look at the themes and align the themes to the research questions while referring to the naïve understanding and the themes (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). As such, the three research questions were answered through the analysis of the data. Looking at question 1, **What happened during**

the cyberbullying incidents? the theme "the initiation" indicated that there were many cyberbullying experiences. These experiences included the participants' pictures being altered, receiving negative comments about their pictures, or being verbally insulted mainly on Facebook. The cyberbullying incidents were public and spread to many other learners at the school that were connected online, making matters worse. The victims became the center of attention online and offline for the wrong reasons. The participants were not given a chance to choose what content would be displayed about them; moreover, modified photos and insults were forced down on the participants. The cyberbullying incidents occurred amongst people who were in close proximity; hence they were able to see how the negative emotions of their victims manifested.

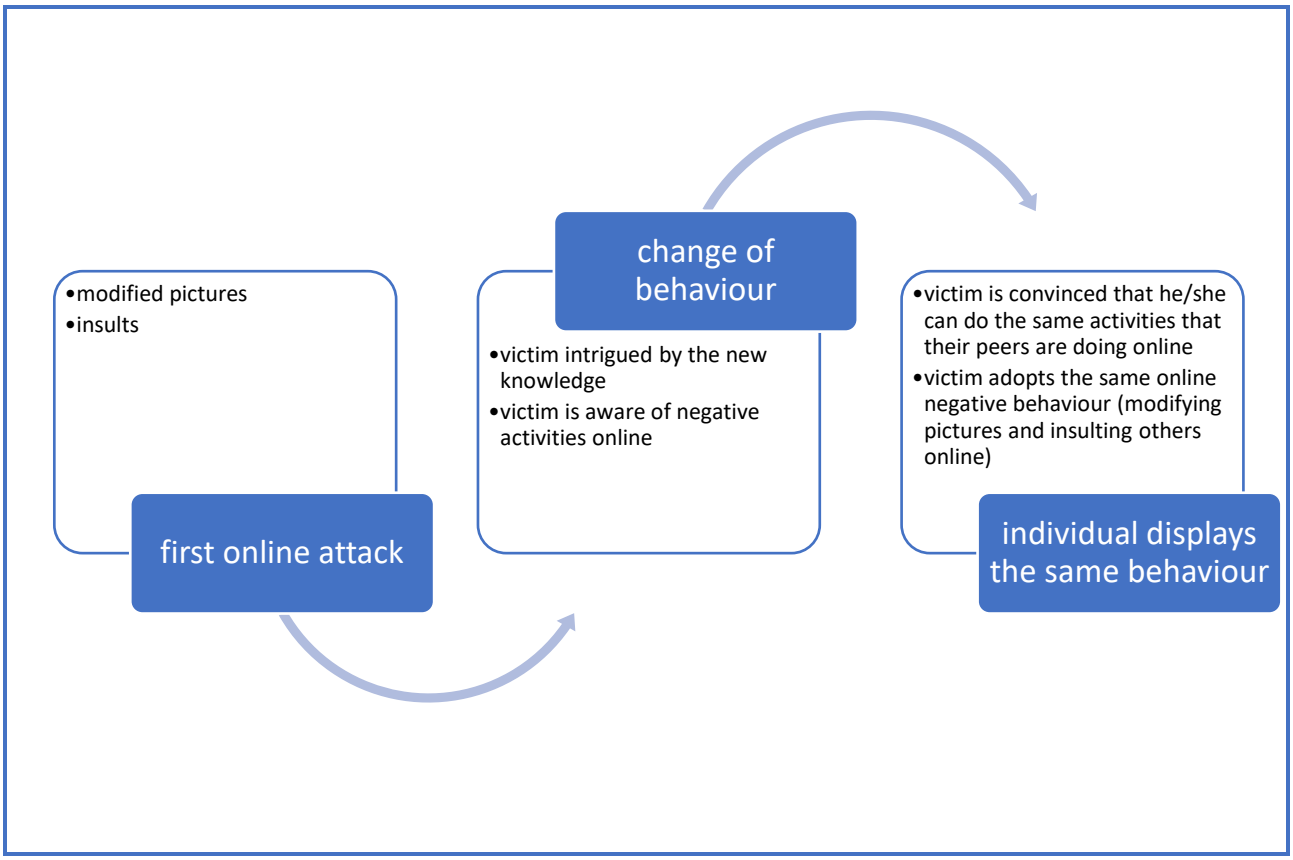
To answer question 2, as stated: **What was the reaction of the victims/bullies to the cyberbullying incidents?** the theme of "emotional turmoil" and "self-protection" clearly demonstrated how the participants reacted after being cyberbullied. The participants being cybervictims felt dehumanized, isolated, and emotionally strained. They felt grossly degraded. It was revealed that the participants could not cope with all the negative and destructive emotions. Firstly, the participants as mentioned above, could not focus at school, thus affecting their academic performance. Most of the time, they were preoccupied in their thoughts with the cyberbullying experience. The participants wished they could hide from the humiliation that the online harassment had caused; therefore, they isolated themselves.

The constant thoughts about the cyberbullying incidents caused the participants sadness, emotional pain, and stress. These negative emotions put intensive strain on the participants; hence these intense negative emotions threatened their emotional well-being. The cybervictims felt that

they had no control over this abusive situation. As a result, anger was greatly experienced by the participants. The participants had to manage their mounting anger. The only way they could manage their anger according to the participants, was to engage in cyberbullying behavior. However, the intense negative emotions and anger they intended to resolve by engaging in cyberbullying activities continued to be imminent. Furthermore, the participants continued to emotionally isolate themselves. Their method of dealing with the mounting negative emotions had not yielded the results they anticipated, causing them even more negative emotions they could not manage effectively. Even after such aggressive, emotional experiences, they still could not share what they were going through emotionally. This isolation was grounded on feelings of mistrust towards the social networks that the participants had. The participants felt emotionally alone and had to find more effective ways of dealing and managing the negative and destructive thoughts and emotions.

To address question 3, as stated: **What role did the experience of being cyberbullied have on the victims becoming cyberbullies?:** The cycle that has emerged from the data explained the role of the cyberbullying experience as paving the way for the participants to engage in cyberbullying behaviour; hence, they could do the same. Below is a diagram (Figure 4) showing how the cyberbullying experience played a role in influencing participants to engage in cyberbullying behaviour (see the next page).

