

# CYBERBULLYING AND ADOLESCENTS' SELF-ESTEEM

By

PHILIP VAN RENSBURG

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Supervisor: Prof. Greg Howcroft

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Kerry-Lynn Thomson

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## DECLARATION

I, *Philip van Rensburg (212450743)*, hereby declare that the *treatise* for Magister Artium in Clinical Psychology *to be awarded* is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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Philip van Rensburg

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## **Abstract**

Cyberbullying can be defined as the wilful and repeated harm inflicted upon others through the medium of electronic text (Patchin, 2002). Typically, cyberbullying involves sending harassing or threatening e-mails and instant messages, posting derogatory comments of someone on a website, or physically threatening or intimidating someone online. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between adolescents' experience with cyberbullying and their level of self-esteem. There is a considerable amount of support, which has been accrued over the years, alluding to the fact that incidents involving bullying have damaging consequences upon adolescent development. One such correlation that has earned a considerable amount of interest is the consequence of bullying on self-esteem. Self-esteem can be defined as a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self. The current research study employed an exploratory, descriptive quantitative research design. Quantitative research focuses on using empirical data with findings based on certainty. Results are accumulated through formal measurements using prearranged instruments and analysed through the use of statistical measures. Research consisted of the completion of a biographical questionnaire which provided data on the demographics of the sample. The cyber bully/victim questionnaire provided information about the prevalence of cyberbullying behaviours among the participants. James Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory was utilised to measure the construct of self-esteem. Participants were selected by means of non-probability sampling and comprised of a sample of grade seven learners enrolled at a primary school in George, Western Cape. Quantitative

data, obtained from the self-report questionnaires, were analysed through the use of descriptive statistics, ANOVA statistics and a Pearson R correlation coefficient. One key finding revealed that over fifty percent (51.40%) of the grade 7 participants had been involved in cyberbullying behaviours. No significant relationship was found to exist between cyberbullying and self-esteem in the grade 7 sample. Self-esteem scores did not vary significantly among the cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the sample.

**KEYWORDS:** cyberbullying, Internet, online communication, online harassment, self-esteem, victimisation, violence.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction and Primary Aims**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter will begin with a general orientation to the current study. The problem of cyberbullying will be discussed, and the concept of self-esteem will be defined. An outline of the aims of the current study will then be provided. This chapter will conclude with a description of the chapter organisation in the current treatise.

#### **1.2 Cyberbullying**

Butterfield and Broad (2002) state that social change provides opportunities for the predatory behaviour that is characteristic of a small number of people. With the new technologies that support the Internet, individuals who cannot adjust rapidly to such changes are at risk from those who can and will deploy technology as a weapon. Cyberbullying is one such example, and has been defined as the wilful and repeated harm inflicted upon others through the medium of electronic text (Patchin, 2002). The latter is a broad definition that encapsulates all forms of harassment that commonly occur over the Internet using either computers or cellular phones.

Cyberbullying is a relatively new, yet potentially very harmful phenomenon in which youth use technology such as computers or cell phones to harass, threaten, humiliate or otherwise hassle their peers. It is defined as the “wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010 a, p. 615).

Cyberbullying involves, sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images by computer or phone; posting sensitive, private information and/or

false information about another person online; pretending to be someone else in order to make a person look bad and/or intentionally excluding someone from an online group (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010 b). Patchin and Hinduja (2010 a) provide further examples of cyberbullying which include sending derogatory emails or text messages, spreading rumours or private information via texts or the internet, using social networking sites to make fun of others, and posting embarrassing pictures or videos of others online.

In many ways, cyberbullying can be worse, more harmful and harder to terminate than traditional bullying. It can happen both during or outside of school hours, and it is less visible to school officials. Images and messages can quickly be distributed by cyberbullies via the Internet, text or social network platforms to a wide audience. Additionally, cyberbullying can often be perpetrated by an anonymous offender, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the origin thereof and subsequently to end (Nunez & Ortega-Ruiz, 2012).

According to Santrock (2004) during adolescence the development of a distinctive identity is significant. Throughout this phase, the progression of developing an identity is for the most part reliant upon prompts from the social environment, such as societal stereotypes (Oyaziwo, 2006). Adolescents as a result have a predisposition to search for behaviours and situations that assist them in valuing themselves in an optimistic manner and to steer clear of those situations that make them view themselves in a negative way. This view correlates with adolescents' awareness and acknowledgment of their ever-shifting self and plays a significant role in the way in which individual development will progress (Santrock, 2004).

There is a considerable amount of support, which has been accrued over

the years, for the fact that incidents involving bullying may have certain consequences with regard to adolescent development. One area that has earned a considerable amount of interest is that of bullying and self-esteem (Oyaziwo, 2006). Self-esteem can be defined as a favourable (high self-esteem) or unfavourable (low self-esteem) attitude toward the self (Sanrock, 2004). Additionally, self-esteem can be understood from the viewpoint that it is an internal depiction of social approval and dismissal and a psychological gauge used to monitor the degree to which a person is included or excluded by others (Kernis, 1995). The two-abovementioned viewpoints highlight the fact that self-esteem is a perception or belief regarding his or her personal significance which is affected by an individual's contribution to the social world (Oyaziwo, 2008).

Existing research on the relationship between bullying and self-esteem indicates that victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims (Rigby, 2002). The exact explanation for this connection is not completely understood. One explanation could be that through experiencing the sense of being victimised one's self-esteem could deteriorate (Sanders & Phye, 2004). Sanders and Phye (2004) point out that another possibility could be the fact that those who have a low self-esteem are more likely to be targeted as victims.

The association between bullying and self-esteem is much less reliable and often contradictory (Smith, 2009). Previous studies suggest that bullies tend to have both higher and lower self-esteem than non-bullies (Ericson, 2001). Some studies also point toward the fact that there is no significant difference between the self-esteem of bullies and non-bullies (Espelage &



Swearer, 2003). Even though the direction of the connection between bullying and self-esteem has not been established yet, research has consistently found that the relationship to self-esteem, regardless of its direction, is present among bullies and victims (Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003).

It appears as if experiences of traditional bullying are associated with differing levels of self-esteem, as it has been indicated that victims of bullying are likely to have differing levels of self-esteem than non-victims (Oyaziwo, 2008). The current researcher hypothesised a similar relationship when considering experiences with cyberbullying. The research question in the current study was whether adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying report differing levels of self-esteem than those who have not been victimised.

There is limited research on cyberbullying in South Africa. As such, it is unclear how many children are involved in or subjected to these practices. Some limited studies, however, have been conducted. The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) conducted a pilot study in 2009 among 1 726 young people between the ages of 12 and 24 years. The study found that almost half of the respondents (46.8%) had experienced some form of cyberbullying. Another interesting finding was that there appeared to be a relationship between young people who commit cyberbullying and those who are the victims of cyberbullying. The study found that 69.7% of respondents who had bullied others via text messaging had themselves been cyberbullied (Badenhorst, 2011).

A study conducted in Port Elizabeth among 1 594 primary and secondary school learners indicated that 36% of the respondents had experienced some form of cyberbullying (Von Solms & De Lange, 2011). In another study

conducted in 2011 about online victimisation of children, conducted by the Youth Research Unit of the Bureau of Market Research at the University of South Africa, it was revealed that 21.46% of the high school pupils surveyed had been approached with 'unwanted talk about sex.' A total of 17.79% said they had received e-mails or instant messages with advertisements or links to 'X-rated' websites. Another 16.95% of the participants indicated that they had opened messages or links with pictures of naked people or people having sex, 16.60% had been asked for sexual information about themselves, 14.27% were worried or felt threatened by online harassment and 9.90% said they had been asked to 'do something sexual.' The study also found that male adolescents were more likely than their female counterparts to engage in unsafe online activities that put them at greater risk of becoming targets of online victimisation. The latter behaviour included opening messages showing pictures of naked people or people having sex (50.3%), accessing websites showing sexually explicit material (50.9%), or receiving e-mails or instant messages with advertisements for or links to age-restricted websites (51.3%) (University of South Africa (UNISA), 2011).

Although some of the statistics mentioned above refer to another aspect of online harassment known as 'sexting', the current researcher felt that it also forms a significant part of the overarching theme of cybervictimisation. Taking all of the above-mentioned information into consideration, it is subsequently important to consider the aspect of cyberbullying and self-esteem in the adolescent who experiences cybervictimisation, including 'sexting'.

### 1.3 Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall self-evaluation of his/her competencies; it is the self-evaluation and descriptive conceptualization that individuals make and maintain with regard to themselves (Battle, 2014; Santrock 2004). In this sense, self-esteem is a personal evaluation reflecting what people think about themselves as individuals. Self-esteem refers to a developed attitude about one's personality (Kaya & Sackes, 2004) and is an important factor in directing behaviour throughout the various aspects of life (Hamarta, 2004). According to Haney and Durlak (1998), self-esteem reflects the degree to which the individual sees him- or herself as a competent, need-satisfying individual. Individuals with high self-esteem have a sense of personal adequacy and a sense of having achieved need-satisfaction in the past (Kaya & Sackes, 2004). In addition to reflecting cognition about oneself, Taylor, Peplau and Sears (2006) note that self-esteem also consists of an affective (liking or disliking) component, thus high self-esteem people like who and what they are. Individuals high in global self-esteem agree with statements like 'I am a person of worth, on an equal plane with others' and 'I am satisfied with myself' (Oyaziwo, 2008).

The self-esteem construct is usually conceptualized as a hierarchical phenomenon. It exists at different levels of specificity, commonly seen in terms of global, and task or situation-specific self-esteem (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005). As a multifaceted conceptualization of the self, scholars generally agree that self-esteem may also develop around a number of other dimensions; including the social, physical, academic, and moral-self (McGee, Williams, & Nada-Raja, 2001).

The literature that is currently available suggests that high self-esteem promotes goals, expectancies, coping mechanisms and behaviours that facilitate productive achievement and impede mental and physical health problems (Donnellan, et al, 2005; McGee, Williams, & Nada-Raja, 2001). According to Coopersmith (1967), the attention an individual receives from other people and the degree of acceptance and respect he or she receives plays a role in self-esteem development.

Kendler, Gardner and Prescott (1998) define self-esteem as the sense of satisfaction and self-acceptance that originates from an individual's assessment of his or her own value, importance, capability and capacity to gratify his or her ambitions. According to Taylor et al. (2006), people with high-self-esteem have an unmistakable sense of what their individual traits are. Such individuals think of themselves in a good way, set attainable goals, use feedback in a self-enhancing manner, take pleasure in their positive encounters and cope effectively with problematic circumstances (Taylor et al., 2006).

On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem think poorly of themselves, often opt for goals that are out of reach, are inclined to be negative about the future, have more negative recollections of their past and wallow in their negative states (Taylor et al., 2006). These individuals are less likely to produce positive feedback for themselves, are more worried about the impression other people will have of them, and are more susceptible to depression or rumination when they encounter setbacks or stress (Taylor et al., 2006).

Sadock and Sadock (2007) deduce that self-esteem is an assessment of

one's sense of value based on perceived accomplishments and success, as well as an awareness of how much one is valued by peers, family members, teachers and society in general. Sadock and Sadock (2007), go further to classify self-esteem based on primary and secondary features. The primary features of positive self-esteem are one's perception of positive physical appearance and high value to peers and family. The secondary features of self-esteem relate to academic achievement, athletic abilities and special talents. Adolescent self-esteem is mediated, to a significant degree, by positive feedback from family members as well as peer groups, therefore adolescents often seek out a peer group that offers acceptance, regardless of negative behaviours associated with that group (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

During adolescence many young individuals move beyond their stable and secure sense of themselves, as nurtured by their families, and begin to develop a more personalised vision of themselves and their potential (Taylor et al., 2006). During this time of change as described above, social networking sites can provide a point of stability while facilitating the very types of personal growth that constitute the identity formation process. Taking the latter into consideration, it can be confirmed that technology plays a part in the identity formation of many of today's adolescents, especially where peer relations are concerned (Taylor et al., 2006). According to Li (2006) a vast access to technology may increase the interaction between peers and resulting peer interactions may affect the way adolescents view themselves. Adolescents want to be part of the rising technological connections their peers are making (Taylor et al., 2006). Taylor et al. (2006) found that removing an adolescent from all the technological platforms that create opportunities for

cyberbullying also removes them from possible positive social networking experiences, and other technological interactions with their peers, which has previously been mentioned as an essential construct of identity shaping.

The rapid and mounting development of connections and interactions with peers during adolescence, via technological platforms, has become increasingly important to an adolescent in developing their identity and a sense of self (Li, 2006). According to Li (2006), the peers and cliques with which learners surround themselves provide them with the opportunities to try new roles. In the young person's search for new roles and an integrated identity, he or she may consistently find that he or she could be a bully or victim and sometimes even both (Li, 2006).

#### **1.4 Primary aims of the research**

The primary aims of the proposed research were:

To determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 learners in George, Western Cape.

To explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not. The null hypothesis will be that there will not be a significant difference between the levels of self-esteem (dependent variable) and the experience of cyberbullying (independent variable).

#### **1.5 Treatise outline**

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature on cyberbullying. The concept of cyberbullying is defined and information relating to the experience and aftermath of this phenomenon is presented and discussed. Chapter Three explores the construct of self-esteem, presenting a description of the

development of this feature. Chapter Four delineates the methodological considerations taken to develop and conduct this research study. Chapter Five reports and discusses the results of the current study. The conclusions reached and implications of the research are then presented in Chapter Six.

## Chapter 2

### Cyberbullying

#### 2.1 Introduction

With the current increase in the use of modern forms of technology for interpersonal communication many doors have been opened for individuals to connect with each other. The advantages of cyber communication are endless. However, as with any new development, there are some difficulties that arise. In this respect cyberbullying is emerging as a negative psychosocial phenomenon. This form of bullying impacts not only the children involved but also the parents, teachers and other educators caught up in the process (Von Marés & Petermann, 2012).

The technological revolution, particularly in digital communication tools such as the Internet, has brought with it significant changes to the lives of individuals and blurs real and virtual worlds and spaces. What has become evident with this dramatic rise in the use of handheld devices and mobile phones is that it allows today's youth to live in a highly mediated world and allows them to stay connected in real time. Growth in the use of technology to connect with others can be seen in research conducted by the US government in 2002 which indicated that, at that time, about 90% of adolescents used computers (*National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2002*).

In a study in Sweden it showed that as electronic devices become more accessible, it is most likely assured that rates of cyberbullying will also escalate (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). In a study by David-Ferdon and Hertz (2007), it was found that almost 80% of adolescents possess the technology



(primarily computers and cell phones) required to participate in cyberbullying, with even more youth having access to such technology at school, libraries, or after-school programmes.

Cyberbullying peaks in primary school and drops somewhat in high school (Williams & Guerra, 2007). Existing literature reveals a focus on primary school pupils, since cyberbullying, like conventional bullying, is likely to be widespread during this developmental period (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

## **2.2 Defining cyberbullying**

The current definitions of cyberbullying differ, but most researchers can generally agree that it is an intentional, repeated, and aggressive act or behaviour carried out by a group or individual employing information and communication technology as an instrument. The acts which the cyberbully typically gets involved in are intentionally committed to break down a victim who cannot easily defend him- or herself or terminate the bullying (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). Aggressiveness, intention, repetitiveness, and a power imbalance are commonly accepted as the core characteristics of cyberbullying (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009).

Cyberbullying includes being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression, using the Internet or other digital technologies. Cyberbullying can take different forms, some of which can be explained by Willard's (2007) classification of eight forms of cyberbullying.

The first four terms used by Willard (2007) that are referred to in the

following paragraph are flaming, harassment, cyberstalking and denigration. The first form of cyberbullying to which Willard (2007) refers is 'flaming' (p. 23). This comprises intense arguments through emails, IM, or in chat rooms, during which impolite, belligerent, or menacing messages are exchanged between two people. Another term used by Willard (2007) is 'harassment' (p. 34). This term implies recurrently sending offensive and hurtful messages to another person. According to Willard (2007), 'cyberstalking' (p.47) encompasses constant harassment and threats of physical harm, to a degree that the victim starts fearing for his or her own safety. The posting of nasty, false, or damaging material (text, photos, or videos) about or of someone in order to harm his or her character, damage friendships, or to humiliate the victim is termed 'denigration' (Willard, 2007, p. 48).

The last four terms in Willard's (2007) classification system; namely impersonation, outing, trickery and exclusion are explained in the following paragraph. During 'impersonation' (p. 51) another individual's identity is used to send or post material of insulting, inappropriate, or embarrassing content in order to damage the reputation or the friendships of the target individual. Another form of cyberbullying, which Willard (2007) defines, is 'outing' (p. 52) which is sending or publicly posting private material or images of someone else, specifically material which may include private, possibly awkward information. 'Trickery' (p. 55) can be at times considered a part of outing. This occurs when a person is tricked into giving away private, potentially uncomfortable information, believing that it is intended for the recipient only, while the cyberbully means to distribute the material to others. The final form

of cyberbullying is 'exclusion' (p.59). This happens when somebody is purposefully left out or barred from an online group or community (Willard, 2007).

Willard's (2007) classification is not, however, exhaustive as there are many different forms of cyberbullying. This is evident from a recent study conducted with primary school children in Canada by Paul, Smith and Blumberg (2012) where they found that cyberbullying is constantly evolving and taking on new forms.

### **2.3 Cyberbullying versus traditional bullying**

Recent studies have demonstrated that there is a significant conceptual and practical overlap between both cyberbullying and traditional bullying and that most young people who are cyberbullied also tend to be bullied by more traditional methods. Despite the overlap between traditional and cyber forms of bullying, it remains unclear if being a victim of cyberbullying has the same negative consequences as being a victim of traditional bullying (Perren, Dooley, Shaw, & Cross, 2010).

As Kowalski, Morgan, and Limber (2012) confirm, there seems to be a small but significant similarity between traditional and cyberbullying, as well as between traditional victimisation and cybervictimisation, with perpetrators and/or targets of cyberbullying often involved in traditional bullying forms as well. The overlap between involvement in cyberbullying and traditional bullying can be found already among children between 7 and 11 years of age. Monks, Robinson, and Worlidge (2012) found that children were most likely to take the same role (that is, the bully) in both online and offline bullying. One hypothesis regarding this relationship is that bullying begins at school and is

then continued via communication technologies (Sourander et al., 2010). While victims of traditional bullying still seem to outnumber cybervictims, cyberbullying may gradually substitute more traditional forms of bullying (Ortega, Elipe & Mora-Mercha, nd). However, Sakellariou, Carroll, and Houghton (2012) warn that an increase in cyberbullying does not imply that traditional bullying forms are becoming less prevalent and less destructive.

As highlighted in this section, there are similarities and differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. One of the differences is related to repetition and power imbalance. This is not as easy to define but can be illustrated through the use of an example. In terms of repetition, an embarrassing picture, once uploaded to a website, can be observed continually, thus generating on-going embarrassment. With regard to power imbalance, many cybervictims experience a very evident vulnerability if their bully remains anonymous. In addition often there is no escape from cyberbullying, as technology-based interactions can take place at any time and in any place (Dooley et al., 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Another characteristic differentiating cyberbullying from traditional bullying is anonymity. Cyberbullies are able to remain 'faceless' behind their computer screen or cell phone and to aggress against their victims, even when they are physically remote (Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009). The physical distance may help to disinhibit cyberbullies, making it easier to say or write things they normally would not say in a face-to-face interaction. Thus, cyberbullying technology allows potential bullies to distance themselves from their victim and disperse harmful material to a larger audience than ever before (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

In contrast to traditional bullying, cyberbullying depends on the perpetrator having some degree of technological expertise. Although it is easy enough to send emails and text messages, more sophisticated attacks, such as masquerading (pretending to be someone else posting denigrating material on a website), require more skill (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

The cyberbully does not usually see the victim's reaction, at least in the short term. On the one hand, this delayed gratification can enhance moral disengagement from the victim's plight (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, & Bonanno, 2005) and thus might make cyberbullying easier. As without such direct feedback there may be fewer opportunities for empathy or remorse. On the other hand, many perpetrators of traditional bullying enjoy the feedback of seeing the suffering of the victim, and would not get this satisfaction so readily through cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

According to Patchin and Hinduja (2011) the variety of bystander roles in cyberbullying (in which an individual observes another person cyberbullying a victim and does not do anything to intervene) is more complex than in most traditional bullying. There can be three main bystander roles in either cyberbullying or traditional bullying rather than one. Firstly, the bystander may be with the perpetrator when an act is sent or posted; secondly, the bystander can be with the victim when it is received; or, thirdly, the bystander is with neither, but receives the message or visits the relevant Internet site (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

One motive for traditional bullying is thought to be the status gained by displaying power over others, in front of witnesses (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). The perpetrator will often lack this

in cyberbullying, unless steps are taken to use more public cyber-places (such as a chat room) or to tell others what has happened or to publicly share the material (Smith et al., 2008). The breadth of the potential audience is increased through the use of the internet where there are many more individuals that can observe another individual being cyberbullied. Over time, cyberbullying can reach particularly large audiences in a peer group compared with the small groups that are the usual audience in traditional bullying. For example, when negative comments are posted on a website, the audience for these comments is potentially very large (Smith et al., 2008).

Smith et al. (2008) mention that unlike traditional forms of bullying, where once the victim gets home they are away from the bullying until the next day, cyberbullying is more difficult to escape from. It is difficult to escape from cyberbullying as there is no place to hide from the virtual attack. If the victim does not decide to take cautionary measures such as turning off their computer or blocking the cyberbully, they may continue to receive text messages or emails, or view nasty postings on a website, no matter where they are geographically located (Smith et al., 2008).

