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**The Relationship between Psychological Conditions, Workplace
Bullying and Intention to Leave**

by

CELIWE MTSHALI

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Supervisor: Prof Crystal Hoole



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ABSTRACT

Employees' intention to leave has been cited as a predictor of actual turnover, which consequently leads to several undesirable consequences for organisations. One notable precursor of employees' intention to leave is the experience of bullying within the work context. While previous research has consistently found a positive relationship between experiences of workplace bullying and employees' intention to leave, researchers have also motivated the need to look into potential intervening factors of this relationship. As it has been suggested that an individual's reaction to stressful events is a function of his or her personal resources, the present study sought to draw attention to the role played by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability as individuals' personal resources in how they respond (intention to leave) to stressful situations or environments (experiences of workplace bullying). Data on participants' experiences of workplace bullying, their intentions to leave their current organisations and their perceptions of each of the psychological conditions were collected from South African employees ($N = 201$). The *Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised* (NAQ-R), the *Psychological Conditions Scale* (PCS), and the *Turnover Intention Scale* (TIS-6) were employed for data collection. Mediation analysis was utilised to examine each of the psychological condition's effect on the workplace bullying-intention to leave link. The results showed experiences of workplace bullying to predict intention to leave, with psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety partially mediating this relationship. Workplace bullying was thus found to have an effect on employees' experiences of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety which, in turn, exert an influence on intention to leave. This study contributes to the existing knowledge concerning workplace bullying and intention to leave by indicating the specific role played by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety. Moreover, to practice, this study suggests that organisations can intervene in the relationship between

workplace bullying and intention to leave through the development and maintenance of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety.

Keywords: Workplace bullying, psychological conditions, psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, psychological availability, intention to leave



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Introduction

This study explored the mediating role of the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, availability, and safety on the relationship between the occurrence of workplace bullying and employees' intention to leave their organisations. This chapter provides the background of the study by introducing the constructs of the study, exploring available literature on each of the constructs, and citing gaps in research related to the issues that the present study sought to address. The research question, objective, and hypotheses that guided the study are also provided. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the layout of the dissertation.

1.2 Background and Problem Statement

While organisations strive to retain their most valuable talent and to utilise this talent in the best possible way (Milner, 2009), a challenge faced by organisations worldwide is the issue of high employee turnover rates (Gyensare, 2013). It has been suggested that the average cost of an employee's departure can amount to 21% of the individual's annual salary (Graber, 2017). Employees leave organisations for an array of reasons, including job dissatisfaction, job insecurity, a lack of affective or normative commitment to the organisation, and one's perception of being a cultural misfit (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011; Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland, & Einarsen, 2014; Gyensare, Otoo, Asare, & Twumasi, 2015). A particular antecedent to turnover is employees' intention to leave their organisations (Glambek et al., 2014).

Employees' intention to leave has been suggested to comprise of employees' thoughts of leaving, plans of exiting, and the pursuit for other employment prospects (Van Dyk, 2016). The intention to leave an organisation has been associated with several undesirable

organisational outcomes for organisations worldwide (Gyensare et al., 2015). The intention to leave has not only been found to result in costs related to the selection and training of new employees but also the costs of improving or maintaining the morale and commitment of the remaining workforce (Khan, Nawaz, Khan, Khan, & Yar, 2013). Given the detrimental effects of intention to leave, previous studies have aimed at identifying the predictors of this phenomenon (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2009). Studies have highlighted work-related factors such as motivation (Bonenberger, Aikins, Akweongo, & Wyss, 2014), job satisfaction (Gyensare et al., 2015), organisational culture, organisational justice (Halawi, 2014), job stress (Sewwandi & Perere, 2016), and commitment (Gyensare, Anku-Tsede, Sanda, & Okpoti, 2016) as causes of employee unhappiness and intentions to quit. Recent studies have started to shed light on other factors not related to the work itself but rather to the relational dynamics involved at work. These relational dynamics include factors such as a poor interrelationship between co-workers and conflict between management and the workforce (Akinyomi, 2016; McCormack, Djurkovic, Casimir, & Yang et al., 2009). One particular factor that has been found to act as an antecedent to intention to leave is an employee's experience of bullying at work (Aljawazneh & Ziad, 2017).

Workplace bullying refers to an employee's long term and systematic experience of "aggression, incivility and social exclusion" in the workplace (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014). A number of studies have reported this type of behaviour at work to be a prevalent phenomenon in South Africa and internationally (such as Cunniff, 2011; Glambek et al., 2014; Namie & Namie, 2011; Visagie, Havenga, Linde, & Botha, 2012). Specifically, within the South African context, the study by Cunniff (2011) established that 31% of the sample in the study reported having experienced bullying at work. The study by Visagie et al. (2012) also reported workplace bullying to be prevalent in the South African work context as the study

found that over a quarter of the sample reported that they had been victims of workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying is an important construct to take into account as it has been reported to have a direct negative relationship on important factors such as an employees' mental wellbeing, job satisfaction, and self-esteem (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016), while showing a positive relationship with other significant outcomes such as health-related issues (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014), substance abuse (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011), and sleeping problems (Hansen, Hogh, Garde, & Persson, 2014). Interestingly, research has also shown that workplace bullying can lead to mental stress reactions for those that witness or are bystanders to the bullying (Hogh et al., 2011). Due to workplace bullying, organisations also incur costs associated with factors such as lowered productivity, higher absenteeism (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016), higher sick leave, and legal liability (Hoel & Einarsen, 2010; Hogh et al., 2011). Bullying therefore also has undesirable effects for the overall functioning of the organisation. The above factors thus warrant a need for increased attention on workplace bullying.

While previous studies have consistently found workplace bullying to be a direct positive predictor of employees' intent to leave (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016, Glambek et al., 2014; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Razzaghian & Ghani, 2014), previous studies have also shown that bullying can have indirect effects on intention to leave, through the identification of different factors mediating the relationship between these two factors. For example, Mathisen, Einarsen, and Mykletun (2008) found that job satisfaction, commitment, and burnout mediated the relationship between bullying and intention to leave. Coetzee and Van Dyk (2017) found that employees' work engagement partially lowered the effect of workplace bullying on intention to leave. Affective commitment (McCormack et al., 2009)

and psychosocial flourishing (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2017) are other constructs found to mediate the effects of bullying on intention to leave.

While acts of bullying within the work context have been suggested to result in the depletion of the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2018; Fountain, 2016) and these psychological resources have also been found to enable an individual to engage or disengage in certain activities at work (Asiwe, Rothmann, Jorgensen, & Hill, 2017; Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007), these psychological conditions have not been explored as potential mediators in the bullying–intention to leave link. This gap in research motivates the need to explore the role played by psychological conditions as personal resources that might impact how one might express intention to leave as a manner of managing and responding to workplace bullying, as research has suggested that personal resources play a role in how individuals cope with difficult situations (Fredrickson, 2004). The present study thus sought to examine the role of these psychological conditions in the relationship between bullying and intention to leave. In other words, the study sought to examine the potential mediating effect of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability in the relationship between bullying and intention to leave.

If evidence indicates that employees who experience bullying consequently report diminished levels of the psychological conditions and, in turn, intend to leave the organisation, it becomes evident that organisations will be able to intervene in the bullying–intention to leave link by fostering these psychological conditions, through establishing and maintaining a working environment that will lead to the development and maintenance of these resources. These measures will, in turn, enable organisations to retain more employees as it has been suggested that proactive actions aimed at addressing intention to leave may motivate employees to remain at their organisations (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2009). This does not,

however, suggest that workplace bullying should be ignored; the destructive consequences of bullying also necessitate the establishment of supportive structures within organisations in order to address workplace bullying (Van Schalkwyk, 2011).

1.3 Research Question

Drawing on the background provided, the following question was posed for the study: “Can the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave be mediated by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability?”

1.4 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine whether or not the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability would mediate the relationship between employees’ experiences of workplace bullying and their intention to leave their current organisations. The model of the study is depicted in Figure 1 below.

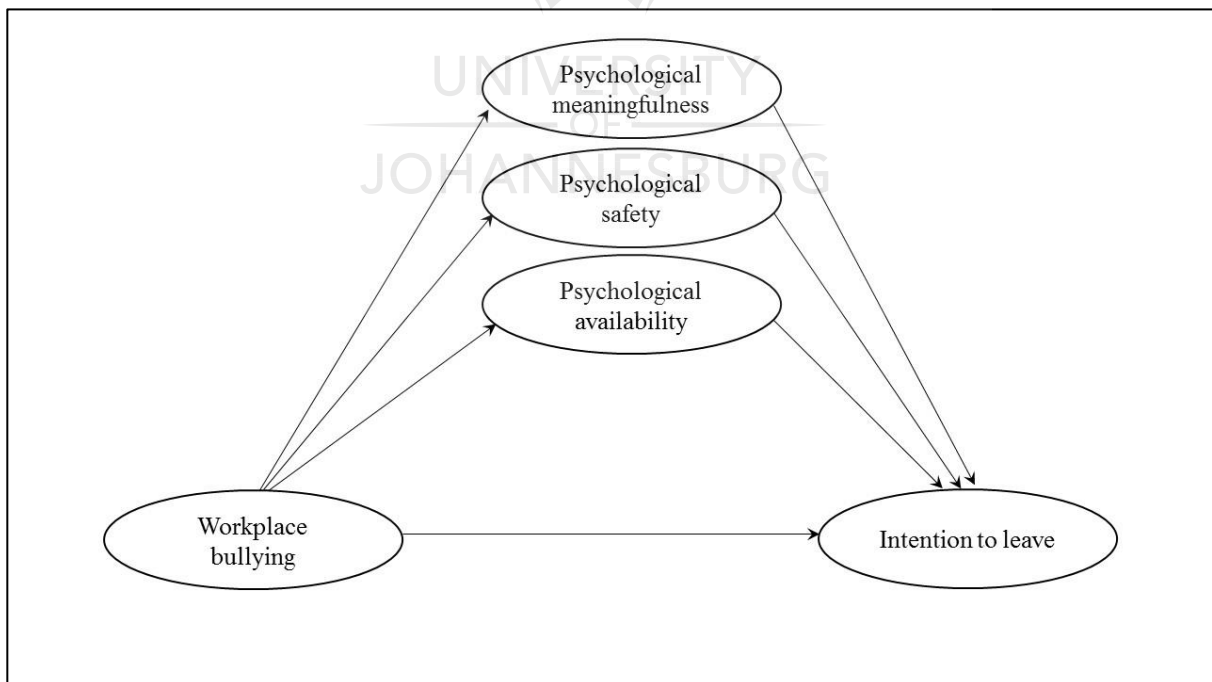


Figure 1. The model of the study

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The study hypothesised the following:

H_1 : Workplace bullying will have a positive relationship with intention to leave (direct effect).

H_2 : Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological meaningfulness (direct effect).

H_3 : Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological safety (direct effect).

H_4 : Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological availability (direct effect).

H_5 : Psychological meaningfulness will have a negative relationship with intention to leave (direct effect).

H_6 : Psychological safety will have a negative relationship with intention to leave (direct effect).

H_7 : Psychological availability will have a negative relationship with intention to leave (direct effect).

H_8 : The psychological conditions will mediate the positive relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave (indirect effect).

1.6 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional research design through purposive and snowballing sampling methods to gather data for the study. Data were gathered from 201 South African employees (the participants) on their experiences of workplace bullying, their

intentions to leave their current organisations, and their perceptions of each of the psychological conditions. Four measuring instruments were used for data collection, namely (1) a biographical questionnaire to acquire sample-specific information pertaining to age, gender, race, occupation, position within the organisation, and tenure; (2) a questionnaire measuring workplace bullying; (3) a questionnaire measuring employees' intention to leave, and (4) a questionnaire measuring employees' psychological conditions.

The data gathered from these questionnaires were captured onto an Excel spreadsheet, following which, data analysis was conducted on the SPSS statistics program. A descriptive statistics analysis was conducted to obtain the mean scores of the scales of the study and to determine the normal distribution of data. Correlation analysis was utilised to determine the existence, strength, and direction of the relationships between the constructs of the study. Mediation analysis was conducted on the PROCESS macro on SPSS to determine the mediating effect of the psychological conditions on the relationship between workplace bullying (as the independent variable) and intention to leave (as the dependent variable). It was important to uphold certain ethical considerations in the study. The main ethical principles of the study included protecting participants from harm, obtaining their informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, informing them of their right to withdraw, and assuring them of confidentiality.