***Figure 4**: The cyberbullying experience and its role in influencing cyberbullying behaviour.*



The cyberbullying experience revealed to participants different ways to victimize people who are active online and the extent of the emotional damage that one could inflict. The experience was an eye-opener as well as an orientation to the participants on cyberbullying activities. Thereafter, the cybervictims had their moments when they instilled the reign of terror, harassing online either the presumed cyberbully or other individuals. The participants' experiences of cyberbullying had acted like a manual that taught them how to engage in cyberbullying activities. The interpretation of the participants' responses to the cyberbullying incidents, as created by the participants, was a fight to defend themselves. According to the researcher, this was because the participants perceived the cyberbullying experiences as a threat. However, in the vicious cyber-

victim-bully cycle, the participants experienced contradicting emotions with feelings of satisfaction and confidence when they had defended themselves and feelings of hopelessness when they could not control the situation. It is also to be noted that the negative emotions experienced by the participants played a crucial role in the reciprocation of behaviour in this study. These experiences existed in the cyber-victim-bully cycle, with others feeling remorseful after engaging in cyberbullying activities. When one looks at the cyber-victim-bully cycle holistically, it seems as if participants needed to engage in cyberbullying activities to survive the online world. They had to deal with the problem that threatened to disrupt their online existence. In other words, the participants needed to engage in the cyber-victim-bully cycle to cope with the negative and aggressive emotions that they felt after they were bullied online. Failure to deal with the threat would result in more negative emotions for the participants. Therefore, the cybervictims responded to cyberbullying with cyberbullying.

5.5 Summary of Chapter 5

The analysis of the data has demonstrated how individuals were exposed to cyberbullying behaviour. Different concepts were at play, pulling the participants into the cyber-victim-bully cycle. However, different thoughts and emotions were experienced in the cyber-victim-bully cycle that still affects the participants. The next chapter presents a discussion of the research findings.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This study embarked on a research journey to discover how and why the cyber-victim-bully cycle occurs. The focus was to attempt to demonstrate the relationship between being a victim of cyberbullying and becoming perpetrators of cyberbullying. Consequently, the objective of this chapter is to discuss these findings within the context of existing literature. A critical discussion of the current themes in relation to the literature and conceptual framework is provided.

6.2 The initiation

Direct cyberbullying that marks the beginning of the cyber-victim-bully cycle is described as being more aggressive, sudden, and confusing than indirect cyberbullying (Hong et al., 2018; Langos, 2012). Direct cyberbullying is when the cyberbully directly contact their target online so that they can get a direct and sudden reaction from them (Hong et al., 2018), whilst indirect cyberbullying incidents do not affect the targeted individual directly because they occur behind the victim's back (Li & Lambert, 2012). An online social platform is meant to bring people together (Décieux et al., 2018). The theme "the initiation" revealed how the participants' journey into the cyber-victim-bully cycle began. Adolescents engage in social network platforms to connect with peers regardless of distance and time. Such platforms are the most valued social interaction spaces by young people; therefore, events that unfold on such online spaces have a huge impact on the lives of young people (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).

Activities that are emotionally aggressive have the potential to cause direct negative effects on the victims. It is to be noted that certain events, especially those that seem to be personally

directed at an individual, can potentially cause adverse effects, such as exposing the victims to unfavourable behaviour (Balakrishnan, 2018). According to the literature on the reciprocal effects model of victimisation on victimising behaviour, direct exposure to victimising behaviour in social interactions can have various consequences. These include informing victims of how unpleasant victimisation is, as well as exposing victims to cyberbullying behaviour; hence, they display the same behaviour (Cooley et al., 2017). This is similar to the findings of the current study. The study reveals a unique relationship between being a victim of cyberbullying and being a perpetrator of cyberbullying. This relationship was strengthened by the reciprocation of behaviour (Chan et al., 2019). As such, it is pivotal to note that this direct cyberbullying experience directly influenced the outcomes as expanded by the sub-themes "the attack", "right next to you", and "getting imposed popularity."

6.2.1 The attack

The sub-theme "the attack" has demonstrated how individuals are subjected to cyberbullying. Previous studies have explained that online social network platforms are online spaces for communication cherished by young people. Most users, especially young people, feel safe in a space that does not require physical conduct to form friendships and spent their leisure time. What this means is that users are mentally and emotionally invested in these online social networks (Décieux et al., 2018). As seen in the current study, similar findings indicated that participants were singled out in a space that was meant to be enjoyed with peers (Chan et al., 2019).

The aggressive harassment that entailed personal information being tainted in a public online platform constituted all elements of an attack (intent, repetition, and harmful), as perceived

by the participants (Tenório & Bjørn, 2019). As evident from the current study, when victims' pictures or insults were used to harass them, it was perceived by the participants as an "attack". An online attack directed at the target can happen either through a text or multimedia message, instant message, post on social media, phone call, or e-mail (Langos, 2012). This is similar to the findings in this study that showed how pictures and insults were used to cyberbully and cause a direct, immediate effect on the victims. Moreover, direct experiences of cyberbullying can be very forceful (Rice et al.,2015). As Benedetta et al. (2017) discovered, the intent of the perpetrator is to have a quick reaction from the victim. Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals can be prone to attack because of being different. For instance, race, weight, religion, and disability can cause someone to be targeted by a cyberbully (Betts et al., 2017; Keum & Miller, 2018). Furthermore, intense emotions can lead victims to quickly respond to a situation without thinking about the consequences of their actions (Fanselow, 2018). As a result, individuals that had negative online experiences internalised their experiences and did not think rationally about what was happening to them (Cao, Khan, Zaigham & Khan, 2018).

6.2.2 Right next to you

The sub-theme "right next to you" refers to the context that the initial attack occurred in. As from the current findings, the initial attack occurred amongst learners that were in the same physical environment. Previous studies indicate that when cyberbullying occurs, the victim and the perpetrator might not be in the same physical space (Tenório & Bjørn, 2019). Suler (2004), in his discussion of the disinhibition theory, has described a factor called invisibility as no physical contact at the time of the online engagement. However, from the current findings, there was physical contact between the cybervictims and the cyberbullies. Most interesting in this context is

that the participants were not sure who the perpetrators were because they hid their identities. From the current study, participants were cyberbullied by a person in their class. Suler (2004), in his discussion of the disinhibition theory, refers to this as anonymity and clarifies that anonymity and invisibility contribute to the disinhibition effect; hence, perpetrators can feel free to engage in unruly behaviour like cyberbullying.