Cyberbullying, in contrast to traditional bullying, is more likely to be experienced outside of school than in the school environment (Smith et al., 2008). However the consequences of cyberbullying often cascade back into the school setting, which often affects student learning and results in psychosocial complications (Smith et al., 2008).

As discussed, cyberbullying has particular characteristics that distinguish it from traditional bullying, despite several similarities between them. These differences can be important in considering the impact of cyberbullying, on

both the perpetrator and victim, and in finding effective coping strategies (Kowalski, et al., 2012)

## **2.4 Context of cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying can take place via many different forms of technology, but manifests mainly through the use of the Internet, mobile phones or a combination of both. According to Von Marés and Petermann (2012), the different modes through which individuals decide to cyberbully have also expanded over the years due to related technological advances. Currently individuals can cyberbully another through the use of phone calls, text messages, instant messaging (IM), emails, posting or sending embarrassing photos or video clips or creating 'hate-websites' (Von Marés & Petermann, 2012).

Electronic media have experienced an exceedingly rapid up-take in South Africa, despite limitations in penetration, broadband connectivity speed and low teledensity (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). Pay-as-you-go mobile technology has made telephone and internet accessible to the vast majority of the population who were previously not connected (Von Solms & De Lange, 2011). South Africa has the fourth fastest growing mobile market in the world (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). Recent data shows that nearly 99% of the South African population belong to a mobile network operator; namely Vodacom, MTN, Cell C or Virgin Mobile (Von Solms & De Lange, 2011).

With the convergence between data and voice services and the shift to a Web 2.0 environment, the potential for cyber violence has multiplied exponentially (Von Solms & De Lange, 2011). Cellphones can now be used

as mediums for violence through email platforms, the web, social networking sites and short messaging, as well as more traditional phone calls.

## **2.5 Prevalence of cyberbullying**

The prevalence rates of cyberbullying and cybervictimisation reported in current published studies tend to vary greatly. Patchin and Hinduja (2010a) state that the most important factors upon which variation depends include the type of informant assessed (victims, peers or teachers); the definition of cyberbullying and the instrument used to measure levels of cyberbullying; the age group investigated, the gender of participants and the rate of internet and mobile phone use. Generalised statements about prevalence are therefore difficult to make.

It is evident, however, that, due to the increased use of information and communication technology over the past ten years, cyberbullying in its many forms has become more frequent (Li, 2006; Ortega, et al. 2009). The fact that some studies have found up to one-third or more of learners have experienced cyberbullying seems to suggest that this phenomenon is becoming a part of many children's everyday experience (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Li, 2006; Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012).

Several school surveys conducted in Belgium (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Walrave & Heirman, 2009) suggest that cyberbullying is a common phenomenon in this region. When young people were asked directly whether they have been involved in cyberbullying (during the last three months or in general), the studies showed prevalence rates for victimisation ranging between 11.1% and 34.2% and prevalence rates for perpetration ranging between 18% and 21.2% (Vandebosch, Beirens, D'Haese, Wegge,



Pabian, 2012). A study conducted in the United Kingdom reported that 7-10% of students had been bullied using electronic forms of technology (Smith, et al. 2008), while a Canadian study found the rate of cyberbullying to be 35% (Cassidy et al., 2009).

Considering age trends reported, involvement in cyberbullying as perpetrator or victim seems to increase over the age range from 10 to 16 years (Smith et al., 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), possibly reflecting the increased use of information and communication technology by adolescents. Cyberbullying seems to be more prevalent during the compulsory school years—specifically with school-going children within the range of 11 to 16 years of age—than it is during the university going years (18 years and older) when adolescents focus more on realising their academic goals (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

With regard to gender differences and cyberbullying, researchers have reported contradictory results. Some studies have found no gender differences (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004); others have reported females to be victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying more often than males (Smith et al, 2008; Wolak et al., 2007); while still other studies have found that males to be more involved in both cyberbullying and cybervictimisation than females (Li, 2006).

Adolescents involved in a study conducted by Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) in conjunction with the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), who conducted a study on cyberviolence among South African youth, were asked whether they had experienced any form of cyber aggression, either within the home environment or school environment, at any

time and within the past 12 months. Almost half (46.8%) of the adolescents reported experiencing some form of cyber aggression, including harassment via telephone (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). If verbal telephone harassment and aggression is excluded, 37% of young people reported being victims of cyberaggression. One in three (31.0%) young people interviewed had experienced some form of cyber aggression while at school, while more than two out of five (42.9%) had experienced some form of cyber aggression outside of school (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

According to Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) many adolescents carry their cell phones with them at all times, either at school or at home. It is therefore not surprising that the latter is the medium through which most cyber aggression is reported. In total, a quarter (25.6%) of young people reported that they had experienced some form of bullying or aggression via text messages received on their cell phones in the 12-month period prior to the study, while slightly more (28.0%) had been victimised via phone calls received on their cell phones (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

According to Burton and Mutongwizo (2009), texting and voice messaging are arguably the most pervasive, invasive and persistent forms of cyberviolence. In order to be victimised via email an individual has to be online on a computer (PC/laptop) or cell phone, on the web or in a chat room. However, as long as their cell phone is on, an individual is vulnerable to receiving an aggressive or harmful text message or phone call. Text messaging is therefore one of the most difficult forms of cyberbullying to escape (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

## 2.6 Causes of cyberbullying

In some ways the causes of cyberbullying are similar to traditional bullying. An integrated overview of the causes of traditional bullying is given below as a basis for a better understanding of the causes of cyberbullying. Explanatory models that have been proposed regarding traditional bullying behaviours, including the highly supported dominance theory (Olweus, 1993, 1994, 1995; Pelligrini 2002), may also apply to Internet bullying. According to the dominance theory, a need for dominance and control is significantly related to bullying behaviours in general (Olweus, 1994).

Olweus (1994) described the typical bully as having an aggressive reaction pattern combined, in the case of males, with physical strength. However, the author points out that dominance does not always involve physical strength; dominance or leadership status may also be established through verbal abuse, threats, and other intimidating behaviours (such as, for example, sexually aversive behaviours) that are motivated by the individual's need for power, control and social status. Thus, for some individuals, the Internet may simply be another avenue that enables them to dominate others.

In addition, because cyberbullying does not require physical strength, it may be a way for individuals who would not normally engage in physically aggressive behaviours to gain power and control over others. Similar to traditional bullying, cyberbullying may be a way in which individuals seek to secure higher social status, especially if the cyberbullying is observed by their peers (Pelligrini, 2002).

The relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem may be similar to that of traditional bullying and self-esteem. Research on traditional bullying

which has been conducted in countries such as Canada and Australia, with mainly primary school children, has found that certain aspects of self-esteem such as high defensive egotism—that is, grandiose, self-enhancing attitude and defensiveness in response to criticism—are significantly related to aggressive behaviour (Machek, 2004; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999).

The ability to remain anonymous and the lack of direct consequences of communications may lead to reduced inhibitions and social constraints, making the Internet 'fertile territory' for engaging in hostile and malicious behaviours (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003). Researchers have suggested that the anonymity that is available with cyberbullying is related to de-individuation, which may result in a weakened ability to regulate emotions and behaviours among perpetrators (McKenna & Bargh, 2000).

McKenna and Bargh (2000) state that de-individuation—the individual's loss of a sense of self and the essence of that which makes the individual human—may also increase the tendency to react to situations without thinking through the potential consequences of behaviours and reduce their awareness and concern of how their behaviours may be affecting others. De-individuation may lead to impulsivity, disinhibition and a lack of empathy, which may increase the tendency to bully others in cyberspace. In a study by Leishman (2005) one participant explained that, via the Internet, an individual does not have to see the face of their victim, and they do not have to look in their eyes and see their hurt.

## **2.7 Psychosocial consequences of cyberbullying**

To illustrate the psychosocial consequences of cyberbullying, a short case study endorsed by Von Marés and Petermann (2012) regarding a grade 5 pupil is presented which demonstrates how cyberbullying affected her. The case study concerns Deborah, who was a friendly 5<sup>th</sup> grader who, even though she was a bit shy at times, still got along well with her fellow classmates. However, after Deborah remained out of school with an alarmingly high number of sick days, her teacher decided to refer her to the school psychologist. Deborah presented with intense stomach aches that were worst in the morning. This eventually led to her avoiding school or, if she was already at school, would ensure that her mother would have to come to pick her up and take her home. During Deborah's sessions with the psychologist it became evident that she feared being ostracized, reflecting that at that time she had nobody to play with during break times. Deborah was also struggling with the fact that someone took on her identity in a popular social networking site, which catered mainly for students. This person would post offensive messages in her name to other pupils from her class. Even though this experience was terminated through interventions from Deborah's school and the police, it still left a psychological scar on Deborah, which she never fully recovered from. She feared that this could happen again and could not trust any of her classmates again (Von Marés & Petermann, 2012).

This case study illustrates the fact that learners who are bullied by their peers are at higher risk of internalising problems (Perren et al., 2010). One of the most devastating outcomes of cyberbullying victimisation is suicide. It is

reported that, in the US a number of adolescents have committed suicide related to cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a).

Researchers have begun to investigate risk factors for engagement in and victimisation by cyberbullying. According to the internet-enhanced self-disclosure hypothesis developed by Valkenburg and Peter (2009), computer-mediated and online communication result in more and more intimate self-disclosure. On the one hand, this might have the positive effect of enhancing the relationship quality of existing friendships, which can in turn promote well-being. On the other hand, learners who provide very personal information about themselves become more vulnerable to cyberbullying as this information can be used against them and projected to a large audience (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

Support for the self-disclosure hypothesis can be deduced from the findings of a study by Erdur-Baker (2010), which evaluated the amount of personal information high school learners provided about themselves on the internet. Additionally, in a study by Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2009) examining the relationship between self-disclosure on the Internet and the risk of being cyberbullied, it was found that many cybervictims exhibit frequent and risky Internet usage.

According to Perren et al. (2010) peer problems during childhood and adolescence can often result in disruptions to healthy functioning, both for those who engage in disruptive behaviours and those who are victimised. Thus if an individual is being cyberbullied during adolescence, it could adversely affect their functioning; not only during this phase of their life but may also carry further into their future development.

Katzer, Fetchenhauer, and Belschak (2009) discovered a strong relationship between traditional victimisation in school and cybervictimisation, with school victims being seen significantly more often among victims of chat room bullying. Kowalski, et al. (2012) support the latter finding by concluding that the risk of being involved in cyberbullying is greater if youth are frequently involved in traditional bullying at school.

According to Ang, Tan, and TalibMansor (2010), the best predictor for cyberbullying was found to be cybervictimisation and vice versa: learners involved as bullies have a high risk of being victimised, while cybervictims often become cyberbullies. The direction of this influence is unclear. Learners whose normative beliefs approve of overt and relational aggression are more likely to be aggressive online (Ang et al., 2010; Werner, Bumpus, & Rock, 2010) and those involved in cyberbullying on a regular basis show less empathetic responsiveness (Steffgen, Konig, Pfetsch, & Melzer, 2011) and perspective taking. Patchin and Hinduja (2011) found evidence that students experiencing stressful life events and the negative emotions that these evoke were more likely to participate in bullying and cyberbullying.

As evidenced in research on risk factors for traditional bullying, most of the relationships seem to be bidirectional in nature, with risk factors and bullying or victimisation influencing and aggravating each other reciprocally (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Von Mare's & Petermann, 2010).

It has been hypothesised that learners who are victims of cyberbullying could have more detrimental outcomes than victims of traditional bullying, possibly due to the unique aspects associated with cyberbullying (Campbell, Cross, Spears & Slee, 2010; Spears, et al., 2008; 2009). Cross et al. (2009) identify

aspects of cyberbullying such as the 24/7 nature; the anonymity and the broader audience available; as well as the power that written and visual electronic media can have as features that make cyberbullying such a dangerous form of bullying. In a recent study of high school learners in the UK on the relationship between cybervictimisation and depression, the evidence suggested that cybervictims do exhibit more symptoms of depression than victims of traditional bullying (Perren et al., 2010; Raskauskas, 2010).

The existing literature on cyberbullying suggests that the consequences of cyberbullying may be similar to traditional bullying. Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, correlates significantly with physical and psychological problems. An Australian-based bullying study conducted by Perren et al. (2010) which focused on primary school learners demonstrated that cyber-victimisation is associated with higher levels of stress symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping, children getting sick more often, absenteeism, and subsequently poor grades. Adolescent victims of cyber-bullying not only reported higher depressive symptoms but also manifested other types of problematic behaviour, including increased alcohol consumption, a tendency to smoke and poor school grades (Perren et al. 2010).

Cross-sectional studies which looked at the link between traditional bullying and depression among New Zealand adolescents, showed that aggressors are also at increased risk for school problems, assaultive behaviours, and substance use. These findings suggest that cyber-victimisation, like traditional bullying victimisation, increases the risk of both internalising and externalising problems (Raskauskas, 2010).

The impact and consequences of different forms of cyberbullying vary and



are moderated by factors such as social acceptance, as highlighted in a study exploring short-term longitudinal relationships between children's peer bullying experiences and their self-perceptions (Boulton, Smith, & Cowie, (2010). Another factor influencing the impact that cyberbullying has on individuals is social integration, as illustrated in the investigation by Jones, Manstead and Livingstone (2011) which considered young children's group processes and their responses to bullying over mobile phones. According to Parris, Varjas, Meyers and Cutts (2011), who conducted a study on the perceptions of high school students regarding methods of coping with cyberbullying, the effectiveness of coping strategies employed emerged as a determinant of the impact that cyberbullying has on an individual. Another factor that influences the impact that cyberbullying has on an individual is self-blaming attributions (Bauman 2010). In this instance, the individual attributes the cause of some negative outcome to factors wholly internal to themselves. Thus those who experience cyberbullying might start blaming themselves for being cyberbullied. In general, attribution is the process of inferring the causes of events or behaviours. Attribution is something an individual does every day, without any awareness of the underlying processes and biases that lead to their inferences. There are different types of attributions other than just self-blaming attributions. The first kind is Interpersonal Attribution. This occurs when telling a story to another individual, the story is narrated in a manner that places the individual in the best possible light. The second type of attribution described is Predictive Attribution. This happens when an individual attributes occurrences in ways that allow them to make future predictions. For example, if an individual's car is vandalized, they might attribute the crime to

the fact that they parked in a particular parking garage and as a result, will avoid that parking garage to avoid further vandalism. The third type of attribution is Explanatory Attribution. An individual uses explanatory attributions to help them make sense of the world around them. Some individuals have an optimistic explanatory style, while others tend to be more pessimistic. Individuals with an optimistic style attribute positive events to stable, internal and global causes, and negative events to unstable, external and specific causes. In contrast, individuals with a pessimistic style attribute negative events to internal, stable and global causes and positive events to external, stable and specific causes (Bauman, 2010).

Overall, the psychosocial correlates of cyberbullying seem to be similar to those identified in studies on the impact of traditional bullying on learners. Even though cyberbullying may, for the most part, not last as long as traditional bullying, its damaging effects have been shown to be comparable, if not more severe (Kowalski et al., 2012). Researchers hypothesise that the increased negative effects of cyberbullying are due to the fact that cyberbullying incidents can occur anywhere and at any time; can potentially be witnessed by an anonymous and limitless audience; and can theoretically remain in cyberspace permanently, thereby creating repeated and on-going victimisation (Kowalski et al., 2012, Smith et al., 2008). Additionally, cyberbullies can easily conceal their identity, which results in heightening the power imbalance and adding to the impact that the negative acts have on their targets. Overall, cyberbullying seems much too complex to be understood as being a conventional form of bullying transferred to manifesting behind screens via e-technologies (Spears et al., 2009).

In a recent Austrian study by Strohmeier, Stefanek, Gradinger and Spiel (2008) on cyberbullying and cybervictimisation, of a sample of 761 adolescents, the combined victim group (cyber and traditional victimisation) showed the highest level of internalising problems and the most maladjusted pattern. Similarly, a study conducted by Perren et al. (2010) on bullying in school and cyberspace found that cybervictimisation contributed over and above traditional victimisation to adolescents' social anxiety. In a comparison between the depressive symptoms in Swiss and Australian adolescents, cybervictimisation is also associated with a range of negative emotions. Results suggest that, in comparison with traditional bullying forms, cyberbullying evoked stronger negative feelings, fear and a clear sense of helplessness. Evidence suggests, therefore, that being a victim of cyberbullying might be more strongly associated with depressive symptoms than traditional bullying victimisation (Perren et al., 2010).

In addition to fear and helplessness, cyberbullying has been reported to evoke feelings of being vulnerable and alone, reduced self-worth and to seriously disrupt relationships (Bauman, 2010; Boulton et al., 2010; Spears et al., 2009). Cybervictims have been shown to experience more emotional and peer-problems, more psychosomatic complaints (headaches, abdominal pain), and more sleeping difficulties. Being a cyberbully has been associated with more hyperactive behaviour and conduct problems, and less prosocial peer group behaviour (Sourander, Brunstein-Klomek, Ikonen, Lindroos, Luntamo & Koskelainen, 2010). As Monks et al. (2012) have found, children in primary school view cyberbullying negatively and are aware that victims' emotions can be impacted negatively.

Youth experiencing cyberbullying, as either offender or victim, feel less safe at school and uncared for by teachers (Sourander et al., 2010), have lower self-esteem, more suicidal thoughts, and are more likely to attempt suicide than those not involved in cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a; 2010b). More psychosomatic and psychiatric problems were discovered among those who were both cyberbullies and cybervictims (Sourander et al., 2010).

However, notwithstanding the very clear evidence of the psychological and emotional impact of cyberbullying on individuals and their families, the effects can also be physical. Cyberbullying can lead to learners not attending at or changing school, moving towns and breaking-up relationships (Spears et al., 2009).

## **2.8 Gender roles and race in cyberbullying**

In a study by Li (2006) junior high school males were found to be more involved in cyberbullying as both bullies and victims than females, and females were more likely to inform adults of cyberbullying incidents than males. In contrast, some studies have noted that girls are both more susceptible to, and more likely to perpetrate, various forms of cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2008). One explanation for these contradictory findings is that males and females may use different cyberbullying strategies, with females preferring chats and instant messaging and males making online threats and creating 'hate websites' (Keith & Martin, 2005, p. 124).

Rejecting the notion of gender differences in cyberbullying activities, Gross (2004), concluded that adolescent online activities are quite similar for both males and females. Other studies have found that both males and females

are equally engaged in cyberbullying or victimisation (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011; Strohmeier et al., 2008).

While there is contradictory evidence in international literature regarding differences in vulnerability to cyberbullying by gender, Smith et al. (2008) found that females were more likely to be both cyberbullies and cybervictims than males. South Africa seems to follow this trend, especially in terms of susceptibility, with more girls reporting experiences of cybervictimisation over a 12-month period prior to the study than boys (33.1% compared to 29.3%) (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

Based on the current findings regarding gender differences in cyberbullying and cybervictimisation the results are unclear, and racial/ethnic differences remain essentially unexamined. In the South African context, however, initial analysis suggests that gender is not a reliable predictor of cyberviolence (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

In a study of adolescent cyberbullying it was found that race appears to be more significant both at home and in the school environment, with black children and youth reporting the highest incidence of cyber aggression, followed by white youths, coloured youths and, finally, Indian/Asian youths who report the lowest incidence. Almost half (49.1%) of the black youths interviewed reported incidents of cyberaggression at home and two out of five (39%) at school, while among the Indian/Asian sample one in five (20.5%) reported incidents of cyber aggression at home, and just over one in ten (12.6%) reported experiencing such incidents at school (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009).

## 2.9 Understanding the cybervictim

Individuals who bully others online are often victims of online bullying as well. Patchin and Hinduja's (2010a) study found that among their sample of participants under 18 years of age ( $N = 384$ ), 11% had bullied others online, 29% were victims of online bullying, and 75% of the online bullies were also victims.

The cyberbullied victims/targets fall into two identifiable at-risk groups (Willard, 2007). The first group is *the wannabe crowd* who try hard to fit in with the group of peers and intentionally involve themselves in Internet communication. Second, *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT)* learners, who are often the target of traditional bullying as well, are generally targeted for personal characteristics or through sexual forms of harassment (Shariff, 2008). A study by Finn (2004) of online harassment at a university campus showed that LGBT individuals are twice as likely to experience cyberstalking or e-mail harassment from a stranger as were students who identified themselves as heterosexual.

According to Shariff (2008) in a UK exploration of the issues and solutions to cyberbullying for the school, the classroom, and the home, he found that about 40% of learners who use social networking sites (SNS) have been cyberbullied compared to 22% of learners who do not use SNS. It is also possible that the victimised students in traditional bullying can be cyberbullies. Watanabe (2008), in a Japanese study on cyberbullying among adolescents, notes that the victims are 17 times more likely to be bullies than bullies to be victims.

## 2.10 Understanding the cyberbully

While it is recognised that there are serious potential psychological consequences for learners who are victims of cyberbullying, including depression, anxiety, lower self-esteem and social difficulties, there has been little research focus on the mental health of learners who cyberbully. It is known that students who traditionally bully report they feel indifferent to their victims, showing a lack of empathy and that they themselves are at increased risk for psychosocial maladjustment (Campbell, Slee, Spears, Butler & Kift, 2013).