1.7 Layout of the Dissertation

This study consists of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 presents a detailed literature review of each of the psychological conditions, workplace bullying, and intention to leave. The associations between the different constructs are also presented in order to formulate an argument regarding the expected mediating role of the psychological conditions in the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave.

Chapter 3 provides an outline of the research methodology employed for the study. This chapter also provides information on the measuring instruments, statistical analysis procedures, and ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results from the statistical analysis procedures conducted on the data gathered for the study.

The final chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results obtained. This is done through presenting comparisons between the results of the study and the hypotheses and available literature underpinning the study. This chapter also provides the limitations and recommendations of the study.

1.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided a background to workplace bullying, intention to leave and psychological conditions. The chapter also provided the research question, objective, hypotheses, and research design that guided the study. Lastly, a brief summary of the other chapters of the study was provided.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents available literature on workplace bullying, psychological conditions, and intention to leave as the predictor, mediating, and outcome variables of the study, respectively. This includes the origin of the concepts, definitions, antecedents and consequences, and the expected relationships existing between the different variables of the study. The theoretical model supporting the study will also be provided.

2.2 Workplace Bullying

2.2.1 Origin

While the research on workplace bullying is said to have tripled since the 1990s (Visagie et al., 2012), its historical origins are not as widely known. According to Yamada (2010), the first exploration of workplace bullying can be attributed to Heinz Leymann (1996), who referred to this type of hostile behaviour as mobbing others at work. The phenomenon of workplace bullying has since been researched in fields such as education, academia, nursing, and media (Smit, 2014). Some labels that have been used to describe this hostile behaviour within the workplace include workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), workplace victimisation (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004), workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), workplace harassment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), harassment (Brodsky, 1976), dysfunctional behaviour (Griffin & Lopez, 2005), emotional abuse at work (Keashly, 2001), workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), and emotional tyranny (Waldron, 2009).

2.2.2 Defining workplace bullying

Leymann (1996), the researcher linked to the origin of workplace bullying, defined the negative behaviour as psychological abuse whereby “the victim is subjected to a systematic,

stigmatising process and encroachment of his or her civil rights” (p. 165). Several definitions of workplace bullying have since emerged in literature over time. Einarsen, Hoel, and Nielsen (as cited in Bernstein & Trimm, 2016) have defined the concept as aggression that directly or indirectly leads to the demeaning or disrespect of some employees. Similarly, Karabulat (2016) defines workplace bullying as the “systematic, long-term abusive treatment” experienced by an employee (p. 5). This abusive treatment consequently leads to feelings of victimisation and helplessness in the victimised employee (Karabulat, 2016).

In other definitions of the concept, authors have explicated three important features of workplace bullying, which are the unwelcome nature of the behaviour, the frequency of bullying, and the duration of bullying. According to Einarsen (1999), workplace bullying refers to an employee’s experience of frequent negative and unwanted behaviours that result in deliberate or undeliberate humiliation, offence, or distress. This experience subsequently leads to the creation of an intimidating workplace and impaired job performance (Einarsen, 1999). Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2011) have defined bullying as behaviour encompassing “harassing, offending, or socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work” (p. 22). The bullying label is applied to negative behaviour that has occurred frequently (such as weekly) and over a duration of time (such as over a six-month period) (Einarsen et al., 2011). According to this definition, isolated events or conflict between employees of a similar strength are not classified as bullying. The definition by Einarsen et al. (2011) was used for the current study.

While this was not the focus of the present study, a further exploration of behaviour classified as bullying, the prevalence of workplace bullying, its antecedents, and its consequences are provided below in order to offer a better understanding of workplace bullying.

2.2.3 Behaviour classified as bullying

As per the definition of workplace bullying chosen for this study, a distinction is made between interpersonal conflict in the workplace and workplace bullying. Bullying behaviour is specifically classified as negative behaviour that is repetitive, continuous, and negatively impacts the target's personal dignity and self-confidence (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). Bullying at work may include overt behaviours such as setting impossible deadlines, shouting at a person in public, a group of workers picking on or teasing another colleague, or threats made to an individual's emotional and physical wellbeing (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2008; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002). Other bullying behaviours are more subtle, including acts such as the altering of information that impacts another person's work, the physical or emotional isolation of another employee, and work over- or under-load (Rayner et al., 2002).

The bullying behaviours involved in this study are categorised as “work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physical intimidation” (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009, p. 27). Work-related bullying encompasses undesirable behaviour that impacts the target's productivity or work performance through work over- and under-load, the assignment of tasks below a person's skill level, and through constantly criticising individuals or their work (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2009). Physical intimidation refers to behaviour such as threats of violence or actual abuse and other intimidating behaviours such as finger-pointing and shoving (Einarsen et al., 2009). Lastly, person-related bullying encompasses acts such as the spreading of gossip about an employee, psychological threats, social or physical isolation, and the making of insinuations or any offensive comments about an individual (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017; Einarsen, 1999).

2.2.4 Prevalence of bullying

It is important to take cognisance of the bullying experienced by employees at work, its antecedents, deterrents, and consequences, as workplace bullying has proven to be prevalent worldwide (Karabulut, 2016). For example, 70% of the respondents in the study by Glasø, Vie, Holmdal, and Einarsen (2011) reported having experienced bullying within the work context. According to Hoel, Cooper, and Faragher (2010), an average of between 10% to 30% of European and American employees reported having experienced workplace bullying. Bullying has also been found to be a prevalent problem within the South African work context. Steinman's (2003) study revealed that 77% of the participants of the study experienced bullying in their working environments. Similarly, Cunniff (2011) established that while 4% of the employees in the study reported often experiencing bullying at work, 31% reported always experiencing bullying at work. A study conducted by Visagie and colleagues (2012) reported that more than a quarter of the employees in the study reported experiences of workplace bullying. In terms of demographic factors (race, age, gender, and level of education), the following information has been found to pertain to the prevalence of workplace bullying:

2.2.4.1 Race

In line with the postulation that outsiders in particular settings tend to be easy targets for bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011), previous studies have suggested that employees from minority racial groups are likely to report higher levels of bullying (Lewis & Gunn, 2007; Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003). This may be because employees that tend to be more exposed and visible, as would minority groups in organisations, are more likely to be victims to bullying (Salin, 2003). This expectation proved consistent in Cunniff's (2011) study within the South African context. The study found that Black employees, as the minority racial group in South African organisations as a result of being economically disadvantaged (Lee, 2010), reported

higher levels of workplace bullying (Cunniff, 2011). Interestingly, Steinman (2003) found that the largest ethnic groups within organisations experience higher levels of violence at work while minority ethnic groups report higher incidences of sexual harassment. This finding by Steinman (2003) was, however, devoid of specific racial considerations but was rather related to the specific large and minority ethnic groups found in particular South African organisations.

2.2.4.2 Age

There have been inconsistencies in the findings pertaining to the association between workplace bullying and age. Some previous studies have indicated that younger employees experience more bullying at work. For example, according to Hoel and Cooper (2000), younger employees and those within the middle-age groups tend to be at greater risk of experiencing bullying than older employees. Deniz and Ertsosun (2010) also found that employees below the age of 30 reported more bullying than their older colleagues. In the South African context, Cunniff (2011) reported that younger employees experienced more bullying than older employees. These results may be attributed to the reason that due to a lower status in pay and job security, new entrants and younger employees in organisations experience a power imbalance that may be conducive to victimisation (CareerBuilder, 2011; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Salin, 2003).

On the contrary, however, Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) have suggested that older employees report more experiences of bullying at work than their younger counterparts. This finding is in line with the trend that higher age and higher tenure have been associated with higher exposure to mobbing behaviour, particularly peaking during pre-retirement age (Zukauskas & Vveinhardt, 2013). Older employees are also subjected to a stigmatisation and stereotypes based on beliefs that older employees are incapable of adjusting to changing work environments (Zukauskas & Vveinhardt, 2013).

2.2.4.3 Gender

Previous studies have yielded different findings pertaining to the gender suggested to experience more bullying. For example, Hoel and Cooper (2000) and Vartia and Hyyti (2002) found that women report more experiences of bullying than men. Salin (2003) is of the opinion that the power differences linked to conventional gender roles may influence bullying behaviour in that women may be perceived to have lower power and status. This perception consequently leads to women's reporting more experiences of victimisation and bullying than men (Salin, 2003).

Cunniff (2011), in the South African context, differently found that men reported higher levels of workplace bullying. It has been suggested that workplace bullying incidents tend to take the form of same-sex harassment acts (Namie, 2003) and as men have higher economic activity and hold more managerial positions in South Africa than women (Statistics South Africa, 2013), this could be a possible reason for Cunniff's (2011) findings that male employees are more likely to be bullied by their male superiors.

Other previous studies (such as Deniz & Ertosun, 2010; Ortega, Høgh, Pejtersen, & Olsen, 2009; Pietersen, 2007; Steinman, 2003) have found that there were no statistically significant differences in the degree to which men and women experienced bullying at work. An interesting finding by Jóhannsdóttir and Ólafsson (2004) was that while there were no gender differences when participants were directly asked whether they have experienced bullying or not, males reported more bullying-type experiences. This finding indicated that males tend to interpret unfavourable experiences differently and, through the use of more assertive coping strategies, feel they are better able to deal with the negative experiences associated with bullying (Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2004).

2.2.4.4 Education levels

Past research has suggested that there are differences in how people with different education levels experience workplace bullying; particularly that people with lower educational levels are more exposed to workplace bullying. For instance, the study by Deniz and Ertosun (2010) established that employees with a primary school level of education were more exposed to bullying at work, particularly in physical form, when compared to those with high school and university levels of education (Deniz & Ertosun, 2010). Additionally, those with a high school education were found to be more exposed to workplace bullying than those with a university education (Deniz & Ertosun, 2010). Ortega et al. (2009) found that unskilled workers reported a higher prevalence of bullying at work. Similarly, within the South African context, Cunniff (2011) found that employees with lower education levels reported more experiences of workplace bullying.

2.2.5 Individual antecedents of workplace bullying

Past research has cited certain attributes of the perpetrator (the bully) as antecedents to bullying. As an example, it has been suggested that bullies tend to have a low self-esteem (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). As a consequence of this low self-esteem, a bully's behaviour may be attributed to being threatened by employees who he or she may perceive as a threat to his or her own reputation at work (Oade, 2009). Due to low self-esteem, perpetrators may also direct their poor performance problems at other colleagues instead of investing in self-improvement (Oade, 2009). Oade (2009) is also of the opinion that due to being afraid of embarrassment and failure, bullies may put others down to feel better about themselves. With this taken into consideration, this hostile behaviour at work may also be the result of envy (Vartia, 1996).

Bullies have also been said to have poor social skills, poor self-awareness, poor self-reflection, and poor perspective-taking (Oade, 2009; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). Due to these

attributes, it has been suggested that perpetrators of bullying may not always be completely cognisant of their behaviour and the negative impact thereof (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). While the above may provide insight into perpetrator behaviour, it is important to note that there is no single profile that would be common to all bullying perpetrators as bullying comes in different forms (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011).

In addition to the characteristics that define the perpetrator, authors have also studied the attributes of the victim to explain the perceptions and reactions to bullying at work. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2011), some people may come across as “natural victims of bullying” and may thus be at a greater risk of being bullied than others (p. 189). This may be due to factors such as being low in self-assertiveness and being unable to stand up for themselves (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). Victims of bullying also tend to report lower coping and conflict management skills than non-victims (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesoy, as cited in Zapf & Einarsen, 2003).

It has been reported that the personality and approach of the victim also play a role in the bullying (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000). For instance, as it has been suggested that victims of bullying may be more introverted than non-victims (Coyne et al., 2000), victims of bullying may tend to be more quiet, shy, and anxious in social settings (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). It has also been suggested that victims of bullying may be more prudent, rule-conscious, punctual, and tend to be more devoted to their work, which are attributes associated with the conscientiousness personality trait (Coyne et al., 2000). This conscientiousness may lead to aggression and envy in the individual’s co-workers as they pose a threat to the self-esteem of others in the organisation (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006; Kim & Glomb, 2014; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). Previous studies have also reported a positive association between neuroticism and bullying (such as Balducci, Fraccaroli, & Schaufeli, 2011; Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007). These results suggest that victims of

bullying may tend to experience emotional reactions such as being anxious and easily upset, consequently making them more susceptible to bullying behaviour as they are perceived to be “more provocative” than their more emotionally stable counterparts (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015, p. 132). Another personality trait that has been linked to bullying is low agreeableness (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001). This may be due to the idea that individuals low in agreeableness tend to be distrustful and sceptical and, as a result, may tend to perceive interpersonal interactions as bullying when compared to individuals high in agreeableness (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009).