A study by Benedetta et al. (2017) discovered that the combination of intentionality and anonymity was found to be vital in categorising cyberbullying according to the seriousness of the act. Other elements that classify how severe cyberbullying is included repetition and how harmful the act is (Hutson, 2016). As in the current study, anonymity was evident as the participants could not point out who had cyberbullied them. They guessed who was responsible for harassing them, but they were not even sure. Moreover, the participants felt frustrated and hopeless (Brady et al., 2019). Furthermore, intentionality was demonstrated by the perpetrators because they singled out the participants and used their personal information to degrade and humiliate them. The perpetrator could physically see their victims and experience the degree of impact that their behaviour has caused the participants. This caused the participants to experience intense emotional problems, thus causing harm. Repetition of the cyberbullying as mentioned above, occurred when the participants were continuously harassed online. The participants went back and forth, exchanging insults and/or modified pictures with the original cyberbully. The online harassment was never a fair contest for the participants because they were blindly harassed online, and they were not able to anticipate when and how other insults would come (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). In such situations, a victim is confused and lost in the midst of insults and comments. This makes perpetrators unaccountable and untraceable; thus, they can continue cyberbullying without taking

responsibility for the harm they cause (Brady et al., 2019), hence, exacerbating disruptive online activities.

6.2.3 Getting imposed popularity

"Getting imposed popularity" is a sub-theme that described how the cyberbullying experience unwillingly made the targets greatly known amongst their peers. One of the notable effects of the imposed popularity was the disruption of participants' learning. Information about the targets spread like wild-fire amongst learners that were connected to the victims' online accounts. As explained in the literature, content on the internet can be distributed any time, amongst anyone that is connected online to the people that are distributing or receiving the content (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). When unfavourable content is spread to one's peers online, it takes away the victims' right to choose content that other people should see about them (Gonzales & Hancock, 2010). What is key to note from the current findings was that the information that was spreading made the participants the centre of undesirable attention. Other studies on the nature of cyberspace have reported that online gossip can spread fast, thereby disrupting learners. The gossip continues to grow an audience, and the victims will be continuously tormented, or new allegations about them are formed throughout their school years (Pittaro, 2019), as also evident from the current findings.

Emotional content has been explained as capturing people's attention, thereby easily spreading content on social media platforms (Brady et al., 2019). As such, content that provoked attention was shared more on social media platforms. Furthermore, the viral nature of cyberspace that refers to how online content can be reduplicated and spread to anyone connected online

(Pittaro, 2019), seemed to play a crucial role in imposing popularity on the participants. This viral nature of cyberspace has the potential of disrupting learning (Pittaro, 2019).

This unconsented popularity put victims of cyberbullying in a position where they had to manage the situation (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2019). Such situations have been documented by previous cyberbullying studies to cause anxiety and discomfort to victims (Hoge, Bickham & Cantor, 2017). Similar effects were experienced by the participants in this current study; moreover, the participants' rights to choose were infringed. The literature explains that when a person feels violated, it is a sign that they have been disrespected. These individuals experience intense emotional pain and are vulnerable (Benedetta et al., 2017), thereby explaining the pain that participants experienced in the current findings. As a result, the reputation and self-esteem of cyberbullied individuals are negatively affected (Cao, Massod, Luqman & Ali, 2018).

6.3 Emotional turmoil

The theme "emotional turmoil" describes the overwhelming thoughts and different emotions that the participants experienced after being cyberbullied. The emotional effects of direct cyberbullying experiences seem to be unpleasant for the cyberbullying victims, as also discovered by Namane and Kyobe, (2017). Below is a discussion of these negative emotions, according to the sub-themes "being dehumanised", "being isolated", and "being strained".

6.3.1 Being dehumanised

To fully grasp this sub-theme, it is crucial to understand that being dehumanised referred to the extent to which being degraded by cyberbullying overwhelmed the participants' thoughts.

The participants felt degraded by the cyberbullying incident. The experience undermined the participants' basic elements of personhood, thereby undermining their status. This caused the participants to experience shame and shock. Like other studies on the effects of cyberbullying, victims of cyberbullying experienced shock and shame (Green, 2019). Shock is an expression that comes when an individual suddenly experiences something they were not expecting (Fanselow, 2018). A person can become numb and fearful (Averdijk, 2011).

The effects of shameful and degrading events are that it continuously plays in the victims' minds (Green, 2019), just like the participants in this study, who also experienced the same negative effects after being cyberbullied. As described in the literature, adolescents want to identify with their peers; therefore, peer identification is very crucial at this stage (Jordan et al., 2018). Moreover, being humiliated on an online public space in front of peers that they want to identify with, grossly degraded the participants. As a result, the thoughts of humiliation continued to be vivid in the participants' minds, bringing discomfort to an already tense situation. When overwhelming negative and suspicious thoughts continuously cycle through one's mind, it is a sign that there is a fundamental problem such as anxiety. Individuals that are anxious are distracted as fear overcloud their minds (Swearer & Hymel, 2015); moreover, the participants experienced anxiety. From the current findings, participants expressed fear of not knowing what would happen to them in the cyberspace hence making them unsettled (Campbell & Buaman, 2018). This was similar to Ong'ong'o's (2019) findings that revealed that victims of cyberbullying were anxious, distracted, and could not cope with their studies.

6.3.2 Being isolated

The sub-theme “being isolated” demonstrates that the participants experienced all the emotions and thoughts related to the cyberbullying in isolation. Sharing emotions and thoughts of how individuals engaged in cyberbullying activities seem to be difficult for the participants. The participants could not talk about their overwhelming emotions as cybervictims. Such findings correspond with Xia and Li (2018), who discovered that emotional isolation in victims of cyberbullying enhances non-disclosure of the experience, thereby suffering alone.

People who experience overwhelming emotions on their own do not receive care and support from people that can potentially assist them. As noted from the findings, participants emotionally isolated themselves after being cyberbullied, from teachers and parents that could have potentially assisted them during this critical time. Such effects of emotional isolation are known to stimulate negative perspectives and behaviours (Green, 2019). If emotional isolation is not addressed, it can intensify over time, causing the victims of aggression to experience even more intense negative emotions and exercise disruptive behaviour like skipping school or withdrawing from social interactions (Xia & Li, 2018). DePaolis and Williford (2018) also indicated that victims of cyberbullying reported that they had fewer friendships and skipped school, similarly to the current findings. This emphasized issues of mistrust by these victims of cyberbullying towards their social interactions (Machackova et al., 2015).