There is some speculation that learners who cyberbully are likely to feel more powerful than traditional bullies because of the greater anonymity afforded to them (Steffgen et al., 2011). The lack of immediate feedback from the victim could lead to even more intrusive cyberbullying (Campbell, Slee, Spears, Butler & Kift, 2013).

As many cyberbullies also bully in traditional ways (Cross et al., 2009), the lack of empathy evident in traditional bullying is likely to be magnified by the use of technology to bully others. This has led to the proposition that cyberbullies may experience even less empathy for their victims than traditional bullies or, conversely, that cyberbullying could attract students who exhibit low trait empathy (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Preliminary studies seem to bear this out, with a negative relationship being found between empathy and cyberbullies, even more so than for traditional bullies (Ang & Goh, 2010; (Steffgen et al., 2011)).

Research suggests that there is likely to be greater negative psychosocial and emotional outcomes for those learners who cyberbully than for those who

engage in traditional bullying (Ang & Goh, 2010). Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) reported that 39% of learners who harassed others online dropped out of school, 37% showed delinquent behaviour, 32% chronic substance abuse and 16% were severely depressed.

### **2.11 Cyberbullying and self-esteem**

Adolescence is a period in which there are many dramatic changes, as a result of which a young person's perception of the world is altered (Erikson, 1985). Adams and Berzonsky (2006) states there are many 'ups and downs' during this period. Harter (1998) adds that one of the most important concepts during adolescence is that of self-esteem. Interaction with other people is important for an adolescent and plays a vital role in the development of self-esteem, for the adolescent this interaction can occur over the Internet as well (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a; 2010b). Self-esteem refers to a developed attitude about one's personality (Kaya & Sackes, 2004) and is an important factor in directing behaviour in the various aspects of life (Hamarta, 2004). Self-esteem refers to an "individual's evaluations of their own self-worth, that is, the extent to which they view themselves as good, competent and decent" (Aronson, Wilson, Akert & Fehr, 2001, p. 19).

Social support is an important factor in the formation of self-esteem during adolescence (Erikson, 1985). Relationships between parents and peers with the adolescent supports the development of their self-esteem. Negative relationships, such as a cyberbully/cybervictim relationship can also hinder the development of the adolescents' self-esteem (Hoffman, Levy-Shiff & Ushpiz, 1988; Kulaksizoglu, 2001). According to Coopersmith (1967), the attention an individual receives from other people and the degree of



acceptance and respect he or she feels play a role in self-esteem development.

With regard to self-esteem and bullying, the literature has found that victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Taking the abovementioned relationship between bullying and self-esteem into account, Patchin and Hinduja (2011) examined the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem. Based on this research conducted by Patchin and Hinduja (2011), cyberbullying was found to be correlated with lower self-esteem. Furthermore in the study by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) experience with cyberbullying, both as a victim and as an offender, was associated with significantly lower levels of self-esteem. Through its exclusive focus on the relationship between self-esteem and cyberbullying, the study by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) provided additional evidence that electronic forms of adolescent aggression play a significant role in the development and level of adolescents' self-esteem.

### **2.12 Psychoeducation and cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying at school remains a major problem and one that is urgently in need of a solution. Cyberbullying is responsible for much unhappiness, and many children do not achieve their potential because of it. A child can be made so unhappy by bullying that they are unable to enjoy what should be some of the happiest years of their lives and instead spend their childhood or adolescence in an anxious and depressed state (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010b). Children's experiences in school are fundamental to their successful transition into adulthood. In school, children negotiate and renegotiate their relationships, self-image and independence. They cultivate interpersonal

skills, discover and refine strengths and struggle with vulnerabilities. As such, schools have an obligation to provide a safe environment for children to develop academically, relationally, emotionally and behaviourally (Wilson, 2004). The current research study therefore aimed to explore and describe the possible effects that cyberbullying have on victims' self-esteem during adolescence.

This study is founded on the belief that the South African community still has a way to go before interventions to resolve cyberbullying will take place on a national level. It is felt that increasing awareness of the problem, through extensive research into the prevalence and extent of cyberbullying in local schools, may encourage school staff members, mental health professionals and the public at large to take a stand against the negative behaviours associated with cyberbullying. A comprehensive intervention plan that involves all students, parents and school staff is required in order to ensure that all students can learn in a safe and fear-free environment. Cyberbullying at school appears to affect a multitude of individuals in diverse ways.

The current study will therefore explore cyberbullying behaviour in order to understand the role that cyberbullying plays in the self-esteem of adolescents. The study will also consider approaches to the management of cyberbullying to inform future research opportunities. One promising avenue for the management of cyberbullying seems to be the provision of opportunities for students to speak about cyberbullying and to allow them to be part of the solution (Cassidy et al., 2009). One possible method of achieving this, called the Quality Circle approach, has been developed from work in schools by Paul et al. (2012). Using the Quality Circle approach, the characteristics of

bullying and cyberbullying alter over time. It therefore seems imperative that intervention programmes should be able to adapt to the varying nature of cyberbullying behaviour in order to remain effective.

Adults need to become sensitive to psychosocial risk factors and symptoms associated with cyberbullying in order to identify possible perpetrators and victims and intervene successfully (Kowalski et al., 2012; Sourander et al., 2010). With third generation, internet-ready phones readily available to an increasing percentage of learners, this seems a growing challenge. The boundaries between students' school and private life are disappearing through the use of communication technologies, with conflicts occurring at school, which then continue online. For school leadership and communities in general, this implies that prevention and intervention efforts need to be supported by more comprehensive strategies (Spears et al., 2009).

From the extensive research on bullying, there is a fairly good overview of what constitutes effective bullying prevention and intervention measures. These require on-going, systematic efforts at individual, school, and community levels. However, when it comes to cyberbullying, more research is needed into which components of anti-bullying programmes constitute effective preventive and intervention measures.

### **2.13 Conclusion**

This chapter examined adolescents' experiences with cyberbullying. The chapter provided an overview of what cyberbullying is, and the difference between cyberbullying and traditional 'offline' bullying. An account was given of the prevalence of cyberbullying as well as the psychosocial effects thereof.

The role that gender plays in cyberbullying was also discussed. The causes of cyberbullying and information on aspects of the cybervictim as well as the cyberbully were also presented.

As discussed briefly in this chapter, previous research on traditional bullying among adolescents has found a relatively consistent link between victimisation and lower self-esteem (Perren et al., 2010). Research has also been conducted on the link between being a victim of cyberbullying and lower self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a). Thus with the abovementioned information at hand the following chapter will focus on adolescents' self-esteem.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Self-Esteem**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The construct of self-esteem was first described by William James (1890) to capture the sense of the positive self-regard that develops when individuals consistently meet or exceed the important goals in their lives. More than a century later, the definition of self-esteem that was offered by James continues to be relevant as self-esteem is generally considered to be the evaluative aspect of self-knowledge that reflects the extent to which people like themselves and believe they are competent (Campbell et al., 1996). Self-esteem is considered to be a relatively enduring characteristic that possesses both motivational and cognitive components (Kernis, 2003).

Individuals tend to show a desire for high levels of self-esteem and engage in a variety of strategies to maintain or enhance their feelings of self-worth. High self-esteem refers to a highly favourable view of the self, whereas low self-esteem refers to evaluations of the self that are either uncertain or outright negative (Campbell et al., 1996). Self-esteem is not necessarily accurate or inaccurate. Rather, high levels of self-esteem may be commensurate with an individual's attributes and accomplishments or the feelings of self-worth may have little to do with any sort of objective appraisal of the individual. It is important to recognise that self-esteem reflects perception rather than reality (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

Fluctuations in self-esteem often coincide with major successes and failures in life. Subjective experience creates the impression that self-esteem rises when an individual wins a contest, garners an award, solves a problem,

or gains acceptance to a social group, and that it falls with corresponding failures. This pervasive correlation may well strengthen the impression that an individual's level of self-esteem is not just the outcome, but also the cause, of life's major successes and failures (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). It is difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to remain indifferent to information that bears on their own self-esteem, such as being told that they are incompetent, attractive, untrustworthy, or lovable. Increases and decreases in self-esteem generally bring strong emotional reactions.

Self-esteem continues to be one of the most commonly researched concepts in social psychology (Baumeister, 1993; Mruk, 1995). Generally conceptualised as a part of the self-concept, to some self-esteem is one of the most important parts of the self-concept. Indeed, for a period of time, so much attention was given to self-esteem that it seemed to be synonymous with self-concept in the literature on the self (Rosenberg, 1990).

The focus on self-esteem has largely been due to the association of high self-esteem with a number of positive outcomes for the individual and for society as a whole (Baumeister, 1993). It is considered that self-esteem is important not only for the development of children but also for the normal functioning adult (Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Moreover, the belief is widespread that raising an individual's self-esteem (especially that of a child or adolescent) would be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole.

Self-esteem can be examined from either a unidimensional or multidimensional theoretical perspective. The unidimensional perspective of self-esteem conceptualizes this construct in singular, global terms, whereas

the multidimensional perspective puts forward that self-esteem is both hierarchical and based on multiple, distinct qualities (Marsh, Craven & Martin, 2006). According to Marsh et al. (2006) the unidimensional perspective of self-esteem has received much criticism, as it has been found to ignore the specific as well as global aspects of the self-concept, as well as the idea that global self-concept is somewhat differentiated from other, more specific features of self-concept. The multidimensional perspective of self-esteem has, however, received increasing recognition as to its value, due to the fact that it emphasises that there are different types of self-esteem within each individual (Marsh et al., 2006).

An individual's sense of their own self-worth is also bound up in the quality of their relationships with others. Signs of rejection can threaten self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). At the same time, self-esteem can influence an individual's self-perceptions, perceptions of others and metaperceptions. Individuals with low self-esteem have an overall history of feeling rejected in their relationships with others, whereas high self-esteem individuals have a history of feeling accepted by others (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

### **3.2 Defining self-esteem**

Self-esteem refers most generally to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self (Rosenberg, 1990). It is composed of two distinct dimensions, namely, competence and worth. The competence dimension (efficacy-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which people see themselves as capable and efficacious. The worth dimension (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which individuals feel they are persons of value. Self-esteem is defined by how much value people place on themselves. It is the evaluative

component of self-knowledge (Cast & Burke, 2002). Self-esteem refers to an “individual’s evaluations of their own self-worth, that is, the extent to which they view themselves as good, competent and decent” (Aronson et al., 2001).

Rosenberg (1990) defined self-esteem as a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self. Moreover, Leary and Baumeister (2000) consider self-esteem to be an internal representation of social acceptance and rejection and a psychological gauge monitoring the degree to which a person is included versus excluded by others. These two conceptualisations underscore the fact that self-esteem is a perception, a belief in one’s personal value, and is affected by one’s participation in the social world where there are often interpersonal conflicts that could lead to behaviour such as bullying.

Sadock and Sadock (2007) conclude that self-esteem is a measure of one’s sense of worth based on perceived success and achievements, as well as a perception of how much one is valued by peers, family members, teachers and society in general. The most important correlates of positive self-esteem are one’s perception of positive physical appearance and high value to peers and family. Secondary features of self-esteem relate to academic achievement, athletic abilities and special talents (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

Adolescent self-esteem is mediated, to a significant degree, by positive feedback from a peer group and family members. To this end, adolescents often seek out a peer group that offers acceptance, regardless of negative behaviours associated with that group (Aronson et al., 2001).

Self-esteem is conceptualized as an important component of the self- concept (Cast & Burke, 2002). According to Santrock (2004), high self-esteem and



positive self-concept are important aspects of a child's well-being. He asserts that self-esteem refers to one's global evaluations of the self, such as the view of oneself as a 'good person'. Battle (2014) states that "Self-esteem refers to the perception the individual possesses of his or her worth" (p.13). It is therefore a combination of an individual's feelings, hopes, fears thoughts and views of who and what they are, what they have been and might still become (Battle, 2014). In contrast, self-concept refers to domain-specific evaluations of the self, which may, for example, be based on an individual's academic ability, athletic skills or appearance (Santrock, 2004).

When considering self-esteem in its totality, it is beneficial to recognise the normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan in order to efficiently assess deviations from this. Therefore the following section will discuss the normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan of an individual, focusing on the different developmental stages in an individual's life.

### **3.3 Normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan**

As an individual goes through life, their self-esteem inevitably waxes and wanes. These fluctuations in self-esteem reflect changes in one's social environment as well as maturational changes, such as puberty and cognitive declines in old age. When the changes are experienced by most individuals at about the same age and when the changes influence individuals in a similar manner, they will produce normative shifts in self-esteem across developmental periods (Trzesniewski, Robins, Roberts, & Caspi, 2004). Although the main focus of this research study is the self-esteem of adolescents, it is appropriate to provide an overview of the normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan.

### **3.3.1 Self-esteem in childhood**

Young children have relatively high self-esteem, which gradually declines over the course of childhood. Researchers have speculated that children have high self-esteem because their self-views are unrealistically positive (Trzesniewski, Robins, Roberts, & Caspi, 2004).

As children develop cognitively, they begin to base their self-evaluations on external feedback and social comparisons, and thus form a more balanced and accurate appraisal of their academic competence, social skills, attractiveness, and other personal characteristics (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). For example, as children move from preschool to elementary school they receive more negative feedback from teachers, parents, and peers, and their self-evaluations correspondingly become more negative.

### **3.3.2 Self-esteem in adolescence**

Adolescence is a time when identity development is particularly important (Rosenberg, 1990). During this period, the process of identity formation is largely dependent upon cues from the social environment (such as, societal stereotypes) (Erikson, 1985). Youth therefore tend to seek behaviours and situations that help them value themselves positively and to avoid those that make them feel bad about who they are (Trzesniewski et al., 2004). Overall, this ties into a child's perceptions and acceptance of his or her changing self and plays a critical role in directing his or her personal and even professional growth trajectory (Taylor et al., 2006).

Research suggests that experience with bullying has a negative effect on adolescent development (Foster et al., 2003). One such relationship that has garnered attention is the effect of bullying on self-esteem (Taylor et al., 2006).

Self-esteem continues to decline during adolescence (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Researchers have attributed the adolescent decline in self-esteem to body image and other problems associated with puberty (Trzesniewski et al., 2004). An individual's emerging capacity to think abstractly about the self and their future, and therefore to acknowledge missed opportunities and failed expectations, contributes to the decline in self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The transition from primary school to the more academically challenging and socially complex context of high school is another factor that contributes to the decline in self-esteem during adolescence (Robins, Tracy, Trzesniewski, Potter & Gosling, 2001).

### **3.3.3 Self-esteem in adulthood**

Self-esteem increases gradually throughout adulthood, peaking sometime around the late 60s. Over the course of adulthood, individuals increasingly occupy positions of power and status, which might promote feelings of self-worth. Many lifespan theorists have suggested that midlife is characterised by peaks in achievement, mastery, and control over the self and the environment (Erikson, 1985). Consistent with these theoretical speculations, in-personality changes that occur during adulthood tend to reflect increasing levels of maturity and adjustment, as indicated by higher levels of emotional stability and conscientious behaviour (Trzesniewski et al., 2004).

### **3.3.4 Self-esteem in old age**

Self-esteem declines in old age. The few studies of self-esteem in old age suggest that self-esteem begins to drop at around the age of 70. This decline may be due to the dramatic confluence of changes that occur in old age, including changes in roles (such as, retirement), relationships (such as the

loss of a spouse), and physical functioning (such as health problems), as well as a drop in socioeconomic status. The old-age decline may also reflect a shift toward a more modest, humble, and balanced view of the self in old age (Erikson, 1985).

Older individuals may maintain a deep-seated sense of their own worth, but their self-esteem scores drop because they are increasingly willing to acknowledge their faults and limitations and they have a diminished need to present themselves in a positive light to others. Consistent with this interpretation, narcissism tends to decline with age (Foster et al., 2003).

### **3.3.5 Decreasing self-esteem from childhood to adolescence**

It appears that average levels of self-esteem decline during the transition from childhood to adolescence (Foster et al., 2003). However, this finding is difficult to interpret because there are debates about whether global self-esteem can be validly assessed in younger children, due to their cognitive limitations (Harter, 1998; Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 1991; Marsh, Ellis, & Craven, 2002; Trzesniewski, Kinal, & Donnellan, 2010).

Harter (1998) argues that the changes in self-esteem from childhood to adolescence stem from underlying cognitive changes that cause self-evaluations to be based more strongly on external criteria (such as, academic performance) and tied more closely to social comparison processes (Trzesniewski, Kinal, & Donnellan, 2010). From this perspective, it is possible that adolescents do not actually feel worse about themselves than children do, but simply change the way they formulate their global self-views, and therefore the way they respond to items on a self-esteem scale. Resolving debates about the validity of self-esteem measures with children and

generally establishing longitudinal measurement invariance for common assessments of self-esteem (Robins, Tracy, Trzesnieski, Potter & Gosling, 2001) is an important area for future research.

### **3.3.6 Increasing self-esteem from adolescence to adulthood**

Although adolescence may not be a time of storm and stress, as it has often been characterised in some accounts (Marsh, Ellis, & Craven, 2002), it might still be a relatively difficult period in an individual's life (Foster et al., 2003). For much of adolescence, individuals are reproductively and cognitively mature, but they are given fairly limited opportunities to express their maturity. Adolescents do not have clearly defined roles in society. This maturity gap was identified by Harter (1998) as an explanation for why many youths engage in transitory antisocial behaviour during adolescence. The elimination of the maturity gap during adulthood may facilitate increases in self-esteem because individuals are able to select environments in accordance with their individual attributes and gradually assume meaningful roles. This process may end up promoting psychological health and maturity, as illustrated by the increase in self-esteem.

The general trend for increasing mean levels of self-esteem during the transition to adulthood is broadly consistent with the *maturity principle* of personality development (Foster et al., 2003)— the idea that individuals become more emotionally stable, confident, and capable during adulthood. Marsh, Ellis, and Craven (2002) concluded that “self-esteem matures during the first decade of adulthood” (p. 257) and Gove, Ortega, and Style (1989) noted that “during the productive adult years, when persons are engaged in a full set of instrumental and social roles, their sense of self will reflect the

fullness of this role; repertoire levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem will also be high” (p.1122). Increases in self-esteem that accompany the transition to adulthood might be part of a suite of psychological changes that occur at this time in the life span, related to changes in agency, opportunities, and social roles.

### **3.4 The development of self-esteem**

The literature on self-esteem has been caught in a quagmire of conflicting findings and provides little agreement about the way self-esteem develops (Foster et al., 2003; Trzesniewski et al., 2004). Understanding the trajectory of self-esteem may provide insights into the underlying processes that shape self-esteem development. For example, the fact that self-esteem drops during both adolescence and old age suggests that there might be something common to both periods such as, the confluence of multiple social and physical changes that negatively affect self-esteem (Trzesniewski et al., 2004).

Knowledge about self-esteem development also has implications for the timing of psychosocial interventions. For example, the normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan suggests that interventions should be timed for pre- or early adolescence because by late adolescence much of the drop in self-esteem has already occurred. Moreover, developmental periods during which rank-order stability is relatively low, may be ideal targets of intervention programmes because self-esteem may be particularly malleable during these times of relative upheaval in the self-concept (Foster et al., 2003).

### 3.5 The six pillars of self-esteem

The crucial importance of self-esteem is emphasized by Branden (1995) who states:

apart from disturbance whose roots are biological, I cannot think of a single psychological problem (from anxiety and depression, to underachievement at school or at work, to fear of intimacy, happiness, or success, to alcohol or drug abuse, to spouse battering or child molestation, to co-dependency and sexual disorders, to passivity and chronic aimlessness, to suicide and crimes of violence) that is not traceable, at least in part, to the problem of deficient self-esteem. Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves (p.13).

It is also generally agreed that the foundations of self-esteem are laid in early life through interactions with one's family. Summarising decades of theory and research on the issue, Mruk (2006) writes that self-esteem depends on "unqualified acceptance of the child early in life, the provision of positive evaluations by significant others, favourable comparisons with others and with an ideal self, and the capacity for effective conduct" (p. 883). Children whose early experiences make them feel loved and accepted for who they are by their parents have a distinct advantage in developing a healthy sense of self-competence and self-liking (Branden, 1985). Basic human warmth, encouragement, respect, and support received from others in these early years are essential to the development and maintenance of self-esteem throughout life (Harter, 1998 Mruk, 2006).

Rosenberg (1990) viewed the self as made up of two elements—‘identity’ which represents cognitive variables, and ‘self-esteem’ representing affective variables. The cognitive variable, or ‘identity,’ involves perceiving and interpreting meaning. He referred to ‘self-esteem’ as the subjective life of the individual, largely an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Like Branden (1995), he determined that self-esteem was made up of two components: 1) feelings of self-worth based primarily on reflected appraisals, and 2) feelings of efficacy, based on observations of the effects of an individual’s own actions. An individual’s social behaviour is thus a product of the two cognitive and affective variables operating together.

According to Branden (1995) the six pillars of self-esteem are: the practice of living consciously; the practice of self-acceptance; the practice of self-responsibility; the practice of self-assertiveness; the practice of living purposefully and the practice of personal integrity. These six pillars will be discussed very briefly in the following sections of the chapter.