While individual factors may have an effect in the development of bullying, management has the responsibility of preventing and managing this behaviour (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). This entails also being aware of organisational precursors of workplace bullying.

2.2.6 Organisational antecedents of workplace bullying

According to the work environment hypothesis by Leymann (1996), environmental conditions within organisations may act as precursors to bullying. While research has recognised the impact of individual factors in workplace bullying, the work environment hypothesis has dominated bullying research (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). Some cited features of the organisational environment that might instigate bullying behaviour include unclear job descriptions, role conflict, role ambiguity, uncertainty regarding performance expectations, and the inadequate provision of resources necessary for task performance (Balducci, Cecchin, & Fraccaroli, 2012; Vartia, 1996). Bullying may thus be perpetuated when employees hold the perception that they are faced with contradictory demands, unclear expectations, and little control over their work (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Salin & Hoel, 2011).

According to Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012), workplace bullying may also emanate from organisational policy and practices, as bullying seems to be more prevalent in organisations without anti-bullying policies. This lack of policy implementation may be seen as leadership's reluctance and incapability to address bullying behaviour, consequently perpetuating a toxic climate within the organisation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This type of climate is perpetuated because the perpetrator gains the impression that the organisation either permits or will turn a blind eye to the bullying behaviour (Harvey, Treadway, & Hearn, 2007).

These individual and organisational antecedents lead to several undesirable outcomes for both individuals within the organisation and the organisation in its entirety and, in the context of the present study, these consequences are explored below.

2.2.7 Individual consequences of workplace bullying

Past studies have revealed negative associations between workplace bullying and individual consequences such as job satisfaction (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016), work engagement (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017) and job security (Glambek et al., 2014). According to Ritzman (2014), lowered organisational commitment and poor morale are some negative work-related outcomes employees may experience as a result of being victims of bullying behaviour at work. Victims of bullying may also experience limited concentration, an increased degree of errors in their work, loss of creativity, missed deadlines, and a diminished ability to manage and plan time effectively (Gardner & Johnson, 2001; Namie, 2003). Another individual consequence, that is of particular relevance to the present study, is the expression of intention to leave following the experience of bullying at work (Aljawazneh & Ziad, 2017; Djurkovic et al., 2008; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2011).

Other reported individual consequences relate to impaired psychological wellbeing and mental health, in that employees who experience bullying may report depression, anxiety, and a lowered self-confidence (Cortina & Magley, 2003; Hansen et al., 2006). The victims of bullying also report feelings of exhaustion, isolation, impatience and being frequently upset (Glasø et al., 2007). Previous studies have also found a negative association between the experience of bullying and symptoms associated with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Rodriguez-Munoz, Moreno-Jimenez, Vergel, & Hernandez, 2010). In addition to the above, studies have also reported experiences of bullying at work to be associated with some physiological problems for the bullied individuals. These include problems such as headaches, musculoskeletal pains, fatigue, stomach disorders, and cardiovascular disease (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Kivimaki et al., 2003; Vartia, 2001).

Exposure to bullying behaviour may also lead to changes in the victims' lifestyles. Bullied individuals may report alcohol abuse, increased smoking, drug use, sleep disturbances, and the use of medication to induce sleep (Namie, 2003; Rospenda, 2002; Vartia, 2001; Yildiz, 2007). Workplace bullying may also impact the quality of an individual's social interactions in other areas outside of work (Yildirim, 2009).

Research has not only reported negative consequences for bullied individuals but has also indicated that those that witness the bullying are also affected (Hoel, Cooper, & Rayner, 1999). Bystanders to bullying have reported negative effects such as increased general and mental stress, feelings of powerlessness, and a lack of control (Ritzman, 2014; Vartia, 2001). These bystanders also report impaired job satisfaction, performance, commitment, and loyalty to the organisation (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). They may also express intention to leave the organisation as a result of fear that they may be the next victim (Vartia, 2001).

2.2.8 Organisational consequences of workplace bullying

According to Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, and Einarsen (2011), organisations also stand to suffer from employees' experiences of bullying at work. When employees experience the negative consequences explored above, it translates to an impaired ability to perform at their optimum in their work (Hoel et al., 2011). This consequently results in increased absenteeism, increased sick leave, poor quality of work, and decreased productivity for the organisation (Hoel et al., 2011; Roscigno, Lopez, & Hodson, 2009).

Workplace bullying also leads to communication difficulties within the organisation and the creation of a hostile working environment (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017; Djurkovic et al., 2008). A perceived acceptance of bullying within may lead to a negative atmosphere of fear and mistrust within the organisation, which may consequently also affect those who are bystanders to the bullying (Namie, 2007). Employees may also establish negative, abusive, and violent behaviour as an organisational norm (Hutchinson, Wilkes, Jackson, & Vickers, 2010). As a result of this negative organisational climate, organisations thus run the risk of the negative influences of bullying spreading throughout the organisation (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006).

Other potential costs pertain to grievances, compensation, and legal costs as organisations can be liable for legal claims pertaining to workplace bullying (Hoel et al., 2011). Workplace bullying may thus also negatively impact an organisation's reputation (Karabulat, 2016; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Workplace bullying also adversely impacts an organisation's long-term success as it gives rise to the risk of losing valued talent through the departure of employees (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017; Ritzman, 2014).

2.3 Psychological Conditions

2.3.1 Origin

The conceptualisation of the psychological conditions of engagement and disengagement (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability) has been attributed to William Kahn (1990). Kahn (1990) sought to develop a theoretical framework to illustrate how different psychological experiences of work and the work context form people's commitment to either applying or removing themselves during task performance. He was guided by the assumption that individuals continuously engage in behaviours of "bringing in and leaving out" numerous parts of themselves during work for the purpose of responding to the environment, expressing, and defending themselves (Kahn, 1990, p. 692). Kahn (1990) postulated that when people engage in any role behaviour, they ask themselves three questions. These are: (1) *How meaningful is this performance for me?* (2) *How safe is this performance?* and (3) *How available am I for this performance?* These questions refer to the three psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. These psychological conditions are each explored below.

2.3.2 Psychological meaningfulness

Kahn (1990) defined psychological meaningfulness as the extent to which an individual feels that he or she is "receiving a return of investment of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (p. 703). It has also been defined as the subjective value an individual places on his or her work, based on his or her own personal ideals and standards (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Similarly, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) have defined psychological meaningfulness as the amount of importance something represents for an individual. For the present study, psychological meaningfulness is seen as one's subjective appraisal of his or her work as being valued,

worthwhile, and instrumental to his or her personal growth; an appraisal that consequently drives an individual's behaviour at work (Kahn, 1990).

2.3.2.1 Antecedents of psychological meaningfulness

As postulated by Kahn (1990), psychological meaningfulness is a consequence of three work-related dimensions, namely task characteristics, role characteristics, and the quality of an employee's interactions within the work context. Task characteristics involve work or job tasks requiring the application of old and new skills, autonomy, variety, and challenge (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) believed these particular aspects of a job or tasks are a significant source of psychological meaningfulness. These characteristics are in line with some of the five core dimensions of the Job Characteristics Model by Hackman and Oldham (1980) (skills variety, task identity, task significance, and autonomy), which have been suggested to impact meaningfulness at work through the facilitation of personal growth.

Role characteristics, as the second antecedent of psychological meaningfulness, encompasses two components of work roles (Kahn, 1990). The first component is the requirement that work roles should fit with the individual's self-image and thus be able to provide an attractive identity to the employee (Kahn, 1990). This fit is particularly important as human beings seek experiences that enable them to "express themselves authentically" (Jacobs, 2013, p. 61). This fit further bears the implication of employees' being comfortable with expressing their values and beliefs within the work context, which consequently leads to experienced meaningfulness (Brief & Nord, 1990; Shamir, 1991). The second component of role characteristics relates to the status or influence brought by the roles individuals occupy (Kahn, 1990). These are also significant sources for the experience of psychological meaningfulness as, through the status or influence of a role, an individual comes to view his or her job as "important, valuable and worthwhile" (Odendaal, 2009, p. 170). In agreement with the above postulations by Kahn (1990), Rich, LePine, and Crawford (2010) also suggest

that an individual's perceptions of organisational and work factors, specifically factors pertaining to task and role characteristics, are important for one's sense of psychological meaningfulness.

In addition to task and role characteristics, Kahn (1990) also postulated that it is important that an individual is provided with a sense of dignity, appreciation, and feelings of being valued through his or her interpersonal relations and interactions within the work context (Kahn, 1990). In line with Kahn's (1990) postulations, previous research has also suggested that people experience meaningfulness when they feel respected and worthwhile (Asiwe et al., 2017; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). These postulations may be explained by the premise that favourable interpersonal interactions and relations lead to a sense of belonging, which consequently impacts an individual's degree of meaningfulness (May et al., 2004).

2.3.2.2 Consequences of psychological meaningfulness

Meaningfulness has been described as a "lifestyle characteristic that is most important for resilience under stressful conditions" (Matuska & Christiansen, 2008, p. 13). It has been evidenced to be related to wellbeing in stressful circumstances, through its role of buffering against stress (Britt & Bliese, 2003). Similarly, Treadgold (1999) found being engaged in meaningful work to be a negative predictor of stress and depression. While those who experience meaningfulness may also encounter daily stressors, they are less likely to experience precipitating stress that might ultimately contribute to depression (Treadgold, 1999).

Being involved in projects with a personal meaning, which are also related to an individual's identity, has also been associated with enhanced wellbeing (Christiansen, 1999). The experience of psychological meaningfulness has also been associated with positive

consequences such as satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to the organisation (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2003). In a similar vein, experiencing work as meaningful has been found to be positively correlated with clarity of self-concept (Treadgold, 1999).

Previous studies have also found psychological meaningfulness to be a precursor of engagement (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007), with studies by Asiwe et al. (2017) and Janik and Rothmann (2015) citing psychological meaningfulness as the most significant predictor of work engagement when compared to psychological safety and psychological availability.

In terms of impacting employees' behaviour, engagement in meaningful work has been positively associated with problem-focused coping and negatively associated with avoidance-focused coping (Treadgold, 1999). While avoidance coping is associated with denial, distancing, or detaching of one's self from the stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), problem-focused coping, on the other hand, encompasses engaging in "efforts to improve or at least to change the person-environment relationship" (Treadgold, 1999, p. 91). In line with avoidance-focused coping, work experienced as meaningless has been suggested to result in a lack of interest and apathy towards work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), feelings of hostility, and disengagement (Aktouf, 1992).

2.3.3 Psychological safety

Psychological safety, as the second psychological condition, refers to an individual's state of "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). According to Edmondson (1999), psychological safety also relates to shared beliefs pertaining to the degree of safety in interpersonal interactions within the workplace. This safety, for example, refers to whether employees believe they will not be rejected for being themselves, expressing their thoughts or

engaging in constructive disagreements with co-workers (Edmondson, 1999). The definition chosen for the present study is the definition by Kahn (1990).

2.3.3.1 Antecedents of psychological safety

Kahn's (1990) study suggested there are four factors that influence psychological safety through creating situations that are "predictable, consistent, and non-threatening" (p. 705). These factors are interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and processes, and organisational norms. Interpersonal relationships, as the first antecedent, is concerned with ongoing and non-threatening interpersonal relationships within the work context characterised by mutual support, trust, and openness (Kahn, 1990). Edmondson (1999) is of the opinion that good interpersonal relationships send the message that one is seen as competent by others and will be less likely to be judged if expressing ideas and opinions, which consequently leads to a sense of psychological safety. The inverse also applies in that poor interpersonal relationships between co-workers lead to employees hiding their true selves from others as they feel they do not fit in (Jacobs, 2013).

Group and intergroup dynamics also have a significant impact on psychological safety. These refer to the dynamics among work groups characterised by informal and unconscious roles that offer group members room to safely express parts of their selves (Kahn, 1990). Based on these group dynamics, members of the same group hold similar views about the interpersonal safety in the particular group as their beliefs are shaped by the same influences and from shared experiences (Edmondson, 2004).