Nathanson (2002) urged that adolescents do not usually have strong relations with adults around them, hence, sharing such experiences are challenging, and adult intervention is rare. The issues of adolescents exercising their autonomy further complicate issues of disclosure for such

negative experiences. As revealed by the current study, participants did not feel the need to seek emotional help from adults because they believed they could handle the situation on their own. However, other previous research findings revealed that adults could be bystanders that watch cyberbullying unfold and do not intervene (Eldridge & Jenkins, 2019). Similarly, adults that were aware of what was happening to the participants in the current study did not address the negative emotions these victims were experiencing.

6.3.3 Being strained

The sub-theme "being strained" described the emotional burden that the participants experienced as a result of the cyberbullying experiences. Being a victim of cyberbullying can cause the affected individuals to experience a lot of emotions at once (Hoge et al., 2017), like in the current study where the participants experienced humiliation, deep sadness, anger, hopelessness, and helplessness. The participants experienced intense emotional changes that they could not control. As noted from previous findings, when individuals cannot control events and their resulting emotions, stress can emerge because of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, which can lead to feelings of anger (Lonigro et al., 2015). Participants had difficulties in controlling their emotions because of emotional distress that emanated from loss of control.

It is to be noted that adolescents feel confident when they fulfil the need for control and are competent and autonomous in their social and emotional interactions (Wagner, 2014). In the current study, however, the participants expressed a loss of control over what was happening online, thereby causing them to experience different negative emotions. This state of emotional intensity was continuously strenuous on the participants causing an overwhelming emotional effect

on them. Studies on emotional effects state that when individuals experience different negative emotions that they cannot handle, a need arises for these individuals to relieve themselves of such emotional strain (Hoge et al., 2017). This is described as a human survival instinct (Fanselow, 2018). Similarly, the survival instincts of the participants were stimulated when they felt they were overwhelmed by these negative and destructive emotions.

6.4 Self-protection

The findings of the current study show that engaging in direct cyberbullying was a way to claim back the emotional control that the participants had lost, hence the theme "self-protection". Participants felt emotionally overwhelmed; moreover, they had to protect themselves from different negative emotions that they could not control. The above-mentioned theme shows how an emotionally overwhelming experience can make the affected person feel threatened and want to safeguard themselves. As such, the participants had to safeguard themselves from overwhelming negative emotions and anger. Lonigro et al. (2015) explained that adolescents that experienced destructive emotions as a result of anger were vulnerable, thus had the potential of engaging in disruptive activities. As evident from the current study, participants engaged in disruptive online activities in an attempt to stabilise their anger. Similarly, studies on cyberbullying discovered that victims of cyberbullying engage in cyberbullying activities to protect themselves from overwhelming emotions such as anger (Balakrishnan, 2018).

As participants in this study reviewed, it was not a physical defence but an emotional defence from overwhelming negative emotions. It is to be noted that extreme anger resulted in emotional instability leading participants to engage in cyberbullying activities. The participants

had inherited cyberbullying behaviour from the perpetrator, which refers to the reciprocal relationship, in order to defend themselves. The effects of emotionally intense attacks are noted to cause reciprocal effects that led victims of such brutal experiences to demonstrate the same behaviour (Marsh et al., 2004).

The cyber-victim-bully cycle, as revealed in this study, is fuelled by a need for participants to protect themselves from intense negative emotions, especially anger that threatens their emotional stability. When an individual perceives an encounter as an attack, it is natural for them to defend themselves (Balakrishnan, 2018). As a result, the victims of cyberbullying that were engaging in cyberbullying activities can be understood as protecting themselves from overwhelming emotions due to being cyberbullied. With this understanding, it became rational for participants to engage in such dehumanising activities. At the same time, feelings of accomplishment are experienced by the participants because they were able to protect themselves from such emotional harm. Participants were confident when they were able to demonstrate that they were capable of defending themselves by cyberbullying too but were vulnerable due to the intense emotional experience they still experienced.

When the research findings are viewed in this context, it shows that victims of cyberbullying had been disinhibited; therefore, they were able to rationalise the disruptive online behaviour and reciprocate it (Suler, 2004). Disinhibition is described as a temporary loss of self-consciousness caused by an external stimulus (Barlett et al, 2016). It can cause someone to be extremely good or bad. In this case, toxic disinhibition was experienced because participants were

extremely mean and harsh in their online interactions (Chen, 2019). The participants in this study were disinhibited, and this led them to reciprocate cyberbullying behaviour.

6.5 The aftermath

Looking closely, the theme "the aftermath" describes the situation that the participants found themselves in after engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. These situations emanated as a result of the participants' engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Below is a discussion of this theme with sub-themes "unresolved emotions", "continued isolation", "moving on", and "more of us".

6.5.1 Unresolved Emotions

Having been perpetrators of cyberbullying, the participants experienced more intense negative and destructive emotions. The sub-theme "unresolved emotions" describes how endless negative effects are evident in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The current study revealed earlier that the cybervictims experienced intense negative emotions. Because these negative emotions were never dealt with, participants displayed disruptive behaviour consistent with individuals that have emotional problems. Similarly, DeLara (2019) explains that the lasting consequences of being cyberbullied can cause psychological problems and affect how victims view themselves. If victims are not able to comprehend and deal with the negative emotions resulting from being cyberbullied, it can result in destructive behaviours. Therefore, in explain why participants in the current study engaged in cyberbullying behaviour, it becomes clear that the unresolved negative emotions because of being victims of cyberbullying, resulted in the cybervictims engaging in cyberbullying.

The literature explains that resolving aggression with aggression usually causes more negative effects (Torres, D'Alessio & Stolzenberg, 2019). The participants in the current study resolved their cyberbullying problems with cyberbullying, and they experienced more negative effects. They failed to address the cyberbullying problem. As a result, participants lost their self-esteem and felt hopeless and helpless (Hoge et al., 2017). The issue of emotional immaturity is significantly portrayed as playing a role in the way that the victims of cyberbullying decided to resolve their problems in this current study. As previous studies on adolescents explained, adolescence is a critical time when intense emotional and body changes happen to young people. Thus, there are intense internal emotions that are new to adolescence, and external events add more emotional strain. As a result, when adolescence goes through such strain, they experience hopelessness (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2019) and might leave issues unresolved.