### **3.5.1 The practice of living consciously**

The phenomenology of low self-esteem, feeling incompetent and unworthy, and unfit for life inevitably translates into experiencing existence as frightening and futile. This turns life for the individual lacking in self-esteem into a chronic emergency where that person is psychologically in a constant state of danger, surrounded by a feeling of impending disaster and a sense of helplessness. In this way, “[s]uffering from low self-esteem thus involves having one’s consciousness ruled by fear, which sabotages clarity and efficiency” (Branden, 1995, p 136). The main goal for such a person is to keep the anxieties, insecurities, and self-doubts at bay, at whatever cost that may



come. On the other hand, a person with a satisfying degree of self-esteem whose central motivation is not fear, can afford to rejoice in being alive, and view existence as an affair that is more exciting than threatening. As Dillon (1997) notes:

individuals who are blessed with a confident respect for themselves have something that is vital to living a satisfying, meaningful, flourishing life, while those condemned to live without it or with damaged or fragile self-respect are thereby condemned to live constricted, deformed, frustrating lives, cut off from possibilities for self-realisation, self-fulfilment, and happiness (p. 226).

The practice of living consciously is the first pillar of self-esteem (Branden, 1995). Through an individual living consciously and being aware of who they are as a person and their own self-worth they are able to better comprehend what it entails to have a higher self-esteem.

### **3.5.2 The practice of self-acceptance**

Branden (1995) expresses the concept of self-acceptance as follows: "I cannot be truly myself, cannot build self-esteem, if I cannot accept myself" (p. 146).

Branden (1995) continues by stating that:

we can run not only from our dark side but also from our bright side, from anything that threatens to make us stand out or stand alone, or that calls for the awakening of the hero within us, or that asks that we break through to a higher level of consciousness and reach a higher ground of integrity. The greatest crime we

commit against ourselves is not that we may deny or disown our shortcomings but that we deny and disown our greatness, because it frightens us. If a fully realised self-acceptance does not evade the worst within us, neither does it evade the best. (p. 163).

Branden (1985) states that “no significant aspect of our thinking, motivation, feelings, or behaviour is unaffected by our self-evaluation” (p. 6). Epstein (1980) similarly argues, “if one’s level of self-esteem is altered it affects the entire self-system” (p. 106). How one evaluates oneself has a powerful impact on emotional well-being, how one relates to others and the world, what one approaches and avoids, and what one makes out of one’s life. In support of this view, empirical research reveals that a wide range of desirable life outcomes, including mental health and happiness, quality of personal relationships, and success and achievement, are associated with high levels of self-esteem (Leary & MacDonald, 2003; Mruk, 2006; Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

James (1890/1983) defined self-esteem as the ratio of a person’s successes divided by the number of failures in areas of life that matter to the individual with regard to personal identity.

Our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do. It is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator our success: thus, Self-esteem equals Success/Pretensions. Such a fraction may be increased as well by diminishing the denominator as by

increasing the numerator. (p. 296).

The practice of self-acceptance is the second pillar of self-esteem. In the chapter dedicated to this pillar, Branden eloquently and powerfully articulates the need to practice self-acceptance, which might best be summed up as “my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with myself” (Branden, 1995, p. 166). In addition to the acceptance of an individual’s positive attributes, he advises that “as a psychotherapist I see nothing does as much for an individual’s self-esteem as becoming aware of and accepting disowned parts of the self. The first steps of healing and growth are awareness and acceptance; consciousness and integration” (Branden, 1995, p. 171).

### **3.5.3 The practice of self-responsibility**

I am responsible for my choices and actions. To be ‘responsible’ in this context means responsible not as the recipient of moral blame or guilt, but responsible as the chief causal agent in my life and behaviour. (Branden, 1995, p. 183).

The third pillar of self-esteem is the practice of self-responsibility. Responsibility can be broken up into two word-segments: response-able. Thus an individual is responsible when they are ‘able to respond’ to life’s challenges as healthy, autonomous human beings. They should be able to avoid responding as victims, blaming this or that for their challenges or feeling shame or guilt for not living up to another person’s standards, but should rather respond as individuals who own the abilities to manifest their desires as they engage in life (Branden, 1995). Thus taking the abovementioned into account, Rosenberg (1990) asserts that the cognitive modality of self (the cognitive variable, or “identity,” involved in perceiving and interpreting

meaning) consists of multiple identities and responsibilities, having as many identities as distinct roles which the individual holds in networks of social relationships. An individual's cognitive modality of self emerges from social interaction and reflects the character and structure of the society in which these interactions occur, consisting of a highly differentiated, complex system of multiple parts—role relationships, social networks, groups, organisations, institutions, communities all bearing on the nature of the self (Rosenberg, 1990).

#### **3.5.4 The practice of self-assertiveness**

“To practice self-assertiveness is to live authentically, to speak and act from my innermost convictions and feelings—as a way of life, as a rule” (Branden, 1995, p. 206).

The practice of self-assertiveness is the fourth pillar of self-esteem. The essence of this pillar is to be real. The essence of being authentic can be deduced from the viewpoint that ‘authentic’ and ‘author’ come from the same root. Thus for an individual to be authentic they must be the author of their own story.

Branden (2009) found that the basic passion in the selected leaders he studied, was to strive for self-expression and that a leaders' behaviour is a vehicle for self-actualization. With this in mind, Branden (2009) further states that “their desire is to bring ‘who they are’ into the world, into reality, which I speak of as the practice of self-assertiveness” (p. 145).

#### **3.5.5 The practice of living purposefully**

Living purposefully is the fifth pillar of self-esteem. For an individual to live purposefully they use their powers for the attainment of goals they have

selected. These could be, the goal of studying, of raising a family, of earning a living, or of starting a new business. Branden (1995) states that “it is our goals that lead us forward, that call on the exercise of our faculties, that energize our existence” (p. 224). In accordance with Branden’s (1995) argument with regard to the practice of living purposefully, Rosenberg (1990), states that “[t]he self is not only a product of social forces and influences, it is also a form of motivational force in itself” (p. 122). Taking this into account, it is concluded that self-esteem may be the master motive in personal and interpersonal relations as well.

### **3.5.6 Personal integrity**

On describing integrity, Branden (2009) emphasizes that:

Integrity is the integration of ideals, convictions, standards, beliefs and behaviour. When our behaviour is congruent with our professed values and when ideals and practice match up, we have integrity. Observe that before the issue of integrity can even be raised we need principles of behaviour, moral convictions about what is and is not appropriate, as well as judgments about right and wrong action. If we do not yet hold standards, we are on too low a developmental rung even to be accused of hypocrisy. In such a case, our problems are too severe to be described merely as lack of integrity. (p. 236).

The practice of personal integrity is the sixth and final pillar of self-esteem. Without it, the preceding practices ‘disintegrate.’ (Branden, 1995).

### **3.5.7 Self-discipline and self-competence**

According to Branden (1995), it is impossible to cope with life’s

challenges unless one has the capacity for self-discipline. The ability to master self-discipline requires one to seek delayed gratification when striving for one's goals. Self-discipline will facilitate one in projecting consequences into the future, in thinking, planning, and seeing the 'bigger picture' (Branden, 1995).

### **3.5.8 The practice of self-esteem**

"What determines the level of self-esteem is what the individual does" (Branden, 1995, p. 26).

A 'practice' implies a discipline of acting in a certain way over and over again consistently. It is not action by fits and starts, or even an appropriate response to a crisis. Rather, it is a way of operating day by day, in big issues and small, a way of behaving that is also a way of being (Branden, 1995, p. 37).

According to George Leonard's (1992) book, *Mastery*

A practice (as a noun) can be anything you practice on a regular basis as an integral part of your life—not in order to gain something else, but for its own sake... For a master, the rewards gained along the way are fine, but they are not the main reason for the journey. Ultimately, the master and the master's path are one. And if the traveler is fortunate—that is, if the path is complex and profound enough—the destination is two miles farther away for every mile he or she travels. (Leonard, 1992, p. 49)

Thus, taking the above mentioned comments into account, the practice of self-esteem is not necessarily about memorizing inspiring words or having

stimulating conversations. The practice of self-esteem is more about practicing and living out core truths and the journey an individual has to take in life in order to gain a greater understanding of what self-esteem means to a person. Adding to the abovementioned comments, Rosenberg (1990) asserts that individuals have the unique ability to reflect on their perceptions and feelings and then act in response to those feelings. Individuals have distinct feelings of esteem regarding each role or identity they hold; these role specific feelings of self-esteem influence self-esteem in proportion to the relative importance of the specific identity or role. Thus an individual who knows what their role is in society will have a higher self-esteem than those individuals who are unsure of their respective role.

### **3.6 Gender differences and self-esteem**

Overall, males and females follow essentially the same developmental trajectory with regard to self-esteem: For both genders, self-esteem is relatively high in childhood, drops during adolescence, rises gradually throughout adulthood, and then declines in old age. Nonetheless, there are some interesting gender divergences.

Although males and females report similar levels of self-esteem during childhood, a gender gap emerges by adolescence, resulting in adolescent males having higher self-esteem than adolescent females (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; Robins et al., 2001). This gender gap persists throughout adulthood, and then narrows and perhaps even disappears in old age. Researchers have offered numerous explanations for the gender difference, ranging from maturational changes associated with puberty to social-contextual factors associated with the differential treatment of boys and

girls in the classroom or gender differences in body image ideals. However, no generally accepted integrative theoretical model exists (Kling et al., 1999; Robins et al., 2001).

According to Kaya and Sackes (2004) males and females have very different values by which they judge themselves. For females, their family, peer support, reflected appraisals and family relationships are important determinants of self-esteem. Parental support and family connectedness are especially important for females. Feelings of mastery, self-actualization and academic performance are more important for males.

One country where there are extreme differences between how males and females are treated according to their perceived roles is South Africa. This can be linked to gender based violence which is a common occurrence in South Africa. South Africa is reported to have one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world (Adar & Stevens, 2000). Estimates suggest that 137 women per 100,000 are raped every year (*South African Institute of Race Relations*, 2012). Girls under the age of 18 constitute approximately 40% of reported rape and attempted rape cases nationally with 12 to 17 year-olds reflecting the highest rape ratio per 100,000 of the female population (*Human Rights Watch*, 2001). These statistics are supported by a number of studies in South Africa, which indicate that adolescent girls experience a high rate of forced sex, ranging from 39% (Centre for AIDS Research, Development and Evaluation (CADRE), 2003) to 66% (Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah, & Jordaan, 2001). In a South African study by Gitau, Micklesfield, Pettifor and Norris (2014), factors including gender based violence were found to play a significant role in females' development of self-esteem. In this study it showed



that females often have problems with self-esteem and that they consistently underestimate their own ability. When asked how they think they would do on different tasks, whether the tasks are new or ones encountered before, they give lower estimates than males do, and in general tend to underestimate their actual performance. The study also highlighted the complexities governing adolescent females' perceptions of body image, self-esteem, and eating attitudes in a multi-ethnic, highly transitioning, urban South African environment. It appears that many of these differences may still be due to cultural demands and preferences being placed upon adolescent girls (Gitau et al., 2014).

### **3.7 Personality and self-esteem**

Researchers interested in individual differences in personality have generally relied on the five-factor model (FFM) as a framework for organising the central constructs. The first of the five constructs is openness to experience.

Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety an individual has. It is also described as the extent to which an individual is imaginative or independent, and depicts a personal preference for a variety of activities over a strict routine. The second construct is conscientiousness which refers to a tendency to be organised and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. The third construct is extraversion which entails having more energy, positive emotions, urgency, assertiveness, sociability, talkativeness and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others. The fourth construct is agreeableness. An agreeable individual has a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative

rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. It is also a measure of one's trusting and helpful nature, and whether an individual is generally well tempered or not. The fifth and final construct is neuroticism this indicates the tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability. Neuroticism also refers to the degree of emotional stability and impulse control (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Over the past couple of decades, studies have linked the Big Five dimensions to a wide range of other personality constructs (John & Srivastava, 1999). During the same period, self-esteem researchers have conducted thousands of studies examining the correlates, causes, and consequences of high and low self-esteem (Baumeister, 1993). Surprisingly, these two important lines of individual-difference research have rarely been connected. Little is known about the personality characteristics that distinguish high versus low self-esteem individuals (Harter, 1998).

Understanding the relation between self-esteem and personality is important for several reasons.

Firstly, embedding self-esteem within the Big Five framework will link it to all other psychological constructs and outcomes that have been linked to the Big Five. The FFM provides a nomological framework that helps to explain similarities and differences among variables. The Big Five dimensions of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability (vs. Neuroticism), and Openness to Experience (hereafter Openness) account for the interrelations among most trait terms (Goldberg, 1993), and they are conceptualized at the broadest level that retains descriptive utility. Possibly because of this breadth, the Big Five are relatively consistent over the life

course (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000), generalise across many different cultures (McCrae & Costa, 1997), and predict a wide range of outcomes—including job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), academic achievement (Robins, John, & Caspi, 1998), delinquency (John, Caspi, Robins, Moffitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1994), personality disorders (Costa & Widiger, 1994), adjustment (Graziano & Ward, 1992), and divorce (Cramer, 1993).

Secondly, self-esteem and personality are likely to share common developmental roots, and examining the personality correlates of self-esteem across the life span might provide insights into the nature of self-esteem and its development. Like personality, self-esteem is moderately heritable, with about 30% of the variance due to genetic differences (Kendler et al., 1998). Basic temperamental characteristics, rooted largely in genetic differences, influence people's behavioural tendencies as well as their affective feelings about what kind of persons they are.

For example, individuals with a temperamentally low threshold for the experience of negative affect tend to feel negatively about themselves (Watson & Clark, 1984). Similarly, positive emotionality might lie at the core of both extraversion and self-esteem (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). It seems likely, then, that self-esteem will be most strongly related to the two Big Five traits that have a clear affective component, namely extraversion (positive affect) and neuroticism (negative affect).

Thirdly, in addition to sharing a common underlying etiology, self-esteem and personality may directly influence each other. For example, individuals' consistent patterns of behaviour (that is, personality) influence how they perceive and evaluate themselves (Watson & Clark, 1984). Conversely, self-

esteem may play a critical role in shaping personality processes. Individuals' beliefs about themselves influence how they act in particular situations, the goals they pursue in life, how they feel about life events and relationship partners, and the ways in which they cope with and adapt to new environments (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

For example, a low self-esteem individual might lack the self-confidence to engage in a wide range of social behaviours and, consequently, become more introverted. Many prominent areas of personality research assume a central role for self-esteem and self-evaluations—including research on self-conscious emotions such as shame and embarrassment (Tangney & Fischer, 1995), narcissism (Robins & John, 1997), attachment (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), self-defining memories (Singer & Salovey, 1993), goals and motivation (Watson & Clark, 1984), and depression (Tangney & Fischer, 1995).

Finally, the link between personality and self-esteem has implications for personality measurement. Most personality studies rely on self-report scales. When these scales are face valid, self-reports are closely tied to self-conceptions and self-evaluations (Robins & John, 1997). The underlying assumption is that what people think they are like will be related, albeit imperfectly, to what they are really like.

Self-esteem has been defined as a global affective orientation toward the self, and high self-esteem individuals are likely to see themselves as possessing a wide range of socially desirable personality traits and as lacking undesirable traits (Tangney & Fischer, 1995). Thus, global self-esteem is conceptually related to socially desirable responding in personality assessment (Shaver et al., 1996). These connections among social

desirability, self-esteem, and personality raise the question of whether any of the relations between self-esteem and the Big Five dimensions can be accounted for by individual differences in social desirability (Goldberg, 1993).

### **3.8 Personality correlates of high self-esteem**

When we speak of high self-esteem, then, we shall simply mean that the individual respects himself, considers himself worthy; he does not necessarily consider himself better than others, but he definitely does not consider himself worse; he does not feel that he is the ultimate in perfection but, on the contrary, recognises his limitations and expects to grow and improve. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 31).

According to Taylor et al. (2006), individuals with high self-esteem have a clear sense of what their personal qualities are. They think well of themselves, set appropriate goals, use feedback in a self-enhancing manner, savour their positive experiences and cope successfully with difficult situations. These individuals also tend to remember their daily experiences more favourably—a memory bias that may itself strengthen high self-esteem.

The modest correlations between self-esteem and school performance does not indicate that high self-esteem leads to good performance. Instead, high self-esteem is partly the result of good school performance (Baumeister et al., 2003). Efforts to boost the self-esteem of learners have not been shown to improve academic performance and may sometimes be counterproductive (Donnellan et al., 2005). High self-esteem does not prevent children from

smoking, drinking, taking drugs, or engaging in promiscuity (Taylor et al., 2006).

Job performance in adults is sometimes related to self-esteem, although the correlations vary widely, and the direction of causality has not been established. Occupational success may boost self-esteem rather than the reverse (Baumeister et al., 2003). Alternatively, self-esteem may be helpful only in some job contexts. Laboratory studies have generally failed to find that self-esteem causes good task performance, with the important exception that high self-esteem facilitates persistence after failure (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

Adolescents high in self-esteem claim to be more likable and attractive, to have better relationships, and to make better impressions on others than people with low self-esteem. However, objective measures disconfirm most of these beliefs (Baumeister et al., 2003). High self-esteem individuals also report higher degrees of happiness, despite the presence of stress or other circumstances (Baumeister, et al., 2003). Thus high self-esteem individuals generally fare better than do their low self-esteem counterparts (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

Rosenberg's (1990) conceptualization of self-esteem is heavily slanted toward the positive. He saw the high self-esteem individual as likely to seek personal growth, development and improvement by pushing themselves to the limits to exercise their capabilities. He characterised the individual with high self-esteem as not having feelings of superiority, in the sense of arrogance, conceit, contempt for others or overwhelming pride. Rather he saw positive self-esteem as having self-respect, considering oneself a person of

worth, appreciating one's own merits, yet recognising personal faults. The person with high self-esteem doesn't consider himself or herself better than others, but neither does he consider himself or herself inferior to others. According to Taylor et al. (2006) a leader with high self esteem does not feel threatened by others ideas. Furthermore an individual with high self-esteem will not have a problem with letting the subordinates be empowered and perform at the best of their abilities (Donnellan et al., 2005).

Sciangula and Morry (2009) found that self-esteem has a strong relation to happiness. Although the research has not clearly established causation, it does suggest that high self-esteem leads to greater happiness. With regard to the development of depression, some studies support the buffer hypothesis (which is that high self-esteem mitigates the effects of stress). These studies found that high self-esteem leads to happier outcomes, regardless of stress or other circumstances (Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Furthermore violence appears to be most commonly a result of threatened ego—that is, highly favourable views of the self that are disputed by some circumstances. Inflated, unstable, or tentative beliefs in the self's superiority may be most prone to encountering threats, and hence to causing violence (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

Coopersmith (1967) described a subset of high self-esteem individuals who demonstrated not only compulsively confident, boastful and aggressive behaviour, but also a defensive self-esteem. He suggested that such individuals' positive self-views mask less conscious self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy, which motivate defensive behaviours. Coopersmith (1967), also added that some high self-esteemed individuals' self-views wax and

wane in response to daily events because their positive self-views conceal less conscious self-doubts that are sometimes manifested experientially in the face of setbacks and failure. Thus, when their explicitly positive self-views are challenged, the normally less conscious self-doubts of individuals with a defensive self-esteem may enter awareness. As a consequence, their self-views may be more labile than those of their secure high self-esteem counterparts.

High self-esteem individuals whose egos have been threatened engage in maladaptive self-regulatory processes (for example, taking excessive risks by overestimating their competency), which results in unnecessary performance declines (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993). One implication of these findings is that high self-esteem individuals are especially caught up in how they feel about themselves and will take a variety of measures to bolster, maintain, and enhance these self-feelings. In fact, Baumeister et al. (1993) suggested that a core component of high self-esteem is the adoption of an aggressively self-enhancing presentational style that includes self-aggrandizing and self-promotion.

### **3.9 Personality correlates of low self-esteem**

Individuals with low self-esteem have less clear self-conceptions, think poorly of themselves, often select unrealistic goals or shy away from goals altogether, tend to be pessimistic about the future, remember their past more negatively and wallow in their negative moods (Taylor et al., 2006). Individuals with low self-esteem also tend to have more adverse emotional and behavioural reactions to criticism or other kinds of personal negative feedback. These individuals are less likely to generate positive feedback for



themselves, are more concerned about their social impact on other people and are more vulnerable to depression or rumination when they encounter setbacks or stress (Taylor et al., 2006).

Research conducted by Baumeister (1993) suggested that rather than having an intense dislike for themselves, low self-esteem individuals are uncertain and confused individuals whose self-feelings are predominantly neutral. Moreover, other research has shown that individuals with low self-esteem also possess low self-concept clarity. This suggests that their self-concepts lack internal consistency and temporal stability and are held with little confidence (Campbell, 1990; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalley & Lehman, 1996).

Over the past century, several studies have examined the correlates and consequences of self-esteem. A wide and diverse literature that spans disciplines and theoretical perspectives suggests that low self-esteem reduces goals, expectancies, coping mechanisms, and behaviours that facilitate productive achievement and work experiences. Moreover, low self-esteem is considered to be a risk factor for mental and physical health problems, substance abuse, and antisocial behaviour (Donnellan et al., 2005; DuBois & Tevendale, 1999; Flory, Lynam, Milich, Leukefeld, & Clayton, 2004; McGee et al., 2001).

A meta-analysis performed by Haney and Durlak (1998) regarding the fluctuation of self-esteem in children and adolescents, showed that self-esteem enhancement programmes do at least as well as other types of interventions in changing other domains of functioning, including behaviours, self-reported personality functioning, and academic performance. However,

despite the theoretical arguments and empirical literature suggesting that self-esteem has adaptive consequences, debates persist about whether low self-esteem is a risk factor for important life outcomes (Baumeister et al., 2003).