The third factor relates to management style and processes. These refer to the degree to which leader and management behaviours are characterised by "support, resilience, consistency, trust and competence" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). This type of behaviour is important

for psychological safety as formal bases of power can influence employees' perceptions of interpersonal risk within the work context (Edmondson, 2004).

Kahn (1990) also saw organisational norms as important for an individual's sense of psychological safety. These norms refer to the shared beliefs pertaining to member behaviours and emotions, which offer opportunities for self-investment during role performance (Kahn, 1990). These organisational norms are seen as significant as psychological safety requires a climate characterised by productive and positive interaction and the accomplishment of collective goals, as opposed to an environment characterised by individual preoccupation with self-protection (Edmondson, 2004).

2.3.3.2 Consequences of psychological safety

Due to psychological safety's ability to promote positive emotions, it has been seen as an important construct that empowers individuals to engage in trial and error and to seek to learn new behaviours (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). In a similar vein, a perception of psychological safety has also been suggested to enable employees' creativity and empower them to "experiment, explore, and learn" (Li & Tan, 2013, p. 413). Li and Tan (2013) also suggest psychological safety is an important force for motivation. Similar to psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety has also been found to be positively related to engagement (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007).

These favourable consequences of psychological safety can be attributed to the premise that people's beliefs and expectations concerning whether others will judge or support them are likely to affect the degree to which they are willing to: 1) take interpersonal risks and 2) take part in learning behaviours (Edmondson, 1999). In environments perceived as safe, individuals come to understand the limitations concerning behaviours deemed as acceptable (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010) and consequently feel comfortable to take

interpersonal risks, to express opposing opinions and to engage in learning behaviours (Ashauer & Macan, 2013). On the other hand, unsafe environments characterised by ambiguity, unpredictability, and threat have been suggested to lead to disengagement and employees' being cautious to try new things (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). It has also been suggested that when employees' psychological safety is threatened, they feel overwhelmed and are likely to seek to protect themselves from any further undesirable exposure (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

2.3.4 Psychological availability

The third psychological condition is psychological availability, which refers to the availability of physical, emotional, and psychological resources important for engaging in an activity at a specific point in time (Kahn, 1990). When people are able to receive or experience these resources from their organisations, they can be engaged in their work (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). While all individuals have the physical, emotional, and psychological resources that allow for engagement in different activities, some work activities may require more of these resources than others (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Psychological availability has also been described as the assessment of "one's readiness or confidence to engage in a work role, given that individuals are also engaged in many other social activities" (Asiwe et al., 2017, p. 2). Kahn's (1990) definition is the definition utilised for the present study.

2.3.4.1 Antecedents of psychological availability

Kahn (1990) postulated that there are four individual distractions that influence psychological availability. These are the depletion of physical energy, the depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and the impact of outside lives or non-work events.

The first two distractions relate to the depletion of an individual's energy. The depletion of physical energy refers to the exhaustion of existing levels of physical resources that enable individuals to invest in role performance (Kahn, 1990). Different kinds of jobs require different types of physical exertion (May et al., 2004) and individuals differ in the levels of strength and flexibility needed for physical challenges (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). The depletion of emotional energy encompasses the exhaustion of emotional resources that individuals require to invest in role performance (Kahn, 1990). This depletion of emotional resources has been suggested to be caused by continuing emotional demands (Morris & Feldman, 1996).

The third distraction of psychological availability is individual insecurity (Kahn, 1990). This insecurity refers to the level of confidence an individual has in his or her own abilities, status, and fit with the social system; these all impact the degree to which one is able to invest in role performance (Kahn, 1990). This may be because when individuals experience insecurity and preoccupation with the impression they leave on other people, they may place more focus on external cues (as opposed to internal cues), consequently distracting themselves from their work role (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004).

Lastly, individuals' outside lives also act as a distraction to psychological availability (Kahn, 1990). This distraction relates to people's lives outside of work (such as the roles they play in the family and in the community) that impact the degree to which they are able to make investments of self during role performance (Kahn, 1990). According to May et al. (2004), the non-work lives of individuals are able to influence their levels of psychological availability through drawing their energies away from their work roles.

2.3.4.2 Consequences of psychological availability

Similar to psychological meaningfulness and safety, previous research has suggested psychological availability is an antecedent of work engagement (Asiwe et al., 2017; May et al., 2004; Rothmann & Buys, 2011; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). This is in line with the premise that when employees have the physical, emotional and cognitive resources associated with psychological availability, they are more likely to be engaged in their work roles (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). It has also been suggested that when individuals trust and have confidence in their capabilities, they are inherently aware of their cognitive, physical, and emotional resources, which consequently means they are able to invest these personal resources in task performance (Jacobs, 2013). In line with the confidence associated with psychological availability, research has suggested that individuals who experience psychological availability are also able to express their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs authentically, including the expression of both positive and negative affect (Argyris, 1982; Rothbard & Patil, 2012).

When people experience a lack of confidence to fulfil work requirements adequately, both physically and emotionally, they may have feelings of estrangement and alienation from work (Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995). It has also been suggested that when people are self-conscious, they may tend to be more focused on what others think or feel about them, which consequently distracts them from their work roles (Rothmann & Welsh, 2013). According to Li and Tan (2013), when employees have to devote energy to dealing with distractions (as with psychological availability), they are left with only a few resources for value-adding tasks and instead devote more energy towards protecting themselves (Li & Tan, 2013). Evidence has shown that a lack of psychological availability has been associated with disengagement from work (Kahn, 1990).

2.4 Intention to Leave

2.4.1 Defining intention to leave

The concept of intention to leave, also referred to as turnover intention, has been defined quite similarly by different authors. According to Khan et al. (2013), intention to leave refers to an employee's considerations of leaving his or her current organisation or employment willingly. It was similarly defined as an individual's deliberate goal to end employment at his or her present organisation (DeTienne, Agle, Phillips, & Ingerson, 2012). Likewise, it was defined by Yang, Wan, and Fu (2012) as an employee's intention to depart from his or her current employment, accompanied by the pursuit of employment in a different organisation. According to Lam, Pine, and Baum (2003), turnover intention or intention to leave can be categorised into two types, namely voluntary and involuntary turnover. While voluntary turnover refers to a decision taken by an employee to depart from an organisation; involuntary turnover differently refers to an employee's departure from the organisation being precipitated by the employer or working conditions (Lam et al., 2003). An employee's consideration to leave the organisation as an outcome of the different occupational pressures faced at work is considered as involuntary turnover (Khan et al., 2013). For the current study, intention to leave is defined as an employee's involuntary considerations to leave his or her current employment, accompanied by a desire to seek employment at another organisation.

For a better understanding of intention to leave, its antecedents and consequences are explored below.

2.4.2 Antecedents of intention to leave

Research has cited several work-related factors as precursors of turnover intention. Past studies have found a negative relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction, organisational justice, affective commitment, and normative commitment

(Guntur, Haerani, & Hasan, 2012; Maertz, Griffith, Campbell, & Allen, 2007; Kaur, Mohindru, & Pankaj, 2013). According to Gyensare et al. (2015), the presence of these work-related outcomes is important for employee motivation and involvement. When employees perceive a lack in these factors, they are likely to experience frustration and exhaustion, and subsequently become motivated to withdraw from the organisation (Gyensare, 2013). Other work-related factors that have been seen as predictors of intention to leave include high work stress (Kaur et al., 2013), undesirable leadership and management behaviour (Rothmann, Diedericks, & Swart, 2013), and uncertainty pertaining to the expected perceived support from one's organisation (Van Schalkwyk, 2011).

In addition to these work-related factors, research has also begun to pay attention to the relational dynamics involved at work in explaining employees' unhappiness and withdrawal. Some of these factors include the perception of high levels of organisational politics (Zhang & Lee, 2010), social exclusion by others in the workplace (Renn, Allen, & Huning, 2013), and leadership behaviour leading to the belittling of employees and feelings of incompetence (Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2015). These relational dynamics are related to workplace bullying, which is also a predictor of intention to leave (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017; McCormack et al., 2009).

It has also been suggested that age has an impact on an employee's intention to leave, in that older employees report less intention to leave (Perez, 2008). Tenure has also been suggested to play a role in intention to leave as employees that have been in the organisation for longer tend to report less desire to leave their employment (Perez, 2008). Gurpreet (2007) has also suggested that employees' intention to leave can also be influenced by factors such as position in the organisation and the experience of individual employees. This is based on the postulation that the higher levels of status and experience within the organisation are associated with lower intention to leave (Gurpreet, 2007).

2.4.3 Consequences of intention to leave

While the determinants of employees' intention to leave have been vastly explored in past research, its consequences have not garnered as much attention. The most documented consequence of intention to leave is actual turnover (such as in Cohen & Golan, 2007; Glambek et al., 2014; Hopkins, Cohen-Callow, Kim, & Hwang, 2010; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). While turnover refers to the degree to which employees leave an organisation in a certain time period (e.g., annually) (Altarawmneh & Al-Kilani, 2010), it is also seen as employee withdrawal behaviour, through which employees attempt to re-establish their value in the employment relationship (Geurts, Schaufeli, & Rutte, 1999; Krausz, Koslowsky, Shalom, & Elyakim, 1995). Turnover is quite a significant outcome to heed as it has previously been proven to have a negative relationship with factors such as productivity, profitability, and employee morale (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010; Lam, Lo, & Chan, 2002). When employees have ultimately left an organisation, the employer also has to manage costs related to the improvement of the morale and commitment of the remaining workforce (Khan et al., 2013). Past research has thus shown that intention to leave by employees (whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis) is costly to organisations. These costs are not only associated with the loss of much valued talent and human capital but also several recruitment, selection, and training of replacement personnel expenses (Khan et al., 2013). According to Van Dyk (2016), other significant outcomes of intention to leave include lowered engagement and productivity of staff, lowered job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, experiences of frustration at work, poor work performance, and impaired psychological wellbeing.

With the above provision of the available literature on each of the variables of the study, the expected relationships between the constructs are explored below.

2.5 Relationships between Variables of the Study

2.5.1 Workplace bullying and intention to leave

Employees that are considered more content with their work and their organisations are expected to have more loyalty towards their organisations and are less likely to experience intention to leave (Yin-Fahd, 2010). While employees consider leaving their organisations for a number of reasons such as low job satisfaction (Gyensare et al., 2015) or having acquired a better offer of employment at another organisation (Hoel et al., 2011), various studies have shown that employees also consider leaving their current organisations or work as a result of having experienced bullying within the organisation (Berthelsen, Skogstad, Lau, & Einarsen, 2011; Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017; Djurkovic et al., 2008).

In a study done over two years, Berthelsen et al. (2011) found differences in the turnover intention of employees exposed to workplace bullying and those who were not; the former were found to have changed employers more often. Similarly, Coetzee and Van Dyk (2017) found that perceptions of bullying resulted in higher turnover intention in employees from various South African organisations. Interestingly, according to the results of the study by Djurkovic et al. (2008), workplace bullying and intention to leave showed a positive relationship, even when the bullying employees experienced was considered to be less severe. This meant that the experienced bullying behaviour did not necessarily involve behaviours such as physical abuse or overt threats of harm (Djurkovic et al. 2008). This noteworthy finding indicates the substantial impact of bullying on intention to leave, even in situations of less severe types of bullying behaviour (Djurkovic et al., 2008). Based on available literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H_1 : Workplace bullying will have a positive relationship with intention to leave.

2.5.2 Workplace bullying and psychological meaningfulness

One of the antecedents necessary for experiences of psychological meaningfulness, as postulated by Kahn (1990) and supported by other previous studies (May et al., 2004; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010), are interpersonal relations and interactions within the work context that provide an individual with a sense of dignity, appreciation, and feelings of being valued. Workplace bullying represents interpersonal interactions characterised by undesirable factors such as harassment, offending, and social exclusion (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003), which represents the inverse of the quality of work interactions required for psychological meaningfulness.

Additionally, one of the important influences of psychological meaningfulness, as postulated by Kahn (1990), are work roles that provide individuals with attractive identities, positive self-images, desired status, and influence. Workplace bullying would thus be expected to be negatively associated with psychological meaningfulness as factors such as role conflict and an employee's having little control over his or her own work are examples of factors that have been associated with bullying behaviour (Einarsen et al., 1994). With this taken into consideration, a negative association between workplace bullying and psychological meaningfulness was expected. It was thus expected that employees reporting the experience of bullying at work would report lower psychological meaningfulness. With the above taken into consideration, the following hypothesis was made:

*H*₂: Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological meaningfulness.