6.5.2 Continued Isolation

The sub-theme “continued isolation” describes how the cyberbullies continued to isolate themselves after failing to defend themselves. The participants had experienced both roles in the cyber-victim-bully cycle but still failed to solve their problems. As literature explains, being a cybervictim followed by becoming a cyberbully is a unique experience that might seem odd to many, hence, relating one’s emotions to others might be difficult. However, staying isolated prolongs emotional suffering and exacerbates mistrust (Xia & Li, 2018). Participants in the current study similarly admitted to mistrust in others and continued to isolate themselves after their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Other studies on cyberbullying have found that adolescents that were more honest about being mischievous did not have deep emotional problems and were less deviant (Laird & Marrero, 2010). It is also evident that other adolescents would not

disclose their negative online behaviour because of peer advice. They wanted to listen to their peers so that they would not be labelled weak if they asked for help. If these adolescents were seen as weak, they would not have been valued by their peers. Therefore, not disclosing their negative online behaviour kept their relationships with peers solid. It is also to be noted that these adolescents wanted the freedom to deal with the situation their own way, hence they continued to isolate themselves (Boulton, Boulton, Down, Sanders & Craddock, 2017).

6.5.3 Moving on

The sub-theme "moving on" describes how the participants have continued with their lives after their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. As the current study has shown, the participants survive amid unresolved negative emotions. None of them have received help to address these emotional problems. Namane and Kyobe (2017) clarify that engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle cause emotional and behavioural problems to the individuals involved, but the participants in the current study have moved on with their lives amid these emotional problems. Previous findings on traumatic encounters explain that individuals that continue with their lives after traumatic encounters keep these experiences in their minds. They cannot get past the traumatic encounter and find it difficult to move on with their lives because of overwhelming negative emotions (Gusler & Kiang, 2017). Moreover, these emotional problems keep them stuck in past experiences, thereby affecting their present social relationships (DePaolis & Williford, 2018).

6.5.4 More of us

As it appears from the participants' experiences, the cyber-victim-bully cycle is common amongst individuals that are close to the participants. From the findings, most people that the participants personally know have been involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. A study on cyberbullying in schools by Campbell and Buaman (2018) revealed that schools had become places where cyberbullying unfolds. Schools have become a concern because of cyberbullying activities. It has also become a great concern for many institutions dealing with young people because the effects of cyberbullying are now becoming visible to many (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2019). This depicts that the cyber-victim-bully cycle is common amongst young people and has the potential of spiralling out of control as new victims become the initiators of the next online harassment. However, there are low reports of such behaviours since the cyber-victim-bullies do not report these experiences (Citron, 2014). This impacts negatively on the recordings of cyberbullying activities and designing intervention programmes.

6.6 Summary of Chapter 6

The cyber-victim-bully cycle has been illustrated above in light of literature and the conceptual framework. The four themes and accompanying sub-themes were discussed in light of the literature on cyberbullying. The next chapter will address the summary of the study, a discussion on the cyber-victim-bully cycle, contributions and strengths of the study, as well as the recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The current study embarked on a research journey to fill in gaps that were identified amongst cyberbullying studies. The use of quantitative methods in investigating cyberbullying left a gap that required qualitative methods to mitigate and answer some unanswered questions. The focus was to understand why and how the cyber-victim-bully cycle occurs using the lived experiences of cybervictims who became cyberbullies.

The cyber-victim-bully cycle has been explained in this study. As indicated in a previous chapter, direct cyberbullying is very common among young people, and it causes intense emotional effects to the victims of this type of bullying. The most concerning effect of direct cyberbullying has been identified as victims being able to display the same behaviour they have been exposed to (Merrill & Hanson, 2016). This is because when cybervictims display the same cyberbullying behaviour, it enhances cyberbullying behaviour. As noted in the current study, these cybervictims justify their behaviour. No matter how provoked the cybervictims are with the cyber-attack, their engagement in cyberbullying activities brought them more emotional problems they could not handle. In the end, they were left with unresolved emotions that they still have to address.

7.2 Summary of the study

The study questioned how the cyber-victim-bully cycle that has been reported in quantitative studies unfolded. Therefore, it was important to investigate if the experiences of cyberbullying influenced these victims to engage in cyberbullying behaviour. It was also crucial to understand why these victims of cyberbullying responded the way they did after being

cyberbullied. Therefore, the study's question was what the subjective experiences were of late adolescents who were involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. In asking this question, the researcher wanted to understand what happened to the late adolescents in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. To answer the sub-questions, namely – What happened during the cyberbullying incidents? How did the participants experience cyberbullying as victims? and How did the experience of being cyberbullied influence the victims into becoming cyberbullies? – semi-structured interviews were conducted. These narratives detailed what happened before, during, and after the occurrence of the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

The interviews and analysis thereof provided insights based on the lived experiences of the participants. It enabled the researcher to understand what happened to the cyber-victim-bully when they were caught up in this cycle. These lived experiences facilitated the answers to the sub-questions that were aimed towards understanding how such experiences of being cyberbullied influenced the victims into becoming cyberbullies. The narratives detailed the role that the cyberbullying experiences had in influencing the cybervictims into the cyber-victim-bully cycle, thus answering the research questions. Phenomenological Hermeneutic studies focus on discovering the subjective experiences of individuals (Ghasemi et al., 2011). This approach facilitated our understanding of the lived experiences.

From the current study, it was evident that factors like disinhibition contribute to the reciprocation of cyberbullying behaviour amongst adolescents. It was also interesting to note that if the cyberbully targeted the victims using their modified pictures or insulting words, the victims would react in the same way. Therefore, the cyberbullies used personal information about the

victims to get them to react. These incidents occurred amongst adolescents who were near each other in proximity, and information about the victims was shared amongst peers and people close to the victims. This negatively affected the victims' interpersonal relationships because their privacy was invaded.

The cyberbullying experiences dehumanised the victims. It is apparent that the victims experienced shock, humiliation, disappointment, degradation, deep sadness, anger, hopelessness, and helplessness. There is evidence of anxiety related to the victims' tarnished images. This causes the victims to constantly think about the cyberbullying experience; hence, they are distracted. This affects their school performance negatively. The study has also discovered that victims of cyberbullying socially isolate themselves. They do not share their emotions and thoughts with anyone. They also do not have control over the situation.