At least three distinct traditions in the social sciences posit a link between low self-esteem and externalizing problems. Rosenberg (1965) suggested that low self-esteem weakens ties to society: according to social-bonding theory, weaker ties to society decreases conformity to social norms and increase delinquency. Humanistic psychologists, such as Rogers (1961), have argued that a lack of unconditional positive self-regard is linked to psychological problems, including aggression. Individuals who have a low self-esteem during their childhood are three times more likely than those with high self-esteem to report average or below average expectations of being successful at their adult work. They are also more likely to express negative attitudes towards school and their classmates (Cast & Burke, 2002).

The neo-Freudians also posit that low self-regard motivates aggression. For example, Horney (1950) and Adler (1956) theorized that aggression and antisocial behaviour are motivated by feelings of inferiority rooted in early childhood experiences of rejection and humiliation. More specifically, Taylor et al. (2006) suggested that individuals protect themselves against feelings of inferiority and shame by externalizing blame for their failures, which leads to feelings of hostility and anger toward other people. Furthermore, low self-esteem may contribute to externalizing behaviour and delinquency (Taylor et al., 2006). Thus, three separate theoretical perspectives posit that externalizing behaviours are motivated, in part, by low self-esteem.

Rosenberg (1990) found that a deficient sense of the self has a profound

impact on psychological functioning, mental health and on interpersonal behaviour. He found that low self-esteem individuals are more likely to feel awkward, shy, conspicuous, and unable to express themselves with confidence. The low self-esteem individual is always worried about making a mistake, being embarrassed or exposing themselves to ridicule. For low self-esteem individuals the self is a tender and delicate object, sensitive to the slightest touch. They have a strong incentive to avoid other individuals or circumstances that reflect negatively on their feelings of self-worth. They are hypersensitive and hyperalert to signs of rejection, inadequacy or rebuff. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to adopt a characteristic strategy for dealing with life that is protective and defensive (Rosenberg, 1990). A leader with low self-esteem may feel threatened by ideas and by empowered employees, they could try and control people as well. They could often feel afraid that if they do not control people that they will lose their leadership role (Baumeister et al., 2003).

According to Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger and Vohs (2003), the low-self-esteem individual is more depressed and unhappy; manifests greater levels of anxiety; shows greater impulse to aggression, irritability, and resentment, and suffers from a lack of satisfaction with life in general. They have greater vulnerability to criticism, less self-concept stability, less faith in humanity and greater social anxiety. Virtually every feature of the low self-esteem personality undercuts spontaneity and creativity. They tend to look for evidence that they are inadequate, whereas high self-esteem individuals are motivated to discover evidence confirming their strengths. For low self-esteem individuals accepting positive feedback is a more subtle kind of risk than

accepting negative feedback. Where high self-esteem individuals attribute their successful outcomes to internal characteristics, low self-esteem individuals contribute success to external influences. Thus, their general approach to life is avoiding risk and embarrassment. As a result, they are never able to discover what they can do or be. This results in individual pain and loss of human potential (Baumeister et al., 2003).

### **3.10 Self-esteem, bullying and cyberbullying**

The literature regarding bullying and self-esteem, including that of adolescents, consistently finds that victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims (Trzesniewski et al., 2004). The precise reasons for this relationship are still unclear. It may be that the experience of being victimised decreases one's self-esteem, or that those who have low self-esteem are more likely to be targeted as victims (Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Studies have found evidence to suggest that bullies tend to have both higher and lower self-esteem than non-bullies (Baumeister et al., 2003). Based on the literature reviewed above, it could be deduced that experiences with traditional bullying are associated with differential levels of self-esteem. Victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-bullies. Bearing this in mind, the current study intended to deduce what effect cyberbullying has on an individual's self-esteem.

Further research is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms linking self-esteem to life outcomes. Identifying the processes that link self-esteem to adjustment outcomes can not only inform theoretical research but also help in developing sound intervention strategies. One approach is to study developmental processes involving person-environment transactions

(Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

Another approach to studying the underlying mechanisms linking self-esteem to life outcomes involves more proximal factors such as intrapsychic or cognitive processes (Taylor et al., 2006). There can be little doubt that self-esteem occupies an important place as a central idea in humanistic psychology, so it certainly deserves to be thought about as one of the central ideas with regard to the healthy development of any person. This research is important to pursue with regard to the effect that cyberbullying has on self-esteem and other life outcomes.

According to research conducted by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) the consequences of cyberbullying seem to be similar to those of traditional schoolyard bullying. In the study by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) victims reported feeling sad, angry, frustrated and helpless. Furthermore, the research study by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) revealed that, of 468 students who had been cyberbullied, 34 percent reported feeling frustrated, 30 percent reported feeling angry, and 21 percent reported feeling sad. Additionally, it was found that a greater proportion of females reported having a lower self-esteem as compared to males. The research by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) reported that the emotional responses to cyberbullying were problematic in the sense that they could precipitate other, more serious behavioural outcomes.

As mentioned, the study by Patchin and Hinduja (2011) found a relationship between experiencing cyberbullying and low self-esteem and suicidal ideation. Patchin and Hinduja (2011) found that cyberbullying victims and offenders both had significantly lower self-esteem than those who have

not experienced it. Although the study found that cyberbullying and low self-esteem are related, the researchers could not deduce with certainty whether cyberbullying causes an individual to have low self-esteem or if having low self-esteem makes an individual an easier target of cyberbullying.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the definition of self-esteem. The normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan was discussed, with specific focus on self-esteem during adolescence and the effects of cyberbullying on adolescents' self-esteem during this period. The six pillars of self-esteem was elaborated upon in order to gain a greater understanding of what constitutes self-esteem in an individual and what personal characteristics influence the development of self-esteem. Gender differences with regard to self-esteem, was then discussed. Finally the personality correlates of high and low self-esteem were outlined. The following chapter will provide an overview of the research methodology employed in the current study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research design and methodology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology that was utilised in the present study. The primary aims of the research are also presented. The chapter includes a synopsis of the research methodology with a specific focus on the research design, participants and sampling procedure, method of data collection, research procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

#### **4.2 The primary aims of the research**

The primary aim of the current research study was to explore and describe the possible effects cyberbullying has on victims' self-esteem. More specifically the study aimed:

4.2.1 To determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 learners in George, Western Cape.

4.2.2 To explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not.

The null hypothesis was that there will not be a significant difference between the levels of self-esteem (dependent variable) and the experience of cyberbullying (independent variable).

#### **4.3 Criteria for selecting an approach**

The practice of research involves combining philosophical ideas with broad approaches to research or strategies and implementing these ideas with specific procedures or methods. Thus, a framework is needed that combines the elements of philosophical ideas, strategies and methods into the relevant

approach to the current research (Neuman, 2006).

Crotty's (1998) ideas established the groundwork for the latter framework. He suggested that in designing a research proposal that four crucial questions be considered. The current researcher took the latter into account when constructing the research methodology for this research study. These four questions can be stated as follows:

- 4.3.1 What epistemological theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective informed the current research study (such as objectivism or subjectivism)?
- 4.3.2 What theoretical perspective-philosophical stance-lies behind the methodology in question that informed the current research study (such as positivism and post positivism, interpretivism or critical theory)?
- 4.3.3 What methodology-strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes governed the current researchers' choice and use of methods used in the current research study (such as experimental research, survey research or ethnography)?
- 4.3.4 What methods-techniques and procedures the current researcher used in the current research study (such as questionnaire, interview or focus groups)?

These four questions show the interrelated levels of decisions that went into the process of designing the current research study. Moreover, these aspects informed the choice of approach the current researcher utilised. The four abovementioned questions will now be discussed with regards to how they informed the current research study.



The epistemological theory which embedded the current research study was objective in nature seeing as the current research study was quantitative. The researcher decided that making use of a quantitative research design would provide the most accurate data with regard to the aforementioned research questions. The theoretical perspective which lies behind the methodology was post positivistic since it uses approaches of analysis such as experiments and surveys, and gathers data on prearranged instruments that yield concrete statistics which were needed to answer the research questions posed by the current research study. The methodology-strategy which was used in the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature and employed the use of quantitative questionnaires in order to provide the researcher with the most accurate data.

#### **4.4 The quantitative approach to research**

Quantitative research is defined as “the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing the phenomena that those observations represent” (Neuman, 2006, p. 5). This means that research is not based upon a possibly subjective interpretation of observations, but is usually a more objective analysis based on the numerical findings produced from these observations (Cozby, 2009). There are two main advantages to using the quantitative approach. Firstly, this type of research method is more objective and enables the researcher to remain more detached. To this end, the study object does not influence the researcher, and the researcher does not influence the study object. Secondly, the results of quantitative research methods may often be generalised to the total population (Cozby, 2009). A disadvantage of the quantitative approach is that

it is often more time-consuming and more expensive than a qualitative research approach (Neuman, 2006).

A quantitative approach can also be explained as one in which the investigator primarily uses post-positivist claims for developing knowledge (for example, cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Newman, 2003).

#### **4.5 Strategies associated with the quantitative approach**

During the late 19th century and throughout the 20th, strategies of inquiry associated with quantitative research were those that invoked the post-positivist perspectives. These include the true experiments and the less rigorous experiments called quasi-experiments and correlational studies and specific single-subject experiments (Mareé, 2007).

More recently, quantitative strategies involved complex experiments with many variables and treatments (for example, factorial designs and repeated measure designs). They also included elaborate structural equation models that incorporated causal paths and the identification of the collective strength of multiple variables.

Experiments include true experiments, with the random assignment of subjects to treatment conditions, as well as quasi-experiments that use nonrandomized designs. Included within quasi-experiments are single-subject designs (Neuman, 2000). Surveys include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection, with

the intent of generalising from a sample to a population (Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

Phillips and Burbules (2000) emphasise that there are three considerations that play into the decision of choosing one research design over another, these are: the research problem, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the audience(s) for whom the report will be written. Therefore these three considerations informed the current researchers' decision to use the quantitative approach in the current research study, as it would provide the most accurate answers to the research questions posed by the current study.

## **4.6 Research methodology**

### **4.6.1 Research design**

Data collection can involve a variety of methods and procedures. Researchers may collect data on an instrument or test (for example, a set of questions about attitudes toward self-esteem) or gather information on a behavioural checklist (for example, where researchers observe a worker engaged in using a complex skill). On the other end of the continuum, data collection might involve visiting a research site and observing the behaviour of individuals without predetermined questions or even conducting an interview in which the individual is allowed to talk openly about a topic, largely without the use of specific questions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The choice of methods used by a researcher depends on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from participants in the project. The nature of the data collected also differs; it may be numerical information gathered on scales of instruments or

more text information or recording and reporting the voice of the participants. In some forms of data collection both quantitative and qualitative data are collected, for example instrument data may be augmented with open-ended observations, or census data may be followed by in-depth exploratory interviews (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Data collection, however, would be futile without a sound research design. A research design is defined as the plans, structures and strategies of investigations that seek to obtain answers to various research questions. Hence, the purpose of the research design is to provide guidelines for the researcher according to which data can be obtained, interpreted and analysed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The research design is simply the strategy that the researcher uses to answer the research question.

The current research was structured in the form of a quantitative research design. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature and employed the use of quantitative survey measures. Quantitative research focuses on using empirical data with findings based on certainty (Kumar, 2005). Results are accumulated through formal measurements using prearranged instruments and analysed through the use of statistical measures (Mareé, 2007).

In the past two decades, research approaches have multiplied to a point at which investigators or inquirers have many choices. It is recommended that a general framework be adopted to provide guidance about all facets of the study, from assessing the general philosophical ideas behind the inquiry to the detailed data collection and analysis procedures. Using an extant framework allows researchers to formulate their plans in ideas well grounded in the literature and recognised by audiences (such as faculty committees)

that read and support proposals for research (Kumar, 2005).

Although different types and terms abound in the literature, for the purposes of this research study focus will be given to the quantitative approach.

#### **4.6.2 Descriptive research**

Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship (Neuman, 2006). It attempts to provide a complete and accurate description of a situation or phenomenon (Struwig & Stead, 2001), and can be regarded as the first step in research as it provides the groundwork for future research. The current research study is descriptive in nature as it attempts to describe the effects of cyberbullying on the victims' self-esteem. According to Cozby (1993), descriptive studies are structured and focus on a few dimensions of a well defined entity, measuring these dimensions precisely and systematically. This study attempted to do this by measuring specific areas of socio-emotional development, namely self-esteem, through the use of a structured self-report questionnaire, namely the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle, 2014). The domains which make up self-esteem, according to Battle's (2014) Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory, are General Self-Esteem; Academic Self-Esteem; Parental/Home Self-Esteem; Social Self-Esteem and Personal Self-Esteem.

Cozby (1993) notes that descriptive research designs employ a variety of techniques to gather information including surveys, observations, case studies, and archival research. This study employed the survey research technique, whereby data was sourced through the use of self-report questionnaires. In survey research, the researcher uses a written

questionnaire or formal interview to gather information on the backgrounds, behaviours, beliefs, or attitudes of a large number of people (Neuman, 2006).

Descriptive research that employs the survey technique as a means of data collection has a number of advantages. Firstly, summarising and describing a relatively large set of data helps to save both time and money. Secondly, researcher bias is reduced and results have greater generalizability. Thirdly, the coding, analysis and interpretation of data collected through a survey technique are also relatively simple (Cozby, 1993). In addition, this type of research may be done over a large geographical area, offers anonymity to participants and may be conducted by a single researcher (Neuman, 2006).

#### **4.6.3 Sampling**

Neuman (2006) asserts that the size of the sample depends on the kind of data analysis the researcher plans, on how accurate the sample has to be for the researcher's purposes and on population characteristics. A sample refers to the persons that are incorporated into the research study namely, the participants. Inclusion criteria are made use of to aid the researcher in coming to a decision on whether a participant is suitable to form part of the sample group (Brink, 2006).

Sampling techniques are a means of selecting a small group of individuals from a population in such a way that the researcher is able to draw conclusions about the phenomenon being researched (Neuman, 2006). According to Brink (2006) sampling is the process of selecting units, such as individuals or organisations, from a population of interest so that by studying the sample one is able to generalise the results back to the population from

which the sample was chosen.

Sampling procedures fall into two categories: formal or probability methods and informal or non-probability methods. Formal probability methods are based on probability sampling procedures. These techniques require the following two elements: Firstly, every sampling unit must have a known and non-zero probability of selection into the sample, and secondly, random chance must be the controlling factor in the selection of sampling units. Probability sampling also tends to be characterised by the use of lists or sampling frames to select the sample, clearly defined sample selection procedures, and the possibility of estimating sampling error from the survey data (Trochim, 2002).

Informal sampling methods include a number of approaches that are based on non-probability principles. Although the general intent is often to make inferences to some larger population, methods of selection tend to be more subjective. In most cases, it is assumed that the individual making the sampling selection is knowledgeable about the underlying dimensions on which the phenomena under study vary and are thus able to select the sample in such a way that these are appropriately covered and free from bias. It is often hoped that the sample is representative enough for the purposes of the survey, but this cannot be known with any measurable degree of certainty (Magnani, 1997). Trochim (2002) states that the main difference between probability and non-probability sampling is that non-probability sampling does not involve random selection and probability sampling does. The current research study has made use of non-probability sampling techniques in order to gather research participants from the general population.

Trochim (2002) states that non-probability sampling techniques have specific advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of this technique include its cost effectiveness, efficiency, the use of smaller sample sizes and the ability to target specific respondents. Disadvantages include an inability to compute sampling error and the fact that the degree of representativeness of the sample to the population is not known. Magnani (1997) adds that non-probability sampling techniques are useful when there are limited resources, an inability to identify members of the population, and a need to establish the existence of a problem.

According to Trochim (2002), non-probability sampling techniques can be divided into two broad categories, these include accidental and purposive sampling. Most sampling methods are purposive in nature as the researcher usually approaches the sampling problem with a specific plan in mind. The most important distinctions among these types of sampling methods are the ones between the different types of purposive sampling approaches. The specific non-probability sampling approach, which was employed in the current study to identify a grade 7 sample, will be discussed in further detail below.

#### **4.6.3.1 Sampling of the grade 7 participants**

Non-probability purposive sampling was utilised in order to identify a sample of grade 7 primary school learners from the general population. In non-probability sampling, the probability of a person being selected as a research participant is unknown since the researcher does not know the size or the members of a population (Neuman, 2006).

In purposive sampling, the researcher makes use of his judgement to select



the sample, based on the goals of the research. Participants are included based on characteristics related to the purpose of the study (Neuman, 2006). Trochim (2002) adds that a purposive sample is one which is selected by the researcher subjectively. The researcher attempts to obtain a sample that appears to be representative of the population and will usually try to ensure that a range from one extreme to the other is included. According to Kumar (2005), the primary consideration in purposive sampling is the judgement of the researcher as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. The researcher only approaches those people who in his opinion are likely to have the required information and be willing to share it. This type of sampling is extremely useful when an individual wants to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which only a little is known. Neuman (2006) asserts that with purposive sampling, the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population. The current researcher has employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique based on the exploratory and descriptive nature of the present study.

The researcher conducted the research among a sample of one hundred and seven grade seven learners. Inclusion criteria were used to identify the sample group, from which a sample was drawn.

The following inclusion criteria was utilised for the present study:

The participants had to be enrolled at the school where the research was conducted.

All participants were required to have at least a Grade 6 level of English language proficiency.

The students had to be in Grade 7 and be thirteen years of age.

The participants were required to have access to a computer or cell phone where they could access the Internet.

#### **4.6.3.2 A description of the participants in the sample**

A large sample size alone does not guarantee a representative sample. A large sample without random sampling or with a poor sampling frame is less representative than a smaller one with random sampling and an excellent sampling frame (Creswell, 1998). The current researcher chose to conduct his research among grade 7 learners as he felt that cyberbullying would be most prevalent among those learners in this grade at the school.

#### **4.7 Measures**

The data collection method will determine the accuracy of the research findings. As a result the data collection method has to be appropriate with regard to the research questions and the research design. A controlled data collection method will result in data being collected that is quantifiable (Struwig & Stead, 2001). A survey can be done to assess an event, attitude or behaviour in a specific population (Neuman, 2006).

The grade 7 participants were requested to complete the following 3 quantitative measures: A short Biographical Questionnaire, the Cyber Bully/Victim Questionnaire and James Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Children (CFSEI) (Battle, 2014). The Biographical Questionnaire was utilised in order to obtain demographic information from the grade 7 participants, the Cyber Bully/Victim Questionnaire was employed in order to establish the prevalence of cyberbullying within the participants' school, whilst James Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Children (Battle, 2014)

provided information on the pupils' current self-esteem.

#### **4.7.1 The biographical questionnaire**

A brief biographical questionnaire was utilised in order to obtain essential demographic information from all of the participants. The questions in the biographical questionnaire requested the following information: the participant's name, the school's name (if applicable), the participant's age, gender, ethnicity and home language.

#### **4.7.2 The cyberbully/victim questionnaire**

The information regarding cyberbullying was collected from the sample of the target population group through a descriptive survey. In a survey the participants are asked to report on events, feelings and behaviour retrospectively (Bowling, 2009). As a result a descriptive survey was used for data collection. The survey was conducted through utilising a structured questionnaire regarding cyberbullying. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured that the data collected was unambiguous, easy to count and therefore quantifiable (Bowling, 2009). The participants completed a cyberbully/victim questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher. This questionnaire was included to ascertain information on the prevalence of cyberbullying and also to determine which participants have experienced cyberbullying and which participants have not. This questionnaire was utilised for the measurement of cyberbully/victim problems such as exposure to various direct and indirect verbal, racial or sexual forms of cyberbullying. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions and did not take longer than 20-25 minutes to complete. Prior to using the questionnaire, the questionnaire was evaluated by a panel of registered psychologists who have expertise in

research and practice in the field.

#### **4.7.3 Battle's culture-free self-esteem inventories (CFSEI)**

The self-esteem measure which was used in this study was Battle's (2014) Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for adolescents (Adolescent Form). The inventory contains 67 items and the following six subscales: a) General self-esteem, b) Social self-esteem, c) Academic self-esteem, d) Parental/Home self-esteem, e) Personal self-esteem, and f) Lie scale (which indicate levels of defensiveness). The items are divided into two groups: those which indicate high self-esteem, and those which indicate low self-esteem. With the scores indicating either of the following seven descriptors, very high self-esteem, high self-esteem, above average self-esteem, average self-esteem, below average self-esteem, low self-esteem and very low self-esteem. The built-in lie scale enabled the researcher to determine how authentic the reported self-esteem was. The participant marked either 'yes' or 'no' for each item. The inventory, which was administered to groups of not more than 25 learners per group, required 20 to 25 minutes for administration (Battle, 2014). This specific measure has been utilised in numerous South African studies including Cox (2007), Daniels (2007), and Williams (2006). In another study by Darney (2009) results of the study provided internal consistency as well as satisfactory levels of validity and reliability that suggested the constructs in Battle's self-esteem inventory are fairly homogenous and relatively tapped into. The results in Darney's (2009) study which were calculated through the use of cronbach's alpha, were as follows; General Self-Esteem (.72), Social Self-Esteem (.33), Academic Self-Esteem (.60) and Parental Self-Esteem (.77).