2.5.3 Workplace bullying and psychological safety

Psychological safety refers to the degree to which employees believe they will not be rejected for being themselves, expressing their thoughts or engaging in constructive

disagreements with co-workers (Edmondson, 1999). One of the elements required for psychological safety, as postulated by Kahn (1990), are ongoing and non-threatening interpersonal relationships within the work context characterised by mutual support, trust, and openness. In a similar vein, previous studies have found that the support employees receive from supervisors and favourable relations with co-workers have a positive association with feelings of psychological safety (May et al., 2004; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

Taking this into consideration, a negative association between workplace bullying and psychological safety was expected as workplace bullying has been linked to aspects such as lack of social support, the existence of contention among colleagues (Van Schalkwyk, 2011), victimisation of employees (Karabulat, 2016) and the creation of an intimidating workplace (Einarsen, 1999). Thus, it was expected that experiences of workplace bullying would be associated with lower psychological safety. Based on this, the following hypothesis was put forward:

H₃: Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological safety.

2.5.4 Workplace bullying and psychological availability

Psychological availability encompasses the availability of physical, emotional, and psychological resources that enable individuals to engage in activities (Kahn, 1990). One of the distractions to psychological availability, as postulated by Kahn (1990), is the level of confidence an individual has in their own abilities, status, and his or her fit with the social system. Research has associated workplace bullying with undesirable consequences such as anxiety, a low self-esteem, feelings of vulnerability, stress, and burnout (Hogh et al., 2011; Matthiesen, Raknes & Rokkum, 1989; Rugulies et al., 2012). It has been suggested that when employees' attentions are focused on distractions, they are unable to devote energy to completing their work tasks, and as a result, they are deprived of the confidence needed to

handle work demands (Li & Tan, 2013). As these consequences of bullying may negatively affect an individual's confidence concerning coping with the technical and social aspects of work, workplace bullying may therefore negatively affect one's psychological availability. It was thus expected that workplace bullying would be negatively associated with psychological availability, in that experiences of workplace bullying will be associated with lower psychological availability. With the above taken into consideration, the following hypothesis was phrased:

H₄: Workplace bullying will have a negative relationship with psychological availability

2.5.5 Psychological meaningfulness and intention to leave

According to Geldenhuys, Łaba, and Venter (2014), when employees are able to experience their work as meaningful, they consequently tend to place greater value in their work and as a result, develop greater attachment and commitment to their organisations. On the other hand, some antecedents of intention to leave have been found to be affective and normative commitment (Gyensare et al., 2015). Additionally, psychological meaningfulness has been positively associated with problem-focused coping (e.g., modifying the circumstances) and negatively related to avoidance-focused coping (e.g., denial or detachment from prevailing circumstances) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Treadgold, 1999). With the above taken into consideration, it was expected that psychological meaningfulness would be negatively associated with intention to leave. In other words, it was expected that lower psychological meaningfulness would be associated with higher intention to leave, with the following hypothesis:

H₅: Psychological meaningfulness will have a negative relationship with intention to leave.

2.5.6 Psychological safety and intention to leave

According to Van Schalkwyk (2011), employees express less intention to leave when they perceive their working environments as supportive. With the emphasis psychological safety places on a working environment comprised of mutual support, trust, and openness, it was expected that high psychological safety would be associated with low intention to leave.

Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) suggest that unsafe environments characterised by ambiguity, unpredictability, and threat are likely to lead to disengagement. This may be due to the fact that when employees' psychological safety is threatened, they feel overwhelmed and are likely to seek to protect themselves from any further undesirable exposure (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). With this in mind, it was expected that lower psychological safety would be associated with higher intention to leave, giving rise to the following hypothesis:

H₆: Psychological safety will have a negative relationship with intention to leave.

2.5.7 Psychological availability and intention to leave

According to Kahn (1990), psychological availability can have an influence on how people go about their work roles, in that the greater the amount of self-confidence an individual has in his or her abilities, the more he or she will be engaged in his or her work roles. Psychological availability has also been found to significantly predict one's engagement to his or her work (Del Valle, 2017; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). Intention to leave, on the other hand, is considered as thoughts of withdrawal, representing disengagement (Van Schalkwyk, 2011). It has also been suggested that when employees must devote energy to dealing with distractions (as with psychological availability), they are left with few resources for value-adding tasks and instead devote more energy towards protecting themselves (Li & Tan, 2013). With this taken into consideration, it was expected that psychological availability would be negatively associated with intention to

leave. Lower psychological meaningfulness was expected to be associated with higher intention to leave. The following hypothesis was thus put forward:

H₇: Psychological availability will have a negative relationship with intention to leave.

2.6 Theoretical Model of the Study

While previous studies have studied the relationship between workplace bullying from theoretical frameworks such as social cognitive theory (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017), the broaden-and-build theory (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2018), and the social exchange theory (Djurkovic et al., 2008), the present study utilised the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as the framework guiding the study.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping model holds that stress is not in the individual or in the environment (Lazarus, 1990). Stress is instead relational in nature, in that it arises from the transaction or interplay between both the individual and the individual's environment (Lazarus, 1990). When stress is defined in this transactional manner, it is understood as arising from the judgement that environmental demands have the likelihood of exceeding an individual's physical or psychological resources, consequently threatening the individual's wellbeing (Dewe, 1997; Holroyd & Lazarus, 1982). This judgement involves two appraisal processes (Dewe, 1997). The first is a primary appraisal process, whereby the individual evaluates the faced situation. Through a process of assigning a meaning to the situation, the individual defines the situation as being "harmful, threatening or challenging" (Dewe, 1997, p. 42).

Following this classification of an event as a threat or a challenge, the individual engages in a secondary appraisal process of evaluating his or her coping resources (Goh, Sawang, & Oei, 2010). During the secondary appraisal process, the individual evaluates how he or she can best cope with the situation (Dewe, 1997). At this stage, individuals have the

task of evaluating the degree of control they have over events and how much power they have to change the situation they face (Dewe, 1997; Goh et al., 2010). In responding to the stressful situation, the individual employs coping strategies and coping resources. Coping strategies refer to the coping behaviour and thoughts of the individual while coping resources relate to the different intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organisational resources an individual has at hand to assist along the coping process (Dewe, 1997).

By applying the postulations of the model to the current study, it can be said that an individual's intention to leave their current organisation as a response to bullying may be a function of the individual's own resources. This is because the model holds that the type and degree of an individual's reaction to a stressful situation is a function of the characteristics of the situation and the individual's appraisal and coping processes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This model is also relevant to this study as it holds the premise that when individuals perceive that their organisations are not providing the needed coping resources, they assume control over their own emotions and take action to reduce their emotional distress as they may not be able to deal with the situation itself (Dewe, 1997). This can be interpreted as that, when individuals experience bullying behaviour at work, they may take action to reduce their emotional distress, which in the context of this study refers to the expression of intention to leave. The model also holds that it is important to take cognisance of people's resources because the degree to which a situation is perceived as stressful and the resultant action taken is a function of the presence of resources that individuals use to cope and respond to situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). By applying the principles of the model to the current study, it was necessary to explore the role played by psychological conditions as resources that might impact how one might express intention to leave as means of managing and responding to bullying, which is a stressful situation in the work environment.

Based on the above and on the fact that acts of bullying within the work context have been suggested to result in the depletion of the psychological conditions of engagement and disengagement (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2018; Fountain, 2016) and these psychological resources have also been found to enable an individual to engage or disengage in certain activities at work (Kahn, 1990), the following hypothesis was formed:

H₈: The psychological conditions will mediate the positive relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave.

The exploration of the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave (as per hypothesis 1), the relationship between workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions (as per hypotheses 2 to 4) and the relationship between each of the psychological conditions and intention to leave (as per hypotheses 5 to 7) provided basis for the eighth hypothesis and thus the objective of the study: determining whether or not the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability would mediate the relationship between employees' experiences of workplace bullying and their intention to leave their current organisations

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of available literature pertaining to the study's predictor (workplace bullying), mediating (psychological conditions), and outcome (intention to leave) variables. This exploration included a look into the origin of the concepts, definitions, antecedents, and consequences, as well as the expected relationships between the different variables. This chapter also offered a look into the theoretical model guiding the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter offers an outline of the research approach employed for the present study. This is followed by an exploration of the research method utilised for the study, including a description of research participants, the sampling procedure, the research procedure, and measurement instruments. Following these will be a broad overview of the statistical methods utilised for data analysis. The chapter ends with an exploration of the ethical considerations upheld in the study.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach utilised for the present study was quantitative. A quantitative research approach encompasses quantification in the processes of collecting and analysing data (Bryman, 2012). As the study sought to examine the relation between three variables based on eight hypotheses, the quantitative approach to research was chosen it allows for the use of statistical analysis to verify hypotheses (Haq, 2014). Quantitative research offers the advantages of allowing for the precise measurement of variables and the generalisation of results to wider populations (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Through the use of quantitative research, numerical data were analysed for the purpose of understanding and making inferences concerning the relationships existing among the different variables of the study.

Based on the quantitative research approach, a cross-sectional research design was utilised for the study. The cross-sectional approach to research design encompasses the collection of quantifiable data on more than one variable from multiple cases, at one point in time (Bryman, 2012; Leavy, 2017). This serves the purpose of determining patterns of association between variables and the identification of variation (Bryman, 2012). The cross-sectional approach was chosen for this study as it would allow for the collection of data on

workplace bullying, each of the psychological conditions, and intention to leave at the same time, in order to make inferences about the relationships between these variables (Bryman, 2012). A cross-sectional approach to research is advantageous as this approach is inexpensive and may be administered in a shorter time (when compared to longitudinal research) (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The cross-sectional research design in the present study was carried out by the use of a survey made up of four self-completion questionnaires.

3.3 Research Method

3.3.1 Research participants

The sample of the study ($N = 201$) was comprised of employees from different South African organisations. The selection criteria for participation in the study included that research participants were employed for a period of a year or longer, irrespective of age, gender, position, or occupation. The participants of the study were also required to have free access to employee assistance programmes in their organisations as some of the items of the measurement instruments of the study could possibly elicit some discomfort or emotional feelings. Having access to an employee assistance programme would enable participants to get assistance following their participation in the study, if needed. Lastly, participants were required to be proficient in English in order to understand and successfully respond to the items of the questionnaires.

The biographical information that was collected consisted of gender, ethnicity, age, position in the organisation, and tenure in the organisation. The sample biographical information is supplied in Table 1 below.

As is shown in Table 1, the sample of employees comprised both males (37.3%) and females (62.7%). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of participants identified themselves as Black (76.6%), followed by White participants (14.4%), Indian participants (5.0%), and

Coloured participants (2.5%). The remaining participants identified their ethnicity as “other” (1.5%). In terms of age groups, most participants were between the ages of 20 to 29 (42.3%). This was followed by participants between the ages of 30 to 39 (21.4%), then 40 to 49 (15.4%), and 50 to 59 (11.9%). The remaining participants reported to be aged 60 years or older (1.5%).

Table 1
Sample biographical composition (N = 201)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	75	37.3
	Female	126	62.7
	Total	201	100
Ethnicity	Black	154	76.6
	White	29	14.4
	Coloured	5	2.5
	Indian	10	5.0
	Other	3	1.5
	Total	201	100
Age	20-29	85	42.3
	30-39	43	21.4
	40-49	31	15.4
	50-59	24	11.9
	60 ≥	3	1.5
	Missing	15	7.5
	Total	201	100

Table 1 Continued

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Position	Trainee/Intern	15	7.5
	Non-manager	60	29.9
	Junior manager/Supervisor	33	16.4
	Middle manager	31	15.4
	Senior manager	25	12.4
	Other	37	18.4
	Total	201	100
Tenure	<10 years	145	72.1
	10-19 years	38	18.9
	20-29 years	11	5.5
	30 years \geq	4	2.0
	Missing	3	1.5
	Total	201	100

Of the 201 sampled employees, the majority of employees indicated they were in non-managerial positions (29.9%), followed by employees who indicated their positions as “other” (18.4%). This was then followed by employees in junior managerial/supervisory positions (16.4%), employees in middle managerial positions (15.4%), employees in senior managerial positions (12.4%), and lastly, employees in trainee or intern positions (7.5%). In terms of the participants’ duration of service in their current organisations (tenure), the majority of employees reported a tenure of less than 10 years (72.1%). This was followed by a tenure of between 10 to 19 years (18.9%), between 20 to 29 years (5.5%). and lastly, a tenure of 30 years or more (2.0%).