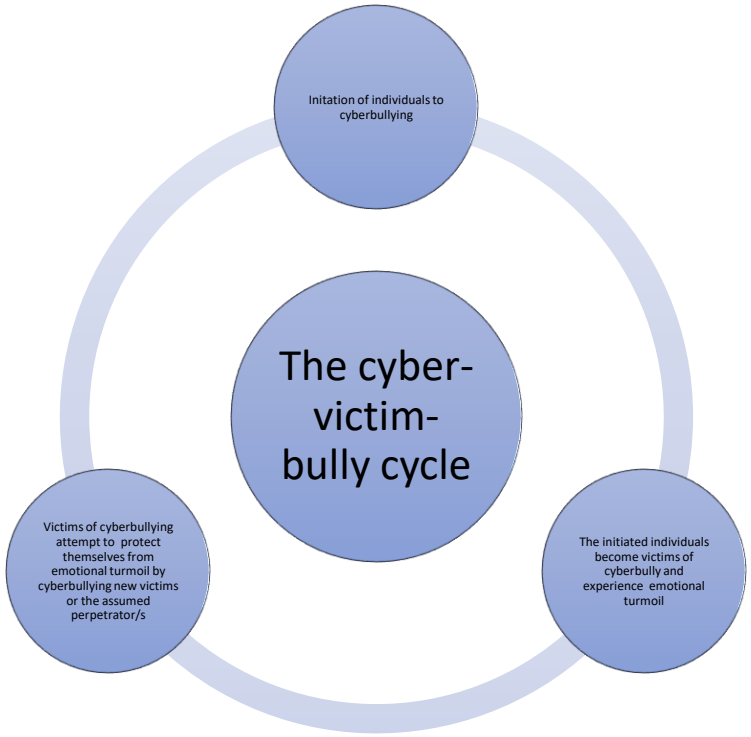
The cyber-victim-bully cycle is to be understood as emanating from a natural instinct by human beings to protect themselves when they feel that they are under attack. When the victims' emotional well-being is overwhelmed, it is regarded as a threat; therefore, they attempt to deal with the perceived threat. In this case, it is by engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

From the current study, it was evident that there is a lack of emotionally grounded interventions in schools and homes. The cyber-victim-bullies do not receive any therapy after their traumatic experiences. The parents and educators did not assist these adolescents when they are facing emotional challenges. Therefore, the victims dealt with their emotions the only way they

knew how. This calls for more intervention programmes that deal with the emotional challenges of adolescents caught in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

7.3 The cyber-victim-bully cycle

The cyber-victim-bully cycle entails an individual being targeted through online bullying. In this cycle, the targeted individual is exposed to cyberbullying, and this causes them to experience intense negative thoughts and emotions. The cyberbullying victims attempt to resolve the intense negative emotions by cyberbullying, either new targets and/or the original bully. In this cycle, new victims are initiated. The new victims become part of the cycle if they decide to engage in cyberbullying as well. As such, new and old victims continue to engage in the cyber-victim-bully cycle, initiating new role players. Below is a diagram that demonstrates the cyber-victim-bully cycle (Figure 5).



The initiation

- Victims are introduced to the cyber-victim-bully cycle by an aggressive direct online bullying experience.
- The experience is mainly charecterised by anonymity repetition and intent
- The audience of this experience are unlimited

Emotional turmoil

- The cyberbullying experience causes victims to experience :

(a) overwhelming negative thoughts and emotions at once and in isolation

(b) difficulty in controlling these negative emotions that victims attempt to protect themselves from these overwhelming emotions

Self-protection

- Victims attempt to deal with emotional turmoil to take back the control they have lost by:

(a) Protecting themselves from overwhelimng negative emotions through engaging in cyberbullying. This lead:

(b) victims of cyberbullying to cyberbully either new victims and or the original cyberbully, therefore original victims become the new cyberbullies

(c) both the new victims and or the orginal cyberbullies are caught up in cyberbullying activities as new victims are intiatied in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The original cyber-victims are now engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle as the new perpetrators.

Figure 5

Figure 5: The cyber-victim-bully cycle

7.4 Contribution of this study

The current study's conceptualisation of the cyber-victim-bully cycle could be used to guide school policies, prevention programmes, and counselling programmes for cyberbullying victims, cyberbullies and cyber-victim-bullies. Such school policies and interventions can assist in addressing all learners affected by cyberbullying. These findings can benefit victims of cyberbullying who are not in the cycle to avoid reciprocating behaviour because it does not solve the negative emotional effects of being cyberbullied. Studies investigating this phenomenon could build on the current understanding of how the cyber-victim-bully cycle develops.

7.5 Strength of the study

The use of a cross-sectional qualitative design enabled the researcher to examine the data in such a way that the voices of the participants stood out. The data was examined qualitatively and not quantitatively, which allowed the researcher to understand the meaning of the data and possible causes for the participants to respond to their cyber victimisation the way they did. Furthermore, this research design gave the late adolescents a platform to narrate their experiences and resulting emotions for the first time.

The interview sessions facilitated a significant conversation that allowed participants to freely express their negative emotional experiences in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The researcher established a good rapport with the participants and did not express judgement. The participants received a platform to express what they went through and were assured that they were not alone. The interviews encouraged the participants to seek the support that they needed to deal with what they had experienced in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. This allowed late adolescents to voice their

pain. The interviews allowed the participants to experience a sigh of relief as these experiences had become a burden to them. The participants' relief also came after they realised that someone had noticed that the cyber-victim-bully cycle was unfolding in schools and was very serious.

The participants were directly interviewed by the researcher. The primary data collected represented the participants' accounts of the cyber-victim-bully cycle as it unfolded. The thematic structural analysis allowed the researcher to undertake analysis of the data, digging deeper into the accounts for meaning. This improved the quality of the themes and clarified the sequence of events that lead to the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

The researcher engaged in continuous probing to get as much data as she could about the cyberbullying experiences. This enabled the researcher to follow up on what the participants shared and clarifying information that was not clear. The participants were able to understand the questions and articulated their experiences as well as answer follow-up questions, thereby providing rich and relevant data. Purposive sampling ensured that data sources were reliable.