#### **4.8 Method and procedure**

Prior to the commencement of the current research study, the necessary approval was obtained from the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Technology and Innovations Committee (FRTI) as well as the Human Ethics Committee at NMMU. The recommended changes were then made by the researcher in order to ensure that the research was carried out in an ethical manner.

Permission to conduct research at a primary school in George in the Western Cape was obtained from the principal and the governing body at the chosen middle-class primary school (See Appendix A). The researcher dealt primarily with the principal at the school, who provided loco parentis for the grade 7 learners' participation. The questionnaires were reviewed by the principal and the governing body at the school prior to administration. A day and time for administration to take place were then arranged. Each grade 7 participant also received an informed consent form which their parents had to complete. The form also provided space where the participant could give their assent were they to take part in the study (See Appendix B).

Research was conducted among 107 grade 7 co-ed learners, in 7 classes. The researcher recruited the teachers in each class to administer questionnaires among the grade 7 learners. The administrators were provided with training on all three of the relevant grade 7 questionnaires and provided with an administration pack containing clear directions for the data collection procedure. On the day that the research took place teachers were assigned to each classroom and the researcher was available, to answer any questions, during this time.

The grade 7 participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and the fact that all responses would be treated as highly confidential. Participants were asked to complete the Biographical Questionnaire for Grade 7 Participants, the Cyber Bully/Victim Questionnaire and the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents. The completed questionnaires were then collected by the teachers and handed over to the researcher. Participants were informed that the results of the group as a whole would be provided in the form of a brief report to be given to the principal at the school. The principal was provided with a contact number for psychological services in the event that any grade 7 participants should require individual counselling as a result of their participation in the study. None of the participants indicated that they required any form of counselling after they completed the questionnaires.

#### **4.9 Data analysis**

Data analysis forms part of the analytical phase and is aimed at answering the research question. The data needs to be systematically analysed in an organised manner, which is done through statistical analysis (Leedy & Ormond, 2005).

A statistician was employed to facilitate the organisation and interpretation of the numerical data that was collected. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and describe the data. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the characteristics of the data that were collected. These characteristics consist of the variability, the central tendency and the shape of the distribution of the data (Kumar, 2005).

The analysed data was used to describe the results and to make

recommendations regarding the current study. As mentioned descriptive statistics were utilised in order to analyse the biographical data of the sample from the study. A nominal-level of measurement were used to describe the results in terms of the participant's age, gender, and ethnicity. Neuman (2006) defines descriptive statistics as a general type of simple statistics used by researchers to describe basic patterns in the data. The data, which were collected from both the cyberbully/victim questionnaire and the self-esteem questionnaire, was calculated and analysed through frequency distributions, median, mean, standard deviations and alpha coefficient by the Department of Statistics at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

The quantitative data collected for research aim 1 (to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 learners in George) was analysed through the use of descriptive statistics, thus the results were quantified. These results were obtained by means of the cyberbully/victim questionnaire. The quantitative data collected for research aim 2 (to explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not) were determined through the use of a null hypothesis. Thus it was hypothesised that there was not going to be a significant relationship between the levels of self-esteem (dependent variable) and the experience of cyberbullying (independent variable). The results were examined through the use of a Pearson-R correlation coefficient in order to describe the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (experience of cyberbullying and levels of self-esteem). Matin (2004) defines Pearson's correlation coefficient as a measure of the linear association between two variables that have been measured on interval

or ratio scales.

Furthermore, data obtained from Battle's (2014) Self-Esteem Inventory, for research aim 2 (to explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not), was interpreted with a Pearson-R correlation coefficient in order to have established the relationship between the independent variable (experience of cyberbullying) and the dependent variable (levels of self-esteem). ANOVA statistics were then used to compare the means of those who experienced cyberbullying with those who did not experience cyberbullying. In general, the purpose of analysis of variance (ANOVA) is to test for significant differences between means (Kumar, 2005). A statistical hypothesis test is a method of making decisions using data. A test result is called statistically significant if it is deemed unlikely to have occurred by chance, assuming the truth of the null hypothesis. A statistically significant result when a probability is less than a threshold (significance level) justifies the rejection of the null hypothesis (Kumar, 2005). For the purpose of the current study the significance level was set at 0.05.

In the typical application of ANOVA, the null hypothesis is that all groups are simply random samples of the same population. This implies that all treatments have the same effect (perhaps none). Rejecting the null hypothesis implies that different treatments result in altered effects (Kumar, 2005).

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Codes of ethics regarding research with human subjects that have been established are the Nuremberg Code, Declaration of Helsinki and the Belmont



Report (Bowling, 2009). The principles in these codes are employed by ethics committees to ensure the protection of research participants (Bowling, 2009).

The current research study was submitted to the FRTI as well as the Human Ethics Committee of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). In this study, the ethical code of the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (2006) was strictly adhered to, namely i) all participants were informed about the nature, goals and possible advantages of this research; ii) participants had the freedom to choose not to participate in the study; iii) participants gave informed consent as to whether they chose to participate in the study; iv) the research had no known risks or discomfort for the participants; v) data was gathered under the supervision of a psychologist in training; and vi) participants confidentiality was guaranteed in that all the material and data was dealt with as confidential at all times and all the necessary measures were put in place to ensure that participants remained anonymous; vii) the data was stored in a secured area at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU); viii) in the case where participants may have experienced re-traumatisation, facilities were put in place in order to provide counselling for these participants (HPCSA, 2006) These facilities were put in place at the school where the researcher enquired whether a classroom or any other room could be made available to counsel any learners who might have needed this facilitation. None of the participants however indicated that they required any form of counselling after they completed the questionnaires, thus the facilities were not utilised.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The methodological considerations and procedure highlighted in this chapter were utilised in order to investigate the aims of the current study. The results of the data collection, capturing and analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### Results and discussion

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the statistical analyses described in Chapter Four will be reported and discussed. Statistical analyses focused on information extracted from the Biographical Questionnaire, Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire and the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory. The two research aims outlined in Chapter Four will guide the presentation and discussion of the results. Tables will be utilised to facilitate the presentation of the quantitative findings for research aims one and two. This chapter will initially provide a socio-demographic profile of the research participants in the sample.

#### 5.2 Socio-demographic profile of the research sample

The biographical variables presented are a summary of the information obtained from the Biographical Questionnaires that were completed by the grade 7 participants. Questions pertaining to age, gender, ethnicity and home language were included in this questionnaire. These biographical variables will now be discussed.

##### 5.2.1 Identifying data of the grade 7 sample

**TABLE 5.1 Access to a cellphone**

<b>Access to a cellphone</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	104	97.20%
No	3	2.80%

In table 5.1 it can be seen that an overwhelming majority of the participants had access to a cellphone with 97.20% of the participants indicating they had

access to a cellphone.

**TABLE 5.2 Computers linked to the Internet**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No, we don't have a computer linked to the Internet in our home	25	23.36%
Yes, in the living room	19	17.76%
Yes, in my room	21	19.63%
Yes, elsewhere in the home	42	39.25%

In table 5.2 the majority of participants in the grade 7 sample indicated that they had access to the Internet elsewhere in their home (39.25%). This was followed by (23.36%) of the participants indicating that they do not have access to the Internet in their home. After this (19.63%) of the participants indicated that they have access to the Internet in their room and (17.76%) of the participants indicated they had access to the Internet in their living room. Thus 82 of the participants (76.64%) had access to the Internet in their home.

**TABLE 5.3 Access to Internet outside home**

<b>Access to Internet outside home</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	83	77.57%
No	24	22.43%

In table 5.3 there were (77.57%) of the participants indicated that they have access to the Internet outside of their home.

### **5.2.2 Sample size**

All of the grade 7 participants were currently attending a middle class primary

school in George. Research took place during the first term, as the researcher was interested in the grade 7 participants' experiences of bullying during their final year of primary school. The school provided loco parentis for all of the grade 7 learners to take part in the study. The distribution of participants per sample is presented in Table 5.4.

**TABLE 5.4 Distribution of participants**

<b>Sample</b>	<b>N</b>
Grade 7 Participants	107

### **5.2.3 Age**

The primary aim of the current study was to explore and describe the experience of cyberbullying on individuals' socio-emotional development during Adolescence more specifically how cyberbullying affected their self-esteem. Santrock (2004) defines adolescence as "the developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, entered at approximately 10 to 12 years of age and ending at 18 to 22 years of age" (p 20). The grade 7 participants in the current study were 13 years of age and therefore form part of the adolescent population in the George area. The average age of the participants in the grade 7 sample is presented in Table 5.5 below.

**TABLE 5.5 Distribution of age**

<b>Sample</b>	<b>Average Age</b>
Grade 7 Participants	13.2

The current researcher initially aimed to conduct his research among adolescents who were 13 years of age. All of the grade 7 participants who

met these criteria were therefore included in the study.

#### **5.2.4 Gender**

Gender refers to the social dimension of being male or female (Santrock, 2004). Both males and females were included in the current study. There was an even spread of both male and female participants in the current study. The gender distribution of the grade 7 participants is presented in Table 5.6 below.

**TABLE 5.6 Distribution of gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	51	47.66%
Female	56	52.34%

#### **5.2.5 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is rooted in cultural heritage, nationality characteristics, race, religion and language (Santrock, 2004). Not only is there diversity within a culture, such as that found in South Africa, there is also diversity within each ethnic group. These ethnic groups include: Black South Africans, White South Africans, Coloured South Africans, Chinese South Africans, Indian South Africans and so forth. Ethnicity was categorized into six different categories during the current research study. The 'Other' category refers to the remaining South African ethnic groups as well as international ethnicities. The ethnic distribution of the participants the sample is presented in Table 5.7 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.7 Distribution of ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Black	8	7,48%
Coloured	32	29,91%
Chinese	0	0%
Indian	1	0,93%
Whites	66	61,68%
Other	0	0%

White participants were the largest ethnic group in the grade 7 sample (61.68%), with Coloureds representing the second largest ethnic group (29.91%), followed by Blacks (7.48%), and then Indian (0.93%). The differences in the above mentioned number of participants per ethnic group may be as a result of the sampling procedure utilised in the current study. Thus the sample is not an actual representation of the demographic profile in South Africa as this study contained mainly white participants.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 in a study of adolescent cyberbullying it was found that race appears to be more significant both at home and in the school environment, with black children and youth reporting the highest incidence of cyber aggression, followed by white youths, coloured youths and, finally, Indian/Asian youths who report the lowest incidence. Almost half (49.1%) of the black youths interviewed reported incidents of cyberaggression at home and two out of five (39%) at school, while among the Indian/Asian sample one in five (20.5%) reported incidents of cyber aggression at home, and just over one in ten (12.6%) reported experiencing such incidents at school (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). The current study however does not correlate with these

findings as the demographic profile of the current sample differs significantly from Burton and Mutongwizo's (2009) sample.

### 5.2.6 Home language

Home language was categorized into three different groups during the current research study. The 'Other' variable included the remaining South African languages as well as international languages. The home language distribution of the participants in each sample is presented below in Table 5.8.

**TABLE 5.8 Distribution of home language**

Language	N	Percentage
Afrikaans	60	56.07%
English	45	42.06%
Xhosa	2	1.87%
Other	0	0%

The school selected for the research among grade 7 learners was a mixed language medium school. The majority of the grade 7 participants spoke Afrikaans as a home language (56.07%). The second highest home language in the grade 7 sample was English (42.06%), followed by a relatively small number of Xhosa speaking participants (1.87%). None of the grade 7 participants spoke any 'Other' home languages. The questionnaires were presented to the grade 7 sample in English as the participants utilised this language within their school context.

### 5.3 Quantitative findings

The quantitative data obtained from the Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire and Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory will be presented in the following section. Findings will be reported and discussed in accordance with the two primary



aims of the study.

#### **5.4 Results for aim 1**

The following section will be addressed according to the first aim of the present study. The first aim of the study was to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among middle class grade 7 school pupils at a relevant school in George in the Western Cape. It is important to note that the grade 7 participants were requested to answer this particular questionnaire according to their overall experience of cyberbullying. Descriptive statistics served to facilitate insight regarding the number of cyberbullies, victims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders within each sample as well as a number of other variables relating to the experience of cyberbullying. These results have therefore been divided into a number of different sub-sections, each focusing on a particular topic. The information obtained from the Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire, which was administered to the grade 7 sample, will now be presented and discussed in further detail.

##### **5.4.1 The prevalence of cyberbullying behaviour**

This sub-section will provide information on the number of cyberbullies, victims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in each sample, the frequency and duration of participants' victimisation, the number and type of cyberbullying behaviours that the participants were exposed to and the form of the cyberbullying incidents.

###### **5.4.1.1 Number of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders within each sample**

Cyberbullying incidents tend to involve three different groups of learners: cyberbullies (those who carry out the cyberbullying behaviours), cybervictims

(those who become the target of cyberbullying behaviours) and bystanders (those who are neither cyberbullies nor cybervictims but are present during the cyberbullying incident). The current researcher has included an additional category within this section which refers to cyberbully-victims (those who are both cyberbullies and cybervictims of cyberbullying). The distribution of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders within each sample is presented on the following page in Table 5.9.

**TABLE 5.9 Distribution of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders**

<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bullies	26	24,30%
Victims	55	51,40%
Bully-Victims	22	20.56%
Bystanders	65	60,75%

Table 5.9 shows that the largest group in the grade 7 sample was bystanders (those who are neither cyberbullies nor cybervictims of cyberbullying). This group included more than half of the grade 7 participants (60.75%). Victims were the second largest group in the grade 7 sample, with almost half (51.40%) of the participants falling in to this category. Cyberbullies were the third largest group in this sample (24.30%). As mentioned in Chapter 2 according to Ang, Tan, and TalibMansor (2010), the best predictor for cyberbullying was found to be cybervictimisation and vice versa: learners involved as bullies have a high risk of being victimised, while cybervictims often become cyberbullies. In a study by Badenhorst (2011) it was found that there appears to be a relationship between young people who commit

cyberbullying and those who are the victims of cyberbullying. The study found that 69.7 percent of respondents who had bullied others via text messaging had themselves been bullied. However, cyberbully-victims were the smallest group in the grade 7 sample (20.56%) which does not necessarily support this hypotheses.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a study conducted by Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) examined the prevalence of cyberviolence, including cyberbullying amongst adolescents in South Africa. In this study they examined adolescents' experiences of any form of cyber aggression, either within the home environment or school environment, at any time and within the past 12 months. Almost half (46.8%) of the adolescents reported experiencing some form of cyber aggression, including harassment via telephone (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). If verbal telephone harassment and aggression is excluded, 37% of young people reported being victims of cyberaggression. One in three (31.0%) young people interviewed had experienced some form of cyber aggression while at school, while more than two out of five (42.9%) had experienced some form of cyber aggression outside of school (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). In another study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) a pilot study was conducted in 2009 among 1 726 young people between the ages of 12 and 24 years. The study found that almost half of the respondents (46.8%) had experienced some form of cyberbullying (Badenhorst, 2011).

The findings in the current study indicate that of the whole grade 7 sample, (24,30%) have been cyberbullies, (51,40%) have been cybervictims and (20.56%) have been cyberbully-victims. In comparison to the prevalence of

cyberbullying behaviours in Burton and Mutongwizo's (2009) study as well as Badenhorst's (2011) study, the number of cybervictims and cyberbully-victims in the current sample group is about the same. The number of cyberbullies in the current sample does however appear to be lower than the number of cyberbullies in Burton and Mutongwizo's (2009) study.

#### 5.4.1.2 Frequency of cyberbullying incidents

Frequency refers to the average number of times that a particular participant has been cyberbullied. The grade 7 participants were requested to provide an average frequency based on the number of times that they had been cyberbullied overall in their lives. The frequency of cyberbullying incidents within the grade 7 sample is presented below in Table 5.10.

**TABLE 5.10 Frequency of cybervictimisation**

Frequency	N	Percentage
I haven't been bullied through cell phone use or the Internet	52	48,60%
It has only happened once or twice	24	22,43%
About two or three times	28	26.17%
More Often	3	2.80%

Table 5.10 shows that (22.43%) of the grade 7 participants have experienced occasional cyberbullying (once or twice) in their lifetime. In addition, over (26.17%) of the participants in the grade 7 sample have been cyberbullied about two or three times. Only (2.80%) of the participants indicated that they have been cyberbullied more often. As mentioned in the study conducted by

Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) almost half (46.8%) of the adolescents reported experiencing some form of cyber aggression, including harassment via telephone in the past twelve months. This result is supported in the current study with (51.4%) of the participants indicating that they have experienced cyberbullying. The frequency of cyberbullying offending will be discussed on the following page in Table 5.11.

**TABLE 5.11 Frequency of cyberbullying offending**

<b>Frequency</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I haven't bullied anyone else using my cell phone or the Internet	81	75.70%
It has only happened once or twice	25	23.36%
About two or three times	1	0.93%
More Often	0	0%

Table 5.11 shows that (23.36%) of the grade 7 participants have occasionally cyberbullied others (once or twice) in their lifetime. In addition, only (0.93%) of the participants in the grade 7 sample have cyberbullied others about two or three times. Not one (0%) of the participants indicated that they have cyberbullied others more often.

#### **5.4.1.3 Duration of cybervictimisation**

Duration refers to the period of time within which the specific cyberbullying behaviours took place and is closely related to the frequency of cyberbullying incidents. The duration of cyberbullying among participants within the sample is presented in Table 5.12 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.12 Duration of cybervictimisation**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not been cyberbullied	52	48.60%
It lasted less than two weeks	35	32.71%
It lasted less than a month	10	9.35%
It has lasted less than six months	2	1.87%
It has lasted less than a year	3	2.80%
It has gone on for several years	5	4.67%

Table 5.12 shows that one third (32.71%) of the grade 7 participants have experienced a low severity of cyberbullying, with victimisation lasting approximately less than two weeks. Lower levels of intermediate bullying, lasting approximately less than one month, were observed in the grade 7 (9.35%) sample. With 4.67 percent of the grade 7 participants indicating they had experienced cyberbullying for several years in their lifetime. The duration of cyberbullying offending will be discussed in Table 5.13 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.13 Duration of cyberbullying offending**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I did not cyberbully anyone	81	75.70%
I did it for less than two weeks	20	18.69%
I did it for less than a month	1	0.93%
I did it for less than six months	0	0%
I did it for less a year	3	2.80%
I did it for more than a year	2	1.87%

Table 5.13 shows that (18.67%) of the grade 7 participants have cyberbullied others over a short duration with offending lasting approximately less than two weeks. Lower levels of long-term cyberbullying offending, lasting approximately less than one year, were observed in the grade 7 (2.80%) sample. Finally, a small percentage of the grade 7 participants indicated they had cyberbullied others for more than a year in their lifetime.

#### **5.4.1.4 Types of cyberbullying behaviours**

Research indicates that there are a variety of different cyberbullying behaviours (Willard, 2007). The Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire, utilised in the current study, provided information on the prevalence of the following types of cyberbullying behaviours: I haven't been bullied through mobile phone use or the Internet; Through text messages or emails; Through multimedia texts (multimedia, photos, videos, happy slapping) or chat rooms;

Through phone calls or instant messages; Through social networking websites (facebook, twitter, etc.); Through file sharing websites (YouTube, flickr etc) and Through a blog (blogger, blogspot, LIVEJOURNAL etc). The prevalence of the above mentioned types of bullying within each sample is presented below in Table 5.14.

**TABLE 5.14 Distribution of the types of cyberbullying victimisation**

<b>Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I haven't been bullied through mobile phone use or the Internet	52	48.60%
Through text messages or emails	16	14.95%
Through multimedia texts (multimedia, photos, videos, happy slapping) or chat rooms	8	7.48%
Through phone calls or instant messages	10	9.35%
Through social networking websites (facebook, twitter, etc.)	18	16.82%
Through file sharing websites (YouTube, flickr etc)	1	0.93%
Through a blog (blogger, blogspot, LIVEJOURNAL etc)	0	0%
Other	2	1.87%



Table 5.14 indicates that cyberbullying through social networking websites such as facebook or twitter were the most common forms of victimisation in the grade 7 sample (16.82%). This is followed by (14.95%) of the grade 7 participants having been cyberbullied via text messages or emails and (9.35%) of the learners had experienced cyberbullying through phone calls or instant messages at some stage during their lifetime. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Burton and Mutongwizo's (2009) study indicated that many adolescents carry their cell phones with them at all times, either at school or at home. In that study the latter is the medium through which most cyber aggression is reported. In total, a quarter (25.6%) of young people reported that they had experienced some form of bullying or aggression via text messages received on their cell phones in the 12-month period prior to the study, while slightly more (28.0%) had been victimised via phone calls received on their cell phones.

This result is confirmed in the present study with many participants indicating that they have been cyberbullied through text messages or phone calls. In addition, (7.48%) of the grade 7s had been cyberbullied through multimedia texts (such as multimedia, photos and videos) or chat rooms, (0.93%) of the sample had experienced cyberbullying through file sharing websites such as YouTube, and (1.87%) of the participants were cyberbullied in other ways. In a study by Darney (2009) it was found that cyberbullying was the least common type of victimisation in her study (11%). In the current study it is evident that the number of cyberbullied victims has increased significantly. The distribution of the types of cyberbullying offending will be discussed in

Table 5.15 .