The study raised awareness amongst the participants of what their role was in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. Some of the participants acknowledged that it was not the best way they could have handled the situation and reflected on better ways to manage such encounters. This gave some of the young adults confidence to boldly face the challenges they were experiencing as a result of their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle by agreeing to seek counselling for the first time. The participants were bold enough to suggest ways that could help adults in dealing with

cyberbullying and an urgent need to help others that were still engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

7.6 Recommendations for practice

On reflection on the investigation, the following recommendations for future practice were put forward:

- Many participants engaged in cyberbullying to defend themselves. There should be programmes that address overwhelming negative and aggressive emotions that threaten the emotional well-being of learners, especially anger management programmes in schools.
- All the participants experienced intense negative emotions whilst engaging in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. There is a need for intervention that can help affected learners to effectively deal with such emotions after their engagement in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.
- The participants received readily available online resources to engage in cyberbullying behaviour. Therefore, there should be aware of the measures taken against those that perpetrate cyberbullying behaviour.
- There should be education for parents and educators to make them aware of the emotional impact that cyberbullying has on learners. Furthermore, there should be training programmes on how to handle cyberbullying situations in schools and in their homes.
- Learners should be encouraged to report cases of cyberbullying even if they participated in cyberbullying activities. There should be guidance given to individuals that handle such cases.

7.7 Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has had many strengths that have been discussed in section 7.5. However, there are some limitations that should be noted. Below are these limitations as well as recommendations for future research.

The cyber-victim-bully cycle across various ages: Due to the small sample in the present study, continued research is needed to explore the cyber-victim-bully cycle experiences across all ages and regions in South Africa. A small sample size lacks diversity in ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. Unruly online behaviour widely varies with cultural orientation, age, and the type of media technology or platform used to engage in online activities. Further replications of the study can verify the results explained above.

Background information of adolescents who engage in the cyber-victim-bully cycle: It was understood that not all victims of cyberbullying end up engaging in cyberbullying behaviour. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to investigate the differences between certain variables such as background and personalities between those victims who engage in the cyber-victim-bully cycle and those that do not.

Gender differences: There was no equal ratio of male and female participants. A sample consisting of only females or males might shed light on gender differences in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

Focusing on a single social network platform: This study was not specific to any type of media technologies and platforms; therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously in terms of generalizing to the rest of the population on different media technologies and platforms.

7.8 Conclusion

From the current study, it is evident that some victims of cyberbullying are introduced to cyberbullying by their cyberbullying experiences. This cycle is characterized by direct cyberbullying experiences that lead to emotional turmoil. When the victims attempt to resolve these negative emotions by engaging in cyberbullying, they believe that they are protecting themselves. Therefore, they might attack the original cyberbully and/or a new "target/victim" that becomes the new "role player' in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The original cyberbully and/or the new target have both become victims, and the initial victim becomes the cyberbully. The original victims begin a new cycle for their targets. Therefore, the cyber-victim-bully cycle continues with each new victim initiating their targets into the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

With such a scenario, new and old role-players continue the cycle initiating more victims and increasing the number of cyberbullying incidents amongst young people. The emotional well-being of the individuals involved in the cyber-victim-bully cycle is negatively affected for example, their thoughts. This negatively affects school performance, psychological health, and interpersonal relationships. There should be a way to interfere with the cycle of cyberbullying as well as assist cybervictims as soon as they have encountered cyberbullying. This could be done through continued research on this phenomenon so that much information can be presented when drafting intervention programmes for cybervictims and cyberbullies engaging in the cyber-victim-

bully cycle. This creates a great opportunity for research on behaviours associated with cyber-victim-bullies.

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APPENDIX A: Interview schedule

Age----------

Gender----------

Ethnical group----------

Level of education----------

1. What is your understanding of cyberbullying?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you were cyberbullied and the circumstances behind the cyberbullying incident/s?
3. What feelings were generated by this cyberbullying experience?
4. What were your thoughts at that time of the cyberbullying experience?
5. How did you respond to this cyberbullying experience?
6. How is your response to the cyberbullying incident a unique experience?
7. What has typically affected or influenced you regarding this experience?

APPENDIX B: Informed consent

This project has received ethical clearance from the College Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Ms. Helena Erasmus, the project supervisor, on telephone number: 012 429 2828; or email her on erasmhc@unisa.ac.za

Section A: Contact and Project Details

Project Title: The experience of cyberbullying and its influence on cyberbullying behaviour amongst late adolescents

Researcher's Full Name: Sundra Dadirai Magombedze

Contact Details: 0630144321

Include a written overview of the study here.

Section B: Participant's consent

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have been informed about the participant Information and the nature and purpose of the research project.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect me in any way neither now nor in the future.
- I understand that the study will be available in the form of a dissertation and it may be followed by conference presentations and publication in academic journals. I understand that my personal results will remain confidential and that the results of the study will be presented in a way that will prevent the identification of participants.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded during the interview and that the recordings will be kept safe in a locked safe after completing the project.
- I agree to take part in the research project.

Participant's Signature	*Printed Name*	*Date*

Researcher Certification		
I have explained the study to the participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved regarding the study.		
Researcher's Signature	*Printed Name*	*Date*

APPENDIX C: Advertisement

Psychological Research: Bullying through social media

ARE YOU 19 or 20 years old, and interested in taking part in a CYBER WARS RESEARCH STUDY?

IF YES,

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study about
RESPONDING to cyberbullying for a Masters in Psychology dissertation.

Please note that the interviews are completely anonymous.

To learn more about this study
or to participate in this study,
please contact:

Principal Investigator:
SUNDRA DADIRAI MAGOMBEDZE
0630144321/ magombedze.sundra@gmail.com

If you do not qualify to take part in the research, please feel free to share this post with your friends!

APPENDIX D: Reflective commentary

I chose cyberbullying as the topic for my Master's dissertation due to a desire to understand how media technology influences behaviour. This desire came forth after I had observed that some people's behaviours were influenced by what they were exposed to through media technologies. The topic was too broad at first but after reading cyberbullying studies, the cyber-victim-bully cycle kept reappearing without any explanation of what enhanced the behaviour. This motivated me to choose a qualitative approach that could explain such cyberbullying behaviour. It proofed to be an exciting research journey.