**TABLE 5.15 Distribution of the types of cyberbullying offending**

<b>Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I haven't cyberbullied anyone through mobile phone use or the Internet	81	75.70%
Through text messages or emails	7	6.54%
Through multimedia texts (multimedia, photos, videos, happy slapping) or chat rooms	5	4.67%
Through phone calls or instant messages	8	7.48%
Through social networking websites (facebook, twitter, etc.)	4	3.74%
Through file sharing websites (YouTube, flickr etc)	0	0%
Through a blog (blogger, blogspot, LIVEJOURNAL etc)	0	0%
Other	2	1.87%

Table 5.15 indicates that cyberbullying through phone calls or instant messaging were the most common forms of victimisation in the grade 7 sample (7.48%). This was followed by (6.54%) of the grade 7 participants

having been cyberbullied through text messages or emails and (4.67%) of the learners having experienced cyberbullying through multimedia texts (such as multimedia, photos and videos) or chat rooms at some stage during their lifetime. In addition, (7.48%) of the grade 7s had been cyberbullied through multimedia texts (such as multimedia, photos and videos) or chat rooms, (3.74%) of the sample had experienced cyberbullying through social networking websites such as facebook or twitter, and (1.87%) of the participants were cyberbullied in other ways.

#### 5.4.1.5 Feelings related to victimisation through cyberbullying

**TABLE 5.16 Distribution of the feelings related to victimisation through cyberbullying**

<b>Feeling</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Have not experienced cyberbullying	52	48.60%
Embarrassed	7	6.54%
Worried	3	2.80%
Upset	6	5.61%
Afraid or Scared	5	4.67%
Alone or Isolated	4	3.74%
Defenceless, no one can do anything about it	7	6.54%
Depressed	10	9.35%
It didn't bother me	5	4.67%
Angry	7	6.54%
Other	1	0.93%

The majority of the grade 7 participants indicated that they felt depressed (9.35%) after experiencing cyberbullying. This is supported by research conducted by Patchin and Hinduja (2010a) where they found that cybervictims

tend to show more symptoms of depression than other individuals their age. Furthermore as mentioned in Chapter 2 in a study of high school learners in the UK on the relationship between cybervictimisation and depression; the evidence suggested that cybervictims did exhibit more symptoms of depression than victims of traditional bullying (Perren et al., 2010; Raskauskas, 2010). Participants also indicated feeling embarrassed and angry (6.54%). A number of the participants also indicated that they felt upset (5.61%) and some indicated that they were afraid or scared or that it didn't bother them (4.67%).

**TABLE 5.17 Distribution of the feelings related to offending through cyberbullying**

<b>Feeling to experiencing cyberbullying</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Did not cyberbully anyone	81	75.70%
Embarrassed	2	1.87%
Worried	5	4.67%
Good	0	0%
I felt bad about myself	8	7.48%
Amused	2	1.87%
Happy	0	0%
Depressed	2	1.87%
It didn't bother me	2	1.87%
Angry	5	4.67%
Other	0	0%

The majority of the grade 7 participants indicated that they felt bad about themselves (7.48%) when they cyberbullied another individual. This was

followed by feeling worried and angry (4.67%). A number of the participants also indicated that they felt embarrassed, depressed or that it didn't bother them (1.87%).

#### 5.4.1.6 Identifying cyberbullies and cybervictims

**TABLE 5.18 Identifying data of cyberbullies**

<b>Identifying Data</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not been cyberbullied	52	48.60%
In my class	6	5.61%
In a different class but in the same year	15	14.02%
In another year (older or younger)	10	9.35%
I know them but they are not in my school	14	13.08%
It is an adult that I know	1	0.93%
It is an adult that I don't know	4	3.74%
I don't know who bullied me	5	4.67%

Most of the grade 7 participants indicated that they were cyberbullied by an individual who is in the same year as them at school but they are in a different class (14.02%). This was followed by 13.08 percent of the participants indicating that they have been cyberbullied by an individual that they know but who does not attend their school. There were a number of participants that indicated they were cyberbullied by an individual in another year (older or younger) (9,35%) suggesting that cyberbullying crosses the age barrier.

**TABLE 5.19 Identifying the gender of cyberbullies**

<b>Gender of Cyberbully</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not been cyberbullied	52	48.60%
Mainly by one girl	20	18.69%
By several girls	10	9.35%
Mainly by one boy	11	10.28%
By several boys	5	4.67%
By both boys and girls	5	4.67%
I don't know who bullied me	4	3.74%

The majority of grade 7 participants indicated that they have been cyberbullied by mainly one girl (18.69%) with (10.28%) of the participants indicating that they have been cyberbullied by mainly one boy. South Africa seems to follow this trend, especially in terms of susceptibility, with more girls reporting experiences of cybervictimisation, over a 12-month period prior to the study, than boys (33.1% compared to 29.3%) (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). What is also interesting to note is that (9.35%) of the participants indicated that they were cyberbullied by several girls which provides evidence that group cyberbullying does occur as well. The identifying data of the cybervictims in the grade 7 sample will be discussed in table 5.20 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.20 Identifying data of cybervictims**

<b>Identifying Data</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not cyberbullied anyone	81	75.70%
In my class	7	6.54%
In a different class but in the same year	5	4.67%
In another year (older or younger)	5	4.67%
I know them but they are not in my school	6	5.61%
It is an adult that I know	0	0%
It is an adult that I don't know	2	1.87%
I don't know who bullied me	1	0.93%

Most of the grade 7 participants indicated that they cyberbullied an individual who is in the same class as them at school (6.54%). Followed by (5.61%) of the participants indicating that they have cyberbullied an individual that they know but that is not in their school. There were a number of participants that indicated they cyberbullied an individual in another year (older or younger) or in another class but they are in the same year (4.67%). Based on the results of table 5.18 and the table 5.20 above there is some correlation between the cybervictims identification of cyberbullies and visa versa. The identifying data with regard to the gender of the cybervictims will be discussed in table 5.21 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.21 Identifying the gender of cybervictims**

<b>Gender of Cybervictim</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not cyberbullied anyone	81	75.70%
Mainly one girl	10	9.35%
Several girls	4	3.75%
Mainly one boy	5	4.67%
Several boys	2	1.87%
Both boys and girls	2	1.87%
I don't know who I cyberbullied	3	2.80%

The majority of grade 7 participants indicated that they have cyberbullied mainly one girl (9.35%) with (4.67%) of the participants indicating that they have cyberbullied mainly one boy. The findings in the current study are supported by some studies that have reported females to be both perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying more often than males (Smith et al, 2008; Wolak et al., 2007). Smith et al. (2008) also found that females were more likely to be both cyberbullies and cybervictims than males. As mentioned in Chapter 2 South Africa seems to follow this trend, especially in terms of susceptibility, with more girls reporting experiences of cybervictimisation over a 12-month period prior to the study than boys (33.1% compared to 29.3%) (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). What is also interesting to note is that (4.67%) of the participants indicated that they cyberbullied several girls which shows, as with table 5.19 that girls tend to some degree cyberbully each other in groups.



#### 5.4.1.7 Actions taken against cyberbullying

**TABLE 5.22 Actions taken against cyberbullying**

<b>Reaction to being cyberbullied</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I have not been cyberbullied	52	48.60%
I ignored what was happening, hoping it would stop	9	8.41%
I turned my cell off	3	2.80%
I told a friend	7	6.54%
I told a teacher	1	0.93%
I told a parent/caregiver	7	6.54%
I asked the person directly to stop texting/phoning me	9	8.41%
I blocked the texts/phone calls	12	11.21%
I changed my cell phone number	2	1.87%
I reported the bullying to the cell phone company and got them to trace the person bullying me	1	0.93%
I tried to do to them what they had done to me	4	3.74%

There were (11.21%) of the participants that blocked the texts/phone calls in order to stop the cyberbullying. The second highest number of responses

were made by two groups of participants who indicated that they either ignored what was happening, hoping it would stop, or asked the person directly to stop texting/phoning (8.41%). There were also two groups that indicated that they told either a parent or a caregiver or a friend (6.54%).

## 5.5 The cyberbullies

The Cyberbully/Victim questionnaire provided information on the characteristics of the cyberbullies in the grade 7 sample. These cyberbully characteristics will therefore now be presented and discussed.

### 5.5.1 Gender of cyberbullies involved in incidents

The gender distribution of the cyberbullies within the grade 7 sample is displayed in Table 5.23 below.

**TABLE 5.23 Gender of cyberbullies involved**

Grade 7 Sample		
Gender	N	Percentage
Males	8	15.38%
Females	18	32.73%
Both Males and Females	5	9.09%

Table 5.23 shows that there were not an equal number of male and female cyberbullies within the grade 7 sample. Male cyberbullies (15.38%) were less common than female cyberbullies (32.73%). Only 9.09 percent of the cybervictims in the grade 7 sample were cyberbullied by both male and female cyberbullies.

### 5.5.2 Age differences between cyberbullies and cybervictims

The age distribution of bullies within each sample is presented in Table 5.24.

**TABLE 5.24 Distribution of cyberbullies by grade**

Grade 7 Sample		
Grade/Age	N	Percentage
I have not been cyberbullied	52	48.60%
In my class	6	5.61%
In a different class but in the same year	15	14.02%
In another year (older or younger)	10	9.35%
I know them but they are not in my school	14	13.08%
It is an adult that I know	1	0.93%
It is an adult that I don't know	4	3.74%
I don't know who bullied me	5	4.67%

The findings in the current study indicate that the grade 7 participants were more likely to cyberbully one another (14.02%) than to be cyberbullied by individuals in another grade (9.35%).

Table 5.24 shows that horizontal cyberbullying was also the most common form of cyberbullying among the grade 7 participants. A combined total of

19.63 percent of the cybervictims had been cyberbullied by individuals in the same class or grade. Cyberbullying by individuals from another school was the second most common form of cyberbullying in the sample (13.08%). This was followed by cyberbullying by individuals in different grades (9.35%). Victimization by cyberbullies who were adults that the victims know was the least common in the sample (0.93%).

### 5.6 The cybervictims

The grade 7 victims' willingness to inform others of their experience of cyberbullying as well as the persons involved in these individuals' self-disclosures are presented and discussed in this sub-section. The victims' willingness to inform others of their experience of bullying at school in the current study is presented below in Table 5.25.

**TABLE 5.25 Cybervictims' willingness to inform others and persons**

#### Involved in cybervictims' self-disclosure

Grade 7 Sample		
Self-Disclosure	N	Percentage
I told a friend	7	12.73%
I told a parent/caregiver	7	12.73%
I told a teacher	1	1.82%
Total	15	27.27%

Table 5.25 notes that almost one third (27.27%) of the grade 7 participants in the current study have informed others about their experience of cyberbullying. This result indicates that more than 70 percent of the

cyberbullying incidents in the grade 7 sample remain unreported.

Table 5.25 shows that of the grade 7 cybervictims who had informed others about their experience of cyberbullying, the majority had told their friends and parents or caregivers both (12.73%). The grade 7 participants were least likely to inform their class teacher (1.82%). As indicated by the results this lack of reporting is problematic as parents, teachers and other adults often do not realise the extent of the cyberbullying that takes place.

### 5.7 The bystanders

Results concerning bystander behaviours in the context of cyberbullying are presented below.

**Table 5.26 Bystanders of cyberbullying**

Frequency	N	Percentage
I haven't seen or heard of anyone else being bullied through cell phone use or the Internet	42	39.25%
It has only happened once or twice	35	32.71%
Three or more times a month	13	12.15%
More often	17	15.89%

The largest group of participants indicated that they witnessed cyberbullying only once or twice (32.71%). The second highest number of participants indicated that they witnessed cyberbullying more often (15.89%) with (12.15%) of the grade 7 participants indicating they have witnessed cyberbullying two or three times.

### 5.7.1 Bystander behaviour

The bystander behaviour of the participants in the grade 7 sample is presented in Table 5.27 below.

**TABLE 5.27 Bystander behaviour**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I haven't seen or heard of any cyberbullying	42	39.25%
I did not pay any attention to the text/video clip	7	6.54%
I did not even read the text/ watch the video clip to the end I deleted it (from my cell)	3	2.80%
I went away from seeing it on another person's cell, as I did not want to get involved in anything like that	11	10.28%
I told the person who had done it not to send nasty texts or video clips any more	8	7.48%
I tried to get a friend or group of friends to help the person being bullied	4	3.74%
I tried to stop the bully from doing it again	6	5.61%
I told an adult about the bullying	9	8.41%

I went and told the person being bullied about it, to warn him/her	7	6.54%
I laughed at the text/video clip together with other people to make fun of the victim	2	1.87%
I commented on the message or video clip to my friends, saying that it seemed a good idea to me	1	0.93%
I read the text / watched the video clip but didn't do anything	2	1.87%
I made suggestions about what to write in the text message or which kind of video clip to send about the person being bullied	2	1.87%
I sent on texts/messages or showed pictures/video clips of the bullying by cell phone to my friends	2	1.87%
I told my friends about the bullying so we could have a good laugh	1	0.93%

Table 5.27 indicates that 39.25 percent of the grade 7 participants had not seen learners being cyberbullied. Overall, the grade 7 participants appear to

have removed themselves from witnessing it on another person's cell, as they did not want to get involved in anything like that (10.28%). A number of participants reported the incident to an adult (8.41%).

### **5.8 Summary of research aim 1 results**

In the current research study the majority of participants fell into the bystander category (those who are neither cyberbullies nor cybervictims of cyberbullying). This group comprised of more than half of the grade 7 participants (60.75%). Victims were found to be the second largest group in the grade 7 sample, with almost half (51.40%) of the participants indicating that they have been victims of cyberbullying. Cyberbullies were the third largest group in this sample (24.30%).

Almost a quarter of the sample of the grade 7 participants indicated that they have experienced occasional cyberbullying (once or twice) in their lifetime. A significant finding in the current study was that 26.17 percent of the participants in the grade 7 sample have been cyberbullied about two or three times. In the current study it was shown that one third (32.71%) of the grade 7 participants have experienced cyberbullying of a short duration with victimisation lasting less than two weeks. In the current study it was found that cyberbullying through social networking websites such as facebook or twitter were the most prevalent forms of victimisation in the grade 7 sample (16.82%). (14.95%) of the grade 7 participants indicating that they were cyberbullied via text messages or emails.

In addition, the current study suggests that cyberbullying through phone calls or instant messaging is the most common form of victimisation in the grade 7 sample (7.48%). This was followed by (6.54%) of the grade 7



participants indicating that they have been cyberbullied through text messages or emails.

The majority of the grade 7 participants indicated that they felt depressed (9.35%) after experiencing cyberbullying. Most of the grade 7 participants indicated that they were cyberbullied by an individual who is in the same year as them at school but in a different class (14.02%). The largest group of grade 7 participants in the current study indicated that they were cyberbullied by mainly one girl (18.69%) with (10.28%) of the participants indicating that they were cyberbullied by mainly one boy.

The results of the study furthermore indicated that there were not an equal number of male and female cyberbullies within the grade 7 sample. Male cyberbullies (15.38%) were less common than female cyberbullies (32.73%). Finally, only one third (27.27%) of the grade 7 participants in the current study informed others about their experience of cyberbullying. This indicated that more than 70 percent of the cyberbullying incidents in the grade 7 sample remain unreported.

### **5.9 Results for aim 2**

The following section will be addressed according to the second aim of the present study which was to explore and describe the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem among both the grade 7 pupils. The grade 7 participants in the current study were requested to complete Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents. The internal consistency and reliability of this measure, level of defensiveness within the sample and overall results of the measure will now be presented and discussed in further detail.

### 5.9.1 Internal consistency and reliability of the culture-free self-esteem inventories

Cronbach's alpha was utilised to establish the internal consistency and reliability of the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents (utilised in the grade 7 sample). These results are presented in Table 5.28 below.

**TABLE 5.28 Internal consistency and reliability of the self-esteem inventories**

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents</b>	
General	0.70
Social	0.67
Academic	0.67
Parental/Home	0.74
Personal	0.85

Overall, the internal consistency within the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory suggests that the constructs in the scales are fairly homogenous and relatively tapped into. The Cronbach's alpha for the social and academic scales were the lowest relative to the other scales, however the values were still significant.

### 5.9.2 Level of defensiveness within each sample

The participants' levels of defensiveness were measured through the use of a built-in lie scale which formed part of the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory. The grade 7 participants' self-esteem questionnaire contained 8 lie-scale items which indicate defensiveness. The level of defensiveness within the grade 7 sample is presented in Table 5.29 below.

**TABLE 5.29 Defensiveness within the grade 7 sample**

<b>Grade 7 Sample</b>		
<b>Score out of 8</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0	9	8.74%
1	23	22.33%
2	22	21.36%
3	17	16.50%
4	18	17.48%
5	10	9.71%
6	2	1.94%
7	1	0.97%
8	1	0.97%

The mean score for the lie scale in the grade 7 sample was 2.58 out of 8.0, with a standard deviation of 1.70. The higher the score, the more defensively the participants were responding to the measure. Overall, the majority of the grade 7 participants (68.93%) appear to have completed the questionnaire honestly, with scores on the defensiveness scale ranging from 0 to 3. However, approximately 31.07 percent of the participants in the grade 7 sample do seem to have engaged in defensive answering when completing the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents with scores on the defensiveness scale ranging from 4 to 8.

#### **5.10 Results of the culture-free self-esteem inventories**

Six scores were computed from the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for the grade 7 sample based on the following subscales: General Self-Esteem, Social Self-Esteem, Academic Self-Esteem, Parental/Home Self-Esteem, Personal Self-Esteem and Global Self-Esteem. The means, standard

deviations and descriptions of the overall results for each of these samples as well as the self-esteem scores for cyberbullies, victims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders within each sample will now be presented and discussed.

### 5.10.1 Self-esteem results for the grade 7 sample

Descriptive statistics served to facilitate insight regarding the average self-esteem scores for the overall grade 7 sample as well as for cyberbullies, victims, bully-victims and bystanders within this sample. The descriptive results for the grade 7 sample will be presented in two tables as there were a significant number of variables to be displayed. A discussion of the findings for both of these tables will then follow. The means, standard deviations and descriptions of the overall self-esteem results for the grade 7 sample are presented in Table 5.30 on the following page.

**TABLE 5.30. Results for the Total Grade 7 sample**

Scale	M	Minimum	Maximum	SD	Description
<b>Total Grade 7 Sample</b>					
General	7.30	0.0	11.0	2.51	Average
Social	8.43	0.0	12.0	2.53	Average
Academic	7.44	1.0	10.0	2.19	Average
Parental/Home	8.15	0.0	12.0	2.72	Average
Personal	8.13	0.0	14.0	3.96	Average

The abovementioned results do not support the findings mentioned in Chapter 3 which found that self-esteem tends to decline during adolescence (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The scores for the adolescents in the current study indicated an average level of self-esteem. However with the transition these participants have to make from primary school to the more academically challenging and socially complex context of high school is an adjustment that

this group still needs to make and could contribute to the decline in self-esteem during adolescence (Robins et al., 2001). The overall self-esteem scores for cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the grade 7 sample are presented in Table 5.31 below.

**TABLE 5.31. Results for grade 7 bullies, victims, bully-victims and bystanders**

Group	Scale	M	Minimum	Maximum	SD	Description
Cyberbullies	General	7.12	2.0	11.0	2.42	Average
	Social	7.32	1.0	12.0	2.23	Below Average
	Academic	6.96	3.0	10.0	2.56	Average
	Personal	7.20	0.0	12.0	3.75	Average
	Parental/Home	7.0	2.0	12.0	2.55	Average
Cybervictims	General	6.91	0.0	11.0	2.61	Below Average
	Social	7.94	0.0	12.0	2.63	Below Average
	Academic	7.53	3.0	10.0	2.27	Average
	Personal	7.76	0.0	14.0	3.97	Average
	Parental/Home	7.80	0.0	12.0	2.68	Average
Cyberbully-victims	General	7.20	2.0	11.0	2.48	Average
	Social	7.40	1.0	12.0	2.39	Below Average
	Academic	7.20	3.0	10.0	2.57	Average
	Personal	7.65	1.0	12.0	3.76	Average
	Parental/Home	7.35	2.0	12.0	2.62	Average
Bystanders	General	7.09	0.0	11.0	2.53	Average
	Social	8.39	0.0	12.0	2.56	Average
	Academic	7.51	3.0	10.0	2.17	Average
	Personal	8.0	0.0	14.0	3.99	Average

	Parental/Home	7.80	2.0	12.0	2.64	Average
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### **5.10.2 General self-esteem scores for the total grade 7 sample and**

#### **for each group**

General self-esteem refers to the overall perceptions and feelings of worth an individual has about him- or herself (Battle, 2014). The mean score of the total grade 7 sample for the general self-esteem subscale was 7.30 out of a possible score of 11.0. It therefore fell into the descriptive category of average self-esteem, which also serves to describe the general sub-score of the cyberbullies in the grade 7 sample. It is interesting to note that the cyberbully-victims in this sample had one of the highest general self-esteem scores of the four groups with a mean score of 7.20. This finding is consistent with the literature which states that cyberbullies have a lot of respect for themselves but little respect for others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

The cybervictims had a below average level of general self-esteem, while cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the current sample had an average level of general self-esteem. Of the four groups, scores indicated that cyberbully-victims had the highest general self-esteem mean (7.20) followed by bystanders (7.09) and cybervictims (6.91). These findings indicate that those who were cyberbullied (cybervictims) had slightly lower general self-esteem scores than those who had not been cyberbullied during their lifetime.

Patchin and Hinduja (2011) assert that cyberbullying behaviours may lead to low self-esteem for the victim. ANOVA (See Table 5.32) tests were run in order to establish whether or not there were significant differences in the general self-esteem scores of the four groups. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between the general self-esteem scores of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the grade 7

sample.