It was not easy to find information that directly addressed the cyber-victim-bully cycle. It became apparent that the cyber-victim-bully cycle was mentioned in passing when other aspects of cyberbullying were being investigated. Furthermore, I struggled to determine which theories would better explain such online behaviour. It was vital that the cyberbullying behaviour be explained with relevant theories, and after constructive criticism, I continued to search for theories. My first theory of choice was the Social Learning Theory by Bandura. I was confident that it could explain the cyber-victim-bully cycle. I just believed that the cyber-victim-bully cycle was a process of learning from peers. However, with guidance and more reading, I could see that it was more than just social learning. I decided to search for more theories. During my intense search for a theory, I came across a bullying study that explained the bully-victim cycle by using the reciprocal effects model. To me, this theory alone seemed not to cover all the factors surrounding the cyberbullying behaviour. To use the reciprocal effects model alone in trying to understand social interactions in cyberspace seemed unfair. This led me to search for any theory that explained cyberspace. There were not many theories that explained cyberspace and Suler's (2004)

disinhibition theory constantly reappeared. I ended up reading the theory and saw it filling the gaps that the reciprocal effects model left behind.

It was not easy to compile the conceptual framework and the sampling procedures of the study. I felt discouraged at times and did not understand how I could put the model and the theory together. I did not give up and the urge to finish what I started kept me going.

My life became more conflicted with the delayed ethical clearance. Some interested individuals that I had had a conversation with about my study left the areas whilst others were no longer interested. When I got the ethical clearance, I had mixed emotions and I was frustrated. I first reassured myself that I would collect data. As I put the posters everywhere, I received please call me requests and messages on my phone. This brought a sense of relief and a bit of confidence back. I still struggled with the conceptual framework and literature on my topic. Slowly, I was able to piece together paragraph by paragraph and the assumptions of my study whilst I prepared for the interviews. The recruitment process of early adults seemed impossible because of monetary compensation. Some participants wanted to be paid, but fortunately, there were those that did not demand compensation. I realised that there were many stories out there about cyberbullying, but the young people were too withdrawn from the research process because there were no financial benefits. It seemed as if they wanted to sell their stories, therefore, the study was seen as an opportunity to make money. I had to reemphasise that there were no financial gains and most participants walked away.

During the interview sessions, I learned a lot and discovered that interviewing was not easy. I realised that it was important to directly ask some hard questions and to keep probing because participants wanted to generalise their experiences. The willingness to participate in the study and the sharing of information seemed to be two different concepts for the participants. However,

because of the lack of information on my topic, I had to get as much information from the participants as possible. Based on the use of a phenomenological context, I specifically designed interview questions that would address the emotional and psychological experiences of the participants in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

The participants commonly wanted to generalise their stories or refer to other people's stories and were not upfront with their cyberbullying experiences. Most of them were shocked when I asked them to narrate in detail their cyberbullying experiences. The irony to the shock was that the participants had expressed how free they were to talk about their experiences. I believe they never thought that they would be asked to narrate in detail about their cyberbullying experiences. It seems like they were not ready to disclose the sensitive information.

In all interview sessions, I recorded the conversations. The participants were settled but more probing was needed to get rich narratives. The interview questions were very specific, but the participants sometimes did not answer the questions. I would then ask directly about an assumption I wanted to clarify. I learned that the participants could not express their experiences but dodged to answer some of the questions. It was evident that participants had difficulties expressing their cyberbullying experiences in words. Maybe if the participants were required to write about what happened to them, more information would have come forth. The pilot study had hinted that participants would clearly express themselves, but the interview sessions indicated that talking about these experiences was not as easy as one might think.

The embarrassment that the participants felt was evident when they narrated their cyberbullying experiences. However, confidence was expressed when they narrated how they got back at the cyberbully. I felt confident in my interviewing skills as well as the rapport that I had developed with the participants. Had it not been for the rapport, the participants would not have shared their

experiences. The participants' stories shocked me because I never thought such aggression was occurring amongst young people. However, these stories provided insight of the cyber-victim-bully cycle, which was very beneficial for my project. Themes began to come to mind and I could see the patterns in the narrated stories.

During the data collection sessions, it was evident that the participants were indeed exposed to cyberbullying and whether they admitted it or not, the experiences had influenced them to engage in cyberbullying. What was striking was the emphasis on anger and how this anger was explained by the participants. The facial expressions and change of the tone of their voices told me that there was more to this anger. Even more surprisingly, the way participants wanted to defend themselves. When the participants experienced cyberbullying, it was an invasion of their territory, therefore, the participants had to defend it. I began to see a pattern that was deeper than the eye could see. I knew I had to listen attentively to these stories for me to be able to do justice to the concepts that seemed to be at play in the cyber-victim-bully cycle. The two theories forming the theoretical framework for the study, could be seen interwoven into the themes that finally emerged, but it was not easy for me to explain these theories alongside the experiences. I became nervous of the information that was in my hands. The doubt I had of whether I could handle so much data and do justice to it, reminded me to be flexible and allow the data analysis process to take course and explain what was really happening in the cyber-victim-bully cycle.

Surprisingly, data analysis was for me the easiest part of the research. Not to say that I got things right the first time, but the process of learning proper coding and not overlooking details made me to enjoy analysing the data. The process of making meaning and listening to the stories was easy for me and redoing it over and over again boosted my confidence that I had lost when trying to compile the conceptual framework. The constant rereading and regrouping taught me to be extra

careful with data and not to cluster many ideas in one theme, but rather form sub-themes. In the two years of doing this study, I have realised that coding and data analysis are processes I enjoyed and with more practice, I can execute them very well. More so, because many activities that we did in 2018 that required analysis, I executed well and lecturers appraised me for my work. During my internship, I also got to realise that I could nurture coding and data analysis to be my trade.

Doing research is tiring and demands more than what I had anticipated. I saw another side of me that kept pushing forward more and more. I told myself when I wrote my Chapter 7, that I could do this and it was possible. I could not control some of the situations I faced, like delayed ethical clearance and respondents seeing my study as an opportunity to make money, but in the end it all came together, from Chapter 1 through to Chapter 7.

APPENDIX E: Editor's confirmation

REGCOR
ENTERPRISES PTY LTD
(2015/375453/07)

Date: 05/06/2020

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to certify that I, Sarah Louise Cornelius, of Regcor Enterprises Pty Ltd, have completed the initial editing of the thesis titled: *The experience of cyberbullying and its role in the cyber-victim-bully cycle amongst late adolescents* by Sundra Dadirai Magombedze.

I have ten years of experience in the field, having worked on multiple doctorates. Currently, I am a member of the Professional Editor's Guild (PEG).

This has been an initial (first-time) edit and all recommendations and errors have been noted in the comments. Any changes or lack of corrections done to the document after editing is not a reflection of the editing services provided. Students are welcome to send the document for a further proofread before the final submission.

Kind Regards
Sarah Louise Cornelius

Professional Editor's Guild Associate Member
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