### **5.10.3 Social self-esteem scores for the total grade 7 sample and for each group**

Battle (2014) defines social self-esteem as an individual's perceptions of the quality of his or her relationship with his or her peers and the associated feelings. The mean score of the total sample for the social subscale was 8.43 out of a possible score of 12.0. Therefore, the participants' overall social self-esteem can be described as average. The bystanders obtained a score indicative of average social self-esteem, while cyberbullies, cybervictims and cyberbully-victims obtained scores indicative of below average social self-esteem. Of the four groups, cyberbullies, cybervictims and cyberbully-victims obtained mean scores of (7.32), (7.94) and (7.40) respectively, whilst the bystanders in this sample obtained a mean social self-esteem score of 8.39. Although the cyberbullies' social self-esteem score is slightly lower than the rest of the participants', the difference in scores was not found to be statistically significant (See Table 5.32).

### **5.10.4 Academic self-esteem scores for the total Grade 7 sample and for each group**

Battle (2014) refers to academic self-esteem as that aspect of self-esteem that involves the individual's beliefs and feelings regarding his or her self-efficacy and ability to cope with academic challenges. The mean score for the total grade 7 sample for the academic subscale was 7.44 out of a possible 10.0. The participants' overall academic self-esteem can therefore be described as average. The scores for cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the grade 7 sample are also indicative of an

average level of academic self-esteem. Cybervictims had the highest academic self-esteem score (7.53), followed by bystanders (7.51), cyberbully-victims (7.20) and cyberbullies (6.96). It is interesting to note that the cyberbullies and cyberbully-victims in the current sample obtained the lowest academic self-esteem score. The ANOVA (See Table 5.32) results indicate that the differences in academic scores between the four groups are not statistically significant.

#### **5.10.5 Parental/Home self-esteem scores for the total grade 7 sample and for each group**

Parental/Home self-esteem refers to an individual's perceptions of the feelings and beliefs their parents hold towards them as well as the perceptions of his or her status at home (Battle, 2014). The mean score for the total sample for the parental self-esteem subscale is 8.15 out of a possible score of 12.0. It therefore fell into the descriptive category of average, which also serves to describe the mean scores of the cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in this sample. There were however slight variations in the parental self-esteem scores for these four groups. Bystanders and cybervictims had the highest parental self-esteem mean (7.80), cyberbully-victims had the second highest parental/home self-esteem score (7.35), and cyberbullies had the lowest parental self-esteem score (7.0). ANOVA tests (See Table 5.32) indicated that the above differences in scores were not statistically significant.

It has been found that parental control is significantly related to self-concept. Authoritative control emphasizing inductive reasoning and explanation, parental supervision, and restrictiveness are related to more



positive self-esteem. Authoritarian control involving coercion, threats and use of physical punishment has deleterious consequences on children's self-esteem. The more parents monitor their children's activities the greater the benefits on children's self-appraisal (Baumeister et al., 2003). Thus in the current sample with the scores indicating that the participants have average levels of parental/home self-esteem, the relationship between parent and child seem to be healthy.

#### **5.10.6 Personal self-esteem scores for the total grade 7 sample and for each group**

Personal self-esteem measures an individual's most intimate perceptions of anxiety and self-worth (Battle, 2014). The mean score for the total sample for the personal self-esteem subscale is 8.13 out of a possible score of 14.0. It therefore fell into the descriptive category of average, which also serves to describe the mean scores of the cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in this sample. There were however slight variations in the personal self-esteem scores for these four groups. Bystanders had the highest personal self-esteem mean (8.0), cybervictims had the second highest personal score (7.76), followed by cyberbully-victims (7.65), with cyberbullies having the lowest personal self-esteem score (7.20). ANOVA tests (See Table 5.32) indicated that the above differences in scores were not statistically significant.

#### **5.10.7 Global self-esteem scores for the total grade 7 sample and for each group**

Global self-esteem has been shown to relate to overall psychological well-being, whereas role specific esteem relates more directly to behaviour, such

as academic achievement (DuBois & Tevendale 1999). It is important to note that most self-esteem instruments are designed to assess global self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1990). This explains why researchers have found that global self-esteem has little or no relationship to performance. However, self-concept measures or role specific measures have indicated there is a strong relationship between self-efficacy and areas such as school achievement (Battle, 2014). This is the advantage that Battle's (2014) self-esteem inventory has, all the sub-categories yield a Global Self-Esteem Quotient (GSEQ), thus global self-esteem is derived from all the sub-category scores.

**TABLE 5.32 Results of global self-esteem**

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very High Self-Esteem	1	1.07%
High Self-Esteem	0	0.0%
Above Average Self-Esteem	20	21.40%
Average Self-Esteem	49	52.43%
Below Average Self-Esteem	21	22.47%
Low Self-Esteem	11	11.77%
Very Low Self-Esteem	5	5.35%

According to Battle's (2014) rating scale as indicated in Table 5.32, the global self-esteem of the participants is average with 52.43 percent of the grade 7 participants falling within the average self-esteem range. When divided into groups of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and

bystanders, it was established that the total scores of all four groups could also be described as average.

**TABLE 5.33 Global self-esteem quotients of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders of the grade 7 sample**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Global self-esteem quotient</b>
Cyberbullies	100
Cybervictims	94
Cyberbully/victims	105
Bystanders	108

Note: Average self-esteem quotient ranges from 90 to 110

In Table 5.33 it can be seen that cybervictims in the grade 7 sample showed the lowest quotient in the average category for the global self-esteem subscale (94), followed by cyberbullies (100), cyberbully-victims (105), and bystanders (108). These quotients indicate that bystanders had the highest global self-esteem quotient, cyberbullies and cyberbully-victims had similar total self-esteem quotients, while cybervictims had the lowest total self-esteem quotient.

### **5.11 ANOVA and correlation results for the grade 7 sample**

The results of the ANOVA and correlation analysis for the grade 7 sample are presented below in Table 5.34 and Table 5.35 respectively.

**TABLE 5.34 Results of ANOVA**

<b>Self-Esteem Sub-Scale</b>	<b>P</b>
General	.671
Social	.702
Academic	.744
Parental/Home	.681
Personal	.595

Note: Significant p-value ( $p < 0.05$ )

**TABLE 5.35 Results of the correlational analysis**

<b>Self-Esteem Sub-Scale</b>	<b>Chi</b>
General	.883
Social	.932
Academic	.979
Parental/Home	.898
Personal	.675

Note: Significant p-value ( $p < 0.05$ )

The results of the ANOVA test indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between the self-esteem scores of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders as all the p-values in this sample were greater than 0.05. The chi-square test used to calculate the correlation between cyberbullying and self-esteem also indicated that there was no significant relationship between these two variables in the current grade 7 sample.

### **5.12 Summary of research aim 2 results**

In the current study the internal consistency of the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory indicated that the constructs in the scales were moderately homogenous and reasonably tapped into. The Cronbach's alpha for the social and academic scales were the lowest relative to the other scales, however the values were still significant. The mean score for the lie scale in the grade 7 sample was 2.58 out of 8.0, with a standard deviation of 1.70. Overall, the majority of the grade 7 participants (68.93%) appeared to have completed the questionnaire truthfully, with scores on the defensiveness scale that ranged from 0 to 3. The global scores of the adolescents in the current study indicated an average level of self-esteem.

When reflecting on the results of each subscale of the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory, the following can be deduced. The mean score of the total grade 7 sample for the general self-esteem subscale was 7.30 out of a possible score of 11.0. This result fell into the descriptive category of average self-esteem, which also described the general sub-score of the cyberbullies in the grade 7 sample. The cybervictims had a below average level of general self-esteem. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the general self-esteem scores of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the grade 7 sample.

The mean score of the total sample for the social subscale was 8.43 out of a possible score of 12.0. Consequently, the participants' overall social self-esteem with regard to the current study could be described as average. The bystanders acquired a score relating to an average social self-esteem, while

cyberbullies, cybervictims and cyberbully-victims acquired scores indicating below average social self-esteem.

The mean score for the total grade 7 sample for the academic subscale was 7.44 out of a possible 10.0. The grade 7 participants overall academic self-esteem in the current study was average. The scores for cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in the grade 7 sample were also indicative of an average level of academic self-esteem. Cybervictims had the highest academic self-esteem score (7.53), followed by bystanders (7.51), cyberbully-victims (7.20) and cyberbullies (6.96). The mean score for the total sample for the parental self-esteem subscale was 8.15 out of a possible score of 12.0. The score for the total grade 7 sample thus fell into the descriptive category of average, which also describes the mean scores of the cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in this sample.

The mean score for the total sample for the personal self-esteem subscale was 8.13 out of a possible score of 14.0. The personal self-esteem score of the grade 7 sample thus fell into the category of average, which also served to describe the mean scores of the cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders in this sample.

The results of the grade 7 participants indicate that the global self-esteem of the participants is average. When divided into groups of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders, it was established that the global scores of all four groups could also be described as average. The cybervictims in this sample did however show the lowest quotient in the average category for the global self-esteem subscale (94), followed by cyberbullies (100), cyberbully-victims (105), and bystanders (108).

In the current research study it was found that the results of the ANOVA test were not statistically significant. The differences between the self-esteem scores for cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders indicated that all of the p-values in this sample were greater than 0.05. The chi-square test used to calculate the correlation between cyberbullying and self-esteem also indicated that there was no significant relationship between these two variables in the current grade 7 sample.

### **5.13 Conclusion**

The first section of this chapter provided a socio-demographic profile of the grade 7 participants in the current study. The quantitative information obtained from the Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire and Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory was then presented and discussed. The conclusions based on the study, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are considered in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings and presents a discussion of the conclusions reached regarding the present study. This is followed by some of the limitations presented in the research. Chapter 6 concludes with a brief set of recommendations for future research.

#### **6.2 Aims of the study revisited**

The primary aims, which served to guide and shape the current research study, are presented below.

6.2.1 To determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 learners in George, Western Cape.

6.2.2 To explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not. The null hypothesis was that there will not be a significant difference between the levels of self-esteem (dependent variable) and the experience of cyberbullying (independent variable).

#### **6.3 Overall findings and conclusions**

Quantitative data was obtained in order to achieve the above aims of the study. Quantitative data was therefore utilised for aims one and two. The findings and conclusions that were drawn from the present study will now be addressed according to these two aims.

##### **6.3.1 The prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 participants**

The first aim of the current study was to explore and describe the prevalence of cyberbullying among a sample of middle-class grade 7 learners at a school



in George, Western Cape. This was done by administering the Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire, which the researcher developed, to the grade 7 participants for completion. It was found that (24.30%) of the participants acted as cyberbullies, (51.40%) as cybervictims and (20.56%) as cyberbully-victims (those who were both cyberbullies and cybervictims of cyberbullying). Just over half of the participants in this sample had been cyberbullied during their lifetime.

In terms of the duration of cyberbullying incidents among the participants, (32.71%) of the grade 7 learners had experienced cyberbullying for less than a two week period, (9.35%) of the participants had experienced cyberbullying for less than a month, and (4.67%) of the grade 7 sample had experienced cyberbullying, for several years. Cyberbullying through social networking websites such as facebook or twitter was the most prevalent form of cyberbullying (16.82%), followed by cyberbullying through text messages or emails (14.95%) and through phone calls or instant messages (9.35%).

Cybervictimisation prevalence rates in some studies when young people were asked directly whether they have been involved in cyberbullying (during the last three months or in general), the studies showed prevalence rates for victimisation ranging between 11.1% and 34.2% (Vandebosch et al., 2012). Other studies have also found up to one-third or more of learners have experienced cyberbullying (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Li, 2006; Cassidy et al., 2012). A South African study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) conducted among 1 726 young people between the ages of 12 and 24 years found that almost half of the respondents (46.8%) had experienced some form of cyberbullying (Badenhorst, 2011). In

comparison with these findings, those of the current study appear to indicate a similar prevalence rate of victimisation as (51.40%) of the grade 7 participants in the current study had been cyberbullied.

### **6.3.2 The relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem**

According to Perren et al. (2010) peer problems during childhood and adolescence can often result in disruptions to healthy functioning, both for those who engage in disruptive behaviours and those who are victimised. Thus if an individual is being cyberbullied during adolescence, it could adversely affect their functioning; not only during this phase of their life but may also carry further into their future development. A study by Raskauskas (2010) of high school learners in the UK on the relationship between cybervictimisation and depression, suggested that cybervictims do exhibit more symptoms of depression than victims of traditional bullying. In a study by Darney (2009) it was found that no statistically significant relationship existed between experiencing bullying and having a lower self-esteem.

The second aim of the current study was to explore and describe the possible effects of cyberbullying on victims' self-esteem. The grade 7 participants were therefore required to complete Battle's (2014) Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Adolescents. The overall findings and conclusions for each sample are discussed below.

### **6.3.3 Self-esteem in the grade 7 sample**

Five scores were computed from the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory for the grade 7 sample based on the following subscales: General Self-Esteem, Social Self-Esteem, Academic Self-Esteem, Parental/Home Self-Esteem and Personal Self-Esteem. The Global Self-Esteem Quotient was also calculated

based on the results of the five subscales. It was found that the global self-esteem quotients for the grade 7 participants fell into the average range indicating normal levels of self-esteem. Average levels of self-esteem were found on the general, social, academic, personal and parental subscales in the grade 7 sample. When divided into groups of cyberbullies, cybervictims, cyberbully-victims and bystanders, results indicated that there were no significant differences in the self-esteem scores of the individuals in each group.

Cyberbullies, cybervictims and cyberbully-victims all scored below average on the Social Self- Esteem subscale. However these results were not statistically significant. While cybervictims scored below average on the General self-esteem subscale, this result was also not significant. Correlational coefficients confirmed that there was no statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem in the grade 7 sample. Cyberbullying therefore does not appear to have had a significant impact on the self-esteem of grade 7 victims and cyberbully-victims in the current study. These findings are surprising as numerous authors (Perren et al., 2010; Raskauskas, 2010; Campbell et al., 2010; Spears et al., 2008; 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a) assert that cyberbullying often leads to lower general and social self-esteem among victims.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the present research**

The limitations of the current research study will be discussed in order to suggest improvements for further research in the future. Firstly, measuring cyberbullying among the grade 7 participants in the current study was challenging, as there was not an established cyberbully/victim questionnaire

available. The current researcher therefore made use of a cyberbully/victim questionnaire based on different questions that he utilised to develop the questionnaire in order to ensure that the grade 7 participants would understand what was expected of them. The administrators in the current study were also encouraged to provide detailed instructions for the completion of the Cyberbully/Victim Questionnaire, using simple, age-appropriate language.

Secondly, limited research and available literature with regard to self-esteem and cyberbullying in South Africa were also considered a limitation to this study. Very little research has been conducted with regard to the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem in South Africa. As a result, it was difficult to make comparisons in relation to South African contexts.

Thirdly, the current researcher employed a number of non-probability sampling techniques in order to gather participants for the current study. This sampling method is viewed as a limitation of the study as the subjectivity of non-probability sampling means that results cannot be generalised to the entire population.

Fourthly, the sample size was mainly white participants making it difficult to generalise the results of the study to the South African population.

### **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

The current researcher proposes the following ideas for future research:

- a) A large-scale study to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying within junior and secondary schools in the larger George or Western Cape area.

- b) The development of a cyberbully/victim questionnaire through the use of specific research to see which standardised questions can be added.
- c) A comparison of the prevalence of cyberbullying among individuals from diverse racial backgrounds.
- d) A longitudinal study to measure the stability of victims' self-esteem levels over time.
- e) A mixed method study should also be considered in order to evaluate both quantitative and qualitative results with regard to being cyberbullied.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The final chapter of the present study began by reviewing the conclusions of the study. This was followed by a discussion of the limitations experienced and finally, recommendations for future research. Despite some of the limitations to the study, the findings were thought to contribute in a valuable way to furthering knowledge regarding the experience of cyberbullying on individuals' self-esteem.

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**Appendix A: Consent form for the school principal**



Dear Sir

January 2015

**Cyberbullying and Adolescents' Self-Esteem  
RE: Research Information Request**

My name is Philip van Rensburg, and I am a Masters (Psychology) student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). I am conducting research on the prevalence of cyberbullying in schools in the George area and the effects of these cyberbullying behaviours on the victim's self-esteem. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Greg Howcroft (NMMU) and Professor Kerry-Lynn Thomson (NMMU). This study will meet the requirements of the Faculty Research and Technology Innovations as well as the Human Research Ethics Committee of the NMMU.

**Aims of the Research**

The research aims:

1. To determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among grade 7 learners in the George area.
2. To explore and describe the levels of self-esteem of the grade 7 learners who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not.

**Significance of the Research Project**

The research is significant in two ways:

1. It will provide information about the prevalence of cyberbullying in schools.
2. It will provide schools and teachers with greater understanding of the prevalence of cyberbullying at school.

**Benefits of the Research to Schools**

1. Dissemination of results to schools and the broader public.
2. Theory gained through this research study may be utilised by a variety of professionals in order to understand and prevent cyberbullying at school.

**Research Plan and Method**

Research will be conducted through the use of self-report questionnaires administered to the grade seven pupils. Each participant is requested to complete a short biographical questionnaire, the cyberbully/victim questionnaire as well as James Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory. Permission will be sought from the learners and their parents prior to their voluntary participation in the research. Only those who consent and whose parents consent will participate. The questionnaires will be administered by the researcher and will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. All information collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and neither the school, nor individual learners, will be identifiable in any reports that are

written. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The participation of the school and the participants is voluntary and the school principal may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty. If a learner requires support as a result of their participation in the survey steps can be taken to accommodate this.

#### School Involvement

Once I have received your consent to approach learners to participate in the study, I will:

Arrange for informed consent to be obtained from participants' parents and the participants

Arrange a time with your school for data collection to take place

Attached for your information are copies of the Parent Information and Consent Form and also the Participant Information Statement.

Invitation to participate:

If you consent to your school to participate in this research, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Philip van Rensburg  
MASTERS STUDENT  
NMMU

Prof. Greg Howcroft  
SUPERVISOR  
NMMU

Prof. Kerry-Lynn Thomson  
CO-SUPERVISOR  
NMMU

### School Principal Consent Form

I consent to you approaching pupils in grade seven to participate in the research study entitled Cyberbullying and Adolescents' Self-Esteem

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

The participation of the school and the pupils is voluntary

I may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty

Pupils in grade seven will be invited to participate and that consent will be sought from them and also from their parents.

Only learners who consent and whose parents consent will participate in the project .

All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.

The learners names will not be used and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.

The school will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.

Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

A report of the findings will be made available to the school.

I may seek further information on the project from Philip van Rensburg on 082 886 0069

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix B: Consent/Assent form for the grade 7 participants**

**South Campus  
Psychology Clinic**  
Tel +27 (0) 41 504 2330 Fax. +27 (0) 41 583 5324  
[uclin@nmmu.ac.za](mailto:uclin@nmmu.ac.za)

Dear Research Participant

You are hereby invited to participate in a research study. You will be provided with the necessary information to understand the study and what is expected of you (the participant). These guidelines will include information on the risks and benefits of the study, as well as your rights as a study participant. Please feel free to ask the researcher to clarify anything that is unclear to you.

In agreeing to take part voluntarily in this research study, you will be required to provide a written consent form, including the date, your signature and initials, in order to confirm that you understand and agree to the terms and conditions of the research study. You have the right to raise concerns regarding the study at any time. Immediately report any new problems experienced during the study to the researcher. Telephone numbers for the researcher are provided in the information letter; please feel free to use these numbers.

Furthermore, it is important that you should be aware of the fact that this study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the university. The REC-H consists of a group of independent experts whose responsibility it is to ensure that the rights and welfare of research study participants are protected and that studies are conducted in an ethical manner. Research studies may not be conducted without the REC-H's approval.

Queries with regard to your rights as a research subject can be directed to the Research Ethics Committee (Human) in the person of the Director: Research Capacity Development at (041) 504-2538. Alternatively, you may write to The Chairperson of the Research, Technology and Innovation Committee, PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 6031. The participants can also contact Philip van Rensburg 0828860069

Participation in research is voluntary and you are thus not forced to take part in any research.

If you do agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any given time during the study without penalty or loss of benefits.

Your participation may be terminated should you fail to follow instructions, for relevant administrative reasons, or if your medical condition changes in such a way that the researcher believes it not to be in your best interest for you to continue with the study. The study may be terminated at anytime by the researcher, the sponsor or the Research Ethics Committee (Human) that initially approved the study.

Although your identity will at all times remain anonymous, the results of the research

study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Philip van Rensburg  
MASTERS STUDENT

Prof. Greg Howcroft  
SUPERVISOR

Prof. Kerry-Lynn Thomson  
CO-SUPERVISOR



### Informed Consent/Assent for Participation in a Psychological Research Study

I, (Name & Surname of Parent/Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_ voluntarily grant my consent to allow (Name & Surname of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research study to be conducted by Philip van Rensburg who is currently completing his treatise at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Department of Psychology as a requirement for his Masters in Psychology. I have read the letter explaining the purpose of the research study and I understand what my son/daughter's participation involves.

I understand that my son/daughter is free to decline to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I understand that all of the information obtained will be treated in the strictest confidence and that no names will be used in any reports about the study.

I understand that I may contact Philip van Rensburg on 082 886 0069 for more information about the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature (Parent/Caregiver)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature (Child/Learner)