3.3.2 Sampling procedure

The study made use of non-probability sampling methods, in the form of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling method that encompasses making “strategic choices about with who, where and how one does one’s research” (Palys, 2008, p. 697). These strategic choices serve the purpose of selecting a sample appropriate for the objectives of the study (Bryman, 2012; Palys, 2008). The researcher thus chooses a sample with a preselected criteria in mind (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Purposive sampling was utilised to select a sample that met the criteria of the study (those listed in 3.3.1 above) and was thus relevant to the topic and objectives of the study.

Snowball sampling, on the other hand, is a method of sampling based on the premise that one sampled case is used to lead the researcher to another case (Patton, 2015). This method of sampling encompasses (1) a researcher’s initially making contact with a small pool of participants that are relevant to the study and (2) subsequently making use of this initial group of people to make contact with other people meeting the eligibility criteria of the study and thus also relevant to the research (Bryman, 2012; Morgan, 2008). Snowball sampling was used in this study by enlisting the original sample (i.e., participants acquired through purposive sampling) to establish contact with other employees meeting the selection criteria of the study. This sampling method was particularly chosen for this study as it would allow the researcher to reach a sample that is not easily accessible; which, in the case of this study, was employees that have access to free employee assistance programmes in their organisations.

3.3.3 Measurement instruments

The measurement instruments used for the study included a biographical questionnaire; a questionnaire measuring employees' experience of workplace bullying; a questionnaire measuring intention to leave; and a questionnaire for measuring the psychological conditions.

3.3.3.1 A biographical questionnaire was used to acquire sample-specific information pertaining to age, gender, ethnicity, position within the organisation and tenure.

3.3.3.2 The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), developed by Einarsen et al. (2009) was utilised for the measurement of workplace bullying. This 22-item instrument allows for the measurement of bullying experiences on three levels, namely "person-related bullying, work-related bullying and physically intimidating bullying" (Einarsen et al., 2009, p. 38). Person-related bullying was measured with 12 items (e.g., "*Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life*"); 7 items measured work-related bullying (e.g., "*Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines*"); and physically intimidating bullying was measured with 3 items (e.g., "*Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse*"). The NAQ-R allows respondents to rate the frequency of their experiences of negative acts on a 5-point scale. This scale offers respondents the options of rating the frequency of their experiences as "*never*", "*now and then*", "*monthly*", "*weekly*", or "*daily*" (Illing et al., 2016).

Einarsen et al. (2009) found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the NAQ-R to be .90. In a different study conducted over two time periods (with a difference of 6 months), the instrument was found to yield Cronbach's alphas of .91 and .89, respectively (Glambek et al., 2014). Bernstein and Trimm (2016) and Coetzee and Van Dyk (2017) also reported good

reliability of the NAQ-R in South Africa with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .89 and .94, respectively.

3.3.3.3 The Psychological Conditions Scale (PCS), developed by May et al. (2004), was utilised to measure the psychological conditions. The 14-item scale is comprised of three subscales, namely the psychological meaningfulness subscale (6 items; e.g., *"I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable"*), the psychology safety subscale (3 items; e.g., *"There is a threatening environment at work"*), and the psychological availability subscale (5 items; e.g., *"I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work"*) (May et al., 2004). The instrument requires respondents to record their responses to items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *"strongly disagree"* to *"strongly agree"* (May et al., 2004).

May et al. (2004) found the Cronbach's alpha coefficients to be .85 for psychological availability, .71 for psychological safety, and .90 for psychological meaningfulness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients within the South African context were found to be .84 for availability, .60 for safety, and .91 for meaningfulness (Rothmann & Rothman, 2010).

3.3.3.4 The Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), developed by Roodt (2004), was used to measure intention to leave. This 6-item self-report instrument measures employees' intention to remain in their current organisation on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *"never"* to *"always"* (e.g., *"How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?"*) (Roodt, 2004). This is with the exception of two items. The first of these is item 2 (*"How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?"*), which requires respondents to reflect on the level of satisfaction they derive from their work on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from *"very satisfying"* to *"totally dissatisfying"*. The fifth item (*"How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?"*) requires respondents to indicate their

likelihood of accepting alternative employment on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*highly unlikely*” to “*highly likely*” (Roodt, 2004).

Giffen (2015) reported a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .88. In a validation study of the scale in South Africa, Bothma and Roodt (2013) found that the instrument yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .80.

3.3.4 Research procedure

In order to recruit participants for the study, employees from different South African organisations were approached (personally and through social media platforms) and asked to take part in the study. This request was accompanied by an explanation of the study and the type of assistance required from the participants. Participants could complete the survey for their participation in the study via one of two methods: the method was in the form of pen-and-paper questionnaires while the second entailed the completion of an online version of the survey through a link supplied via email and social media platforms.

Both forms of surveys were accompanied by a cover letter that supplied information on the nature and purpose of the study. This cover letter explained that participants had a choice to participate in the study and that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any point, without any negative consequences. Participants were also informed that their choice to participate in the study and the data provided would be held confidentially, and that the information would only be used for academic purposes.

The questionnaires that were completed by participants also included a consent form that included the details of the researcher and of the research supervisor, a biographical information form, and the items from each of the study’s measurement instruments. Following the completion of the survey, participants were requested to suggest and provide the contact details of other employees who may be able to participate in the study.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out using the SPSS version 25 (IBM Corp., 2017) program. The data was checked for errors prior to running any statistics. This encompassed checking whether all item scores fall within the range of possible values for each scale. As the observed data for the study included some missing data, a pairwise exclusion of missing data was utilised, as per the recommendation by Pallant (2011). This meant that a case was excluded only if it was missing the data required for a particular analysis but was still included in other analyses for which it had the required information (Pallant, 2011). As per May et al. (2004), two items from the psychological safety subscale were reverse-scored prior to conducting any analysis. These were item 8 (*“I am afraid to express my opinions at work”*) and item 9 (*“There is a threatening environment at work”*).

3.4.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics provide descriptions of samples of subjects based on variables or a combination of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). According to Thompson (2009), descriptive statistics can be used to compare samples of a particular study to another and to identify sample characteristics that might have an influence on the conclusions of the study. Taking this into consideration, descriptive statistics were employed to obtain a summary of the characteristics of the participants, as depicted in Table 1 above. As descriptive statistics also provide estimations of central tendency (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014), the mean scores of workplace bullying, intention to leave, and each of the psychological conditions were examined to obtain an indication of the degree to which the study’s participants experienced each of the variables of the study.

As descriptive statistics also provide information on the distribution of scores for continuous data (Pallant, 2011), descriptive statistics in terms of skewness and kurtosis were analysed for determining the normal distribution of data. Skewness is a measure of the

symmetry of the distribution of data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Kurtosis, on the other hand, is concerned with the peakedness of a distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). While a perfectly normal distribution is reflected by skewness and kurtosis values of 0 (Pallant, 2011), skewness and kurtosis values are deemed acceptable at $<|2|$ and $<|4|$, respectively.

3.4.2 Reliability

The reliability of a measure refers to the consistency with which the measure assesses a particular attribute (Roodt, 2013). It has also been described as the degree to which a scale is without random error (Pallant, 2011). A reliability analysis was necessary in order to determine if the instruments utilised for the study (the NAQ-R, PCS, and the TIS-6) consistently reflect what they measure (Field, 2013). The reliability of the scales used in the present study was analysed by the examination of Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α), a measure of internal consistency (Pallant, 2011). Internal consistency refers to the "degree to which items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute" (Pallant, 2011, p. 6). Cronbach's coefficient alpha provides a measure of the average correlation among the items of a scale (Pallant, 2011). The statistic's values range from 0 to 1, with greater reliability being reflected by higher values (Pallant, 2011). Taber (2017) suggests that Cronbach's alpha coefficients should be at least .70 for satisfactory reliability.

3.4.3 Correlation analysis

A correlation analysis provides a description of the strength and direction of the relationship between variables (Pallant, 2011). Correlation analysis was utilised to determine the existence, strength, and direction of the relationships between the study's variables. The correlation between the following variables was analysed: (1) workplace bullying and intention to leave, (2) workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions, and (3)

each of the psychological conditions and intention to leave. These analyses tested hypotheses 1 to 7.

The statistic used for the analysis of correlation was the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r). The correlation coefficient was analysed to determine the strength and direction of each relationship. While a negative correlation coefficient reflects a negative relationship between the variables, a positive correlation coefficient is interpreted as a positive relationship. In the present study, a negative correlation signalled that the two variables in the analysed relationship change in opposite directions. A positive correlation, on the other hand, related to the two variables changing in the same direction. As per Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the strength of the relationship was interpreted by considering the following effect sizes: small effect (r value between .10 and .29), medium effect (r value between .30 and .49), and large effect (r value between .50 and 1.0).

3.4.4 Mediation analysis

The eighth hypothesis of the study was concerned with probing the potential mediating effect of psychological conditions on the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. Prior to conducting the mediation analysis, the assumptions of regression were checked. This entailed checking for multicollinearity, outliers, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity (Pallant, 2011). The fulfilment of the above assumptions was checked by considering the descriptive statistics output (for outliers and normality), the correlation output (for multicollinearity), and the residual scatterplots generated from a linear regression procedure (for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity).

The primary aim of mediation analysis is to determine whether a mediator can explain the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017). Mediation was thus used to determine whether psychological

meaningfulness, safety and availability (as mediators) can explain the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave, as per the objective of the study. Mediation analysis was conducted on the PROCESS macro (version 3.2) for SPSS (Hayes, 2018), which analyses mediation through a regression-approach (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017).

As the study included three mediators (psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability), parallel mediation was utilised. Parallel mediation refers to a mediation analysis where two or more variables are proposed to mediate the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017). The mediators involved in parallel mediation can correlate but are not allowed to causally influence each other (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017).

The mediation analysis followed the four steps of regression recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Firstly, the regression between workplace bullying and intention to leave was considered. This step certified that there was indeed an effect that may be mediated (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This was followed by considering the regressions between workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions. Thirdly, the regressions of each of the psychological conditions and intention to leave were considered. The last regression included workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions acting as the independent variables, with intention to leave as the dependent variable. The estimation of each of these paths entailed looking at the unstandardised regression coefficients (b) from the two variables in a regression (Field, 2013).

Based on the results of the fourth step, a full mediation occurs when the independent variable has no direct effect on the dependent variable, in the presence of a mediator (Gunzler, Chen, Wu, & Zhang, 2013). A partial mediation, on the other hand, occurs when the mediator only mediates a part of the effect the independent variable has on the dependent

variable, which has been found to be more common (Gunzler et al., 2013). With all of the abovementioned steps, the level of statistical significance was set at $p \leq .05$ (Pallant, 2011).

Mediation analysis also entailed looking at the indirect effects of workplace bullying on intention to leave, which refers to the pathway between the two variables through a mediator (Hayes, 2018). A 95% percentile bootstrap confidence interval was utilised to draw inferences about the indirect effect of workplace bullying on intention to leave (Hayes, 2018).

3.4.5 Ethical considerations

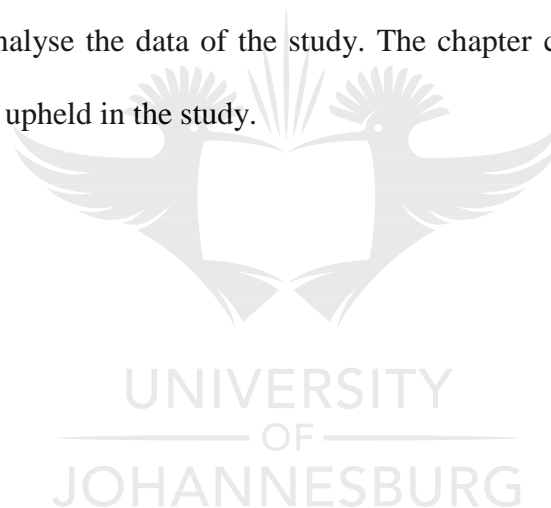
The study was granted ethical clearance by the College of Business Economics Research Ethics Committee at the University of Johannesburg. All study participants were treated with respect and dignity throughout the research process. The study also aimed to ensure that no harm was inflicted on participants. In particular, this entailed the requirement for all research participants to have free access to employee assistance programmes within their organisations. As some of the items of the measurement instruments of the study could possibly elicit some discomfort or emotional feelings, having access to an employee assistance programme would thus enable participants to receive assistance following their participation in the study, if needed.

The ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, and confidentiality were also upheld for the study. Prior to participants' completing the questionnaire, they were informed about the purpose and importance of the study and were requested to sign an informed consent form to indicate their understanding and agreement to participate in the study, which satisfies the ethical principle of informed consent. For the principle of voluntary participation, participants were informed that they had a choice to participate in the study. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw their participation from the study at any point and would not face any negative consequences for

their withdrawal. The confidentiality of participation and data was emphasised by informing participants that data would be kept securely and would only be used for academic purposes. Participants were also provided with the contact details of the researcher and of the research supervisor to afford them the opportunity to ask questions during any stage of the process of completing the questionnaires of the study. The researcher also ensured that the data obtained from participants was not misrepresented in any way.

3.4.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has offered an outline of the research approach and the research methods utilised for the present study. This was followed by a broad description of the statistical methods employed to analyse the data of the study. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations that were upheld in the study.



CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides the results of the statistical analyses conducted on the data, in the form of tables and the interpretations thereof. The presented results include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and mediation analysis.

4.2 Research Results

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

The results from the analysis of descriptive statistics are depicted in Table 2 below. According to these results, the data followed a normal distribution as all values are within the acceptable ranges for skewness ($<|2|$) and kurtosis ($<|4|$).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the scales

Scale	Total M	Average M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Workplace bullying	40.08	1.80	17.698	1.337	1.252	.96
Intention to leave	20.18	3.36	6.185	-.204	-.918	.82
Psychological meaningfulness	23.06	3.85	7.055	-.797	-.397	.96
Psychological safety	10.99	3.66	3.144	-.437	-.682	.57
Psychological availability	20.88	4.18	4.068	-.985	.376	.87

Note: M, mean; SD, standard deviation; α , Cronbach's coefficient alpha

To determine the extent to which employees experienced workplace bullying, intention to leave their current organisations, psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability, the mean statistics for all scales were analysed.

According to the five-point Likert-type scale employed for workplace bullying, comprised of the points “*never*”, “*now and then*”, “*monthly*”, “*weekly*” and “*daily*”, the sample reported an average workplace bullying score of 1.80. This score suggests that, on average, participants have *never* experienced workplace bullying incidences in the past six months of their employment.

On the 5-point Likert type scale utilised for measuring intention to leave, the sample reported an average score of 3.36. The options for this scale ranged from “*never*” to “*always*”, “*very satisfying*” to “*totally dissatisfying*” and “*highly unlikely*” to “*highly likely*”. The mean score suggests that over the past nine months the sample participants have occasionally experienced a desire to leave their current employment. The participants also experienced their work as somewhat satisfying for fulfilling their personal needs but were fairly likely to accept an offer of alternative employment at the same compensation level.

In terms of psychological meaningfulness, which was based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*”, the sample reported a mean score of 3.85. This score suggests that the participants neither disagreed nor agreed that they had experienced psychological meaningfulness in their work. On a 5-point Likert-type scale for psychological safety, ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*”, the sample reported a mean score of 3.66. The score similarly suggests that the participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they experienced psychological safety in their work. For psychological availability, also based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*”, the sample reported a mean score of 4.18. This score suggests that the members of the sample had experienced psychological availability in their work.

In addition to the above descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (α) values were utilised to evaluate the reliability of the scales used for the study. These results are also

provided in Table 2 above. As may be seen in Table 2, the scale utilised for measuring workplace bullying (the NAQ-R) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96. The scale measuring intention to leave (ITL-6) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .82. The scale measuring the three psychological conditions reported the following Cronbach's coefficients: .96 for psychological meaningfulness, .57 for psychological safety, and .87 for psychological availability.

In determining a scale or instrument's reliability, Taber (2017) recommends that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient should ideally be above .70. It is, however, common to find low Cronbach's alpha values (such as .50) in shorter scales (Pallant, 2011). In these situations, it is advised to report alternatively on the mean inter-item correlation values for the scales with low Cronbach's values (Pallant, 2011). With this taken into consideration, the mean inter-item correlation coefficient for the 3-item psychological safety subscale (that yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of .57, which is below the recommended threshold) was also investigated. The mean inter-item correlation for the subscale was .31, which falls within the recommended range of .2 to .4 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). All this considered, all scales employed in this study performed reliably.

4.2.2 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted by evaluating the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficients (r) between the following relationships: (i) workplace bullying and intention to leave (for hypothesis 1), (ii) workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions (for hypotheses 2 to 4), and (iii) each of the psychological conditions and intention to leave (for hypotheses 5 to 7). This analysis thus corresponded to hypotheses 1 to 7.

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3 below. As can be seen from the table, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between workplace bullying and intention to leave (large effect; $r = .55$; $p < .001$) (hypothesis 1).

Table 3

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients (N= 201)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Workplace bullying	1.00	-	-	-	-
2. Intention to leave	.55*	1.00	-	-	-
3. Psychological meaningfulness	-.32*	-.41*	1.00	-	-
4. Psychological safety	-.46*	-.52*	.24**	1.00	-
5. Psychological availability	-.12	-.16***	.41*	.21**	1.00

Note: *, $p < .001$; **, $p < .01$; $p < .05$; Correlation coefficients in bold represent statistically significant correlations

In considering the correlations between workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions, the results suggest that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between workplace bullying and psychological meaningfulness (medium effect; $r = -.32$; $p < .001$) (hypothesis 2). Similarly, the results also suggest a statistically significant negative correlation between workplace bullying and psychological safety (medium effect; $r = -.46$; $p < .001$) (hypothesis 3). Workplace bullying did not, however, report a statistically significant correlation with psychological availability ($r = -.12$; $p = .082$) (hypothesis 4).

The results of the correlations between each of the psychological conditions and intention to leave suggest that psychological meaningfulness has a statistically significant negative correlation with intention to leave (medium effect; $r = -.41$; $p < .001$) (hypothesis 5). Similarly, the results suggest that psychological safety has a statistically significant negative

correlation with intention to leave (large effect; $r = -.52$; $p < .001$) (hypothesis 6). Correlation results lastly suggested that psychological availability also has a statistically significant negative correlation with intention to leave (small effect, $r = -.16$; $p < .05$) (hypothesis 7).

4.2.3 Mediation analysis

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted on the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) on SPSS to investigate the eighth hypothesis of the study. This hypothesis postulated that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability will mediate the relationship between workplace bullying (independent variable) and intention to leave (dependent variable). The results for this analysis are supplied in Table 4 below.

The results from the parallel mediation analysis indicated that workplace bullying is a statistically significant predictor of intention to leave, $b = .19$, $t(181) = 8.99$, $p < .001$. The analysis also indicated workplace bullying is also a statistically significant predictor of psychological meaningfulness ($b = -.12$, $t(181) = -4.40$, $p < .001$) and psychological safety ($b = -.09$, $t(181) = -7.24$, $p < .001$). Workplace bullying was, however, not a statistically significant predictor of psychological availability, $b = -.02$, $t(181) = -1.22$, $p = .223$.

The consideration of the effect of each of the psychological conditions on intention to leave indicated that psychological meaningfulness ($b = -.23$, $t(178) = -4.31$, $p < .001$) and psychological safety ($b = -.58$, $t(178) = -4.72$, $p < .001$) were both statistically significant predictors of intention. Psychological availability was, however, not a statistically significant predictor of intention to leave ($b = .05$, $t(178) = 0.60$, $p = 0.549$).

The parallel mediation analysis also indicated that workplace bullying, in the presence of the statistically significant mediators (psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety), remains a significant predictor of intention to leave ($b = 0.11$, $t(178) = 5.14$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety

partially mediate the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. Approximately 45% of the variation in intention to leave was accounted for by the predictors ($R^2 = .45$, $F(4,178) = 37.05$, $p < .001$).

Table 4

Regression coefficients from the mediation analysis (direct effects)

Variable	Effect	SE	t	F	R	R²
<i>Intention to leave ~</i>						
Workplace bullying	.19*	.02	8.98	80.79	.55	.31
<i>Psychological meaningfulness ~</i>						
Workplace bullying	-.12*	.03	-4.40	19.32	.31	.10
<i>Psychological safety ~</i>						
Workplace bullying	-.09*	.01	-7.24	52.44	.47	.22
<i>Psychological availability ~</i>						
Workplace bullying	-.02	.02	-1.22	1.50	.09	.01
<i>Intention to leave ~</i>						
Workplace bullying	.11*	.02	5.14	37.05	.67	.45
Psychological meaningfulness	-.23*	.05	-4.31	37.05	.67	.45
Psychological safety	-.58*	.12	-4.72	37.05	.67	.45
Psychological availability	.05	.09	.60	37.05	.67	.45

Note: *, $p < .001$; *SE*, standard error; *t*, *t*-statistic; *F*, *F*-statistic; *R*, multiple correlation coefficient; R^2 , coefficient of determination

The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 1000 samples. These results are provided in Table 5 below and indicate that the indirect effect was significant ($b = .08$, $SE = .01$, 95% $CI = .05, .11$). It can thus be suggested that workplace

bullying has an indirect effect on intention to leave, through psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety.



Table 5

Indirect effect of workplace bullying on intention to leave via psychological meaningfulness and safety

Variable	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping 95% CI	
			Lower	Higher
Indirect effect				
<i>Intention to leave</i>				
Workplace bullying	.08*	.01	.05	.11

Note: *, $p < .001$; SE, standard error; 95% CI, 95% bias-corrected confidence interval

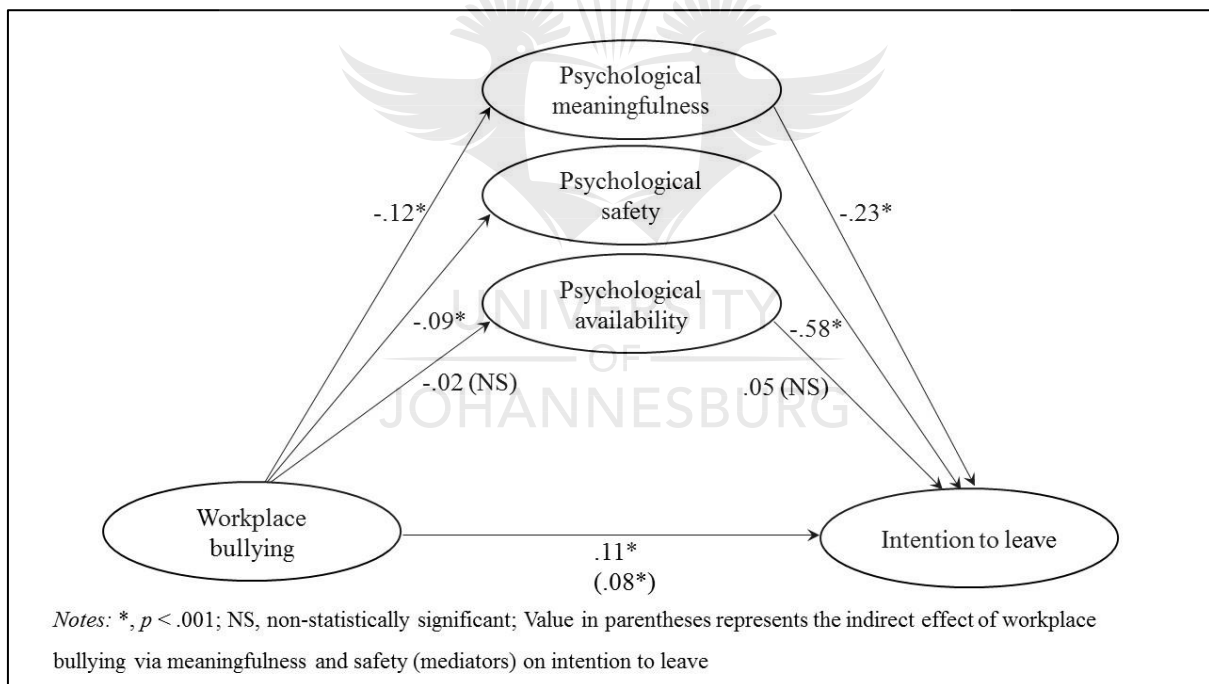


Figure 2. The direct and indirect effects of the variables of the study

4.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided the results obtained from the analysis of data in the form of descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and multiple regression analysis. The

comprehensive explanation and discussion of these results is presented in the following chapter.



CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Chapter Introduction

As per the results presented in the preceding chapter, this chapter begins with an exploration of the interpretation of these results. This is done by considering whether each hypothesis was proved, answering the research question and discussing whether the results of the study are in accordance with the findings of previous research. The chapter concludes with the contributions of the present study, the limitations, and the recommendations offered to future researchers.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The main objective of the current study was to examine whether or not the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability can mediate the relationship between employees' experiences of workplace bullying and their intention to leave their current organisations. This was explored through the investigation of eight hypotheses, which are expanded upon in the sections that follow.

5.2.1 Workplace bullying and intention to leave

The first hypothesis held that workplace bullying has a positive relationship with intention to leave. The correlation results have confirmed there is indeed a positive relationship between these two constructs, which suggests that employees who experience bullying within their working environments were more likely to intend leaving their current employment. Results from the correlation analysis have thus provided evidence confirming the first hypothesis of the study.

This finding is in agreement with previous studies by Berthelsen et al. (2011), Coetzee and Van Dyk (2017), and Glambek et al. (2014), who have also found a positive relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. For example, Coetzee and Van Dyk

(2017) found workplace bullying to have a significant positive association with intention to leave. According to the findings by Berthelsen et al. (2011), employees who had been victims of bullying at work considered leaving their employment more than their counterparts who had not fallen victim to bullying. Glambek et al. (2014) found that exposure to bullying was associated with employees' intention to leave their employment six months following exposure, due to being "increasingly afraid for their job and work situation" (p. 262). The findings of these previous studies and those of the present study may be explained by the premise that bullying behaviour exerts a negative emotional effect on victims, lowers the extent to which they experience work as fulfilling, and, in turn, increases their intention to leave the organisation (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2017).

5.2.2 Workplace bullying and psychological meaningfulness

The second hypothesis postulated that workplace bullying has a negative relationship with psychological meaningfulness. According to the correlation analysis, workplace bullying negatively correlated with psychological meaningfulness. Based on this result, an inference can be made that employees who experience workplace bullying are more likely to report lower levels of psychological meaningfulness, which confirms the second hypothesis of the study.

The result of the negative relationship between workplace bullying and psychological meaningfulness is in line with the findings by Fountain (2016), who also found a significant negative association between bullying and psychological meaningfulness. These results confirm the premise that individuals who have fulfilling relations and interactions within the work context are likely to report the experience of meaning in their work (May et al., 2004). Experiences of bullying, on the other hand, relate to unfavourable relations characterised by undesirable factors such as harassment, offending, and social exclusion (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003), which represent the opposite of the quality of interactions required for

psychological meaningfulness. The negative association between experiences of bullying and psychological meaningfulness is also in line with the postulation that people are able to experience meaningfulness when they are made to feel respected, worthwhile, and valued (Asiwe et al., 2017; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010); which are not feelings associated with the experience of bullying

5.2.3 Workplace bullying and psychological safety

The third hypothesis held that workplace bullying has a negative relationship with psychological safety. In accordance with this expectation, workplace bullying negatively correlated with psychological safety. This result implies that employees who have experienced bullying within the work context were more likely to report lower levels of psychological safety. The correlation results have thus provided evidence in support of the third hypothesis of the study.

This result is in agreement with Fountain (2016) who found that workplace bullying is negatively associated with psychological safety. This result is also in accordance with past research that has suggested that the support employees receive from their superiors and their favourable relations with co-workers has a positive association with feelings of psychological safety (May et al., 2004; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). The negative association between workplace bullying and psychological safety can be explained by the premise that supportive and trustworthy relations within the work context can lead to perceptions of safety at work (Edmondson, 1999; May et al., 2004). A work context characterised by lack of social support and the victimisation of employees (as with workplace bullying) (Karabulat, 2016; Van Schalkwyk, 2011) may thus not lend itself to the supportive supervisory and co-worker relations required for employees' experiences of psychological safety.

5.2.4 Workplace bullying and psychological availability

The fourth hypothesis of the study postulated that workplace bullying has a negative relationship with psychological availability. While workplace bullying negatively correlated with psychological availability, implying that employees who have experienced bullying may report lower levels of psychological availability, this correlation was not statistically significant.

This result is in agreement with research findings by Fountain (2016) as, in addition to establishing negative associations between workplace bullying and the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety, the study found workplace bullying to be negatively associated with psychological availability (Fountain, 2016). As psychological availability can be drawn down by a high self-consciousness and a low self-confidence (Kahn, 1990), the present study's findings supports the idea that workplace bullying may therefore act as a distraction to availability through its consequences. Some of these consequences include anxiety, a low self-esteem, feelings of vulnerability, and stress (Hogh at al., 2011; Matthiesen et al., 1989; Rugulies et al., 2012).

5.2.5 Psychological meaningfulness and intention to leave

Following the relationship between workplace bullying and each of the psychological conditions, the fifth hypothesis of the study postulated that psychological meaningfulness has a negative relationship with intention to leave. The correlation analysis indicated that psychological meaningfulness negatively correlated with intention to leave, implying that employees reporting lower levels of psychological meaningfulness are more likely to report intent to leave their current employment. This correlation result thus confirms the fifth hypothesis.

This finding is in agreement with past research by Baklaieva (2016), Janik and Rothmann (2015), and Van Der Westhuizen (2014), which have found a negative association between psychological meaningfulness and intention to leave. Baklaieva (2016), for instance, found a strong negative relationship between psychological meaningfulness and intention to leave. Janik and Rothmann (2015) established that low psychological meaningfulness had a direct effect on intention to leave. Van Der Westhuizen (2014) found that meaningful work had a positive impact on employee engagement, which in turn had a negative impact on the development of intention to leave. These findings, pointing to a negative relationship between meaningfulness and intention to leave, support the premise that meaningless work is likely to lead to feelings of apathy and employees' withdrawal from work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). These findings also support the belief that employees who do not experience their work as meaningful do not usually fit into their organisations (Shamir, 1991) and, as a result, are likely to desire to leave their places of employment (Baklaieva, 2016).

5.2.6 Psychological safety and intention to leave

Hypothesis 6 held that psychological safety has a negative relationship with intention to leave. As the correlation analysis has indicated that psychological safety negatively correlates with intention to leave, it can be suggested that employees reporting lower levels of psychological safety are likely to report intent to leave their current employment. The correlation results have thus confirmed the sixth hypothesis of the study.

Some previous studies have also found psychological safety to be negatively associated with intention to leave, which is in agreement with the finding of the present study. For example, Liu et al. (2017) found psychological safety to have a negative impact on intention to leave. Yanchus, Periard, Moore, Carle, and Osatuke (2015) also found that psychological safety negatively correlated with turnover intention. These results thus suggest that environments perceived as psychologically unsafe may lead individuals to feel

personally threatened and consequently desire to leave the environment (Yanchus et al., 2015). This desire to depart may be in a bid to protect themselves from any further undesirable exposure (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). On the other hand, the experience of psychological safety predicts favourable relations within the work context, which consequently lead to engagement (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007) and intention to stay (Abugre, 2017).

5.2.7 Psychological availability and intention to leave

The seventh hypothesis held that psychological availability has a negative relationship with intention to leave. Psychological availability negatively correlated with intention to leave, implying that employees reporting lower levels of psychological availability are more likely to report intent to leave their current employment and thereby confirming the seventh hypothesis.

The present study's finding is in line with the premise that individuals who experience an overload in terms of physical, emotional, and psychological resources, as features of psychological availability (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010), are likely to withdraw from their work, possibly in a bid to replace their resources (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). This is also in agreement with the idea that when employees have to devote energy to distractions (as with psychological availability), they are left with few resources for value-adding tasks and eventually devote more energy towards protecting themselves (Li & Tan, 2013).

While there is a dearth in research concerning the relationship between psychological availability and intention to leave, the relation between psychological availability and engagement has been explored. The findings from these studies can be employed to make inferences about the relationship between psychological availability and intention to leave, as intention to leave has been found to be negatively related to engagement (Sibiya, Buitendach,

Kanengoni, & Bobat, 2014), while psychological availability is considered to be one of the drivers of engagement (Kahn, 1990). According to Rich et al. (2010), psychologically available individuals are likely to “exhibit higher engagement in role performance context” (Rich et al., 2010, p. 622). Self-efficacious behaviour (similar to psychological availability) has been found to explain the change in employees’ work engagement over time (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Past studies have thus found that psychological availability positively contributed to experiences of engagement (Jacobs, 2013; Luba, 2016).

5.2.8 The mediating effect of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability

Guided by the assertions of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the eighth hypothesis held that the psychological conditions mediate the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. The model holds that how stressful a situation is perceived to be, and the resultant action taken, is a function of the personal resources individuals use to cope with and respond to situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In order to acquire a better understanding of the relationship between workplace bullying (as a stressor) and intention to leave (as a response to the stressor), the present study sought to look at the role played by psychological conditions as personal resources in this relationship.

As available literature has suggested that lowered levels of the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability may be consequences of workplace bullying (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2018; Fountain, 2016) and predictors of disengagement (Kahn, 1990), the present study sought to determine whether these psychological conditions can act as the resources that mediate the relationship between workplace bullying and intentions to leave.

Based on the results of the regression analysis, workplace bullying was found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of intention to leave, suggesting that employees' experiences of bullying within the work context were likely to lead to intent to leave the organisation. Workplace bullying also significantly negatively predicted psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, implying that employees' experiences of workplace bullying were likely to act as a precursor to diminished levels of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety. The psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety were found to be statistically significant negative predictors of intention to leave, which suggests that employees' experiences of lower psychological meaningfulness and lower psychological safety were likely to lead to intent to leave their current organisations.

The regression analysis has also provided evidence in support of the eighth hypothesis by demonstrating that perceptions of workplace bullying remain a statistically significant positive predictor of intention to leave in the presence of the mediating effects of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety. This result suggests that psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety partially mediate the positive relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. This mediation outcome suggests that there are indeed underlying mechanisms involved in the bullying–intention to leave relationship, with the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety playing a significant role in this relationship. This implies that employees' experiences of bullying within the work context lower their levels of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, which consequently leads to the intention to leave their current organisations. This result thus supports the hypothesised mediating effect and answers the research question that guided the present study.

While the study initially looked at the potential mediating role of all three psychological conditions, it is notable that psychological availability did not mediate the

relationship between bullying and intention to leave. This can be explained by that psychological availability did not meet two of the steps required to indicate mediation. Firstly, workplace bullying also did not act as a statistically significant predictor of psychological availability. Secondly, psychological availability also did not act as a significant predictor of intention to leave. With this taken into consideration, psychological availability could not mediate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The established mediation finding can be explained by the fact that the experience of bullying may lead to a loss of personally valuable resources (Tuckey & Neall, 2014), particularly the depletion of psychological conditions (Rai & Agarwal, 2017). As humans have the basic motivation to “retain, protect and build resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516), individuals facing the depletion of resources may be motivated to protect themselves from the further depletion of remaining resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). In a bid to protect their remaining personal resources, employees may withdraw from situations perceived to be resource-consuming (Rai & Agarwal, 2017), a withdrawal achieved by engaging in “passive and defensive behaviours” (Xu et al., 2015, p. 3) or avoidance-focused coping behaviours (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) such as distancing themselves from the stressful situation.

While bullying appeared to have both a direct and an indirect effect on intention to leave, the direct effect was stronger. This is similar to findings by McCormack et al. (2009), who observed that the direct effect of workplace bullying on intention to leave was stronger than the indirect effect explored in their study (which was affective commitment). The above findings are in support of the premise that negative relations within the work context “actively engage employees’ intention to leave” (Abugre, 2017, p. 198).

The findings of the study have confirmed the premise held by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping that an individual's reaction to a stressful event can be affected by the individual's own resources of coping and responding to situations. The results from the mediation analysis have shown that an individual's intent to leave the organisation, as a response to workplace bullying which is a stressor, is affected by the degree to which the individual experiences the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety. An individual's personal resources thus play an important role in the degree to which they express intent to leave as a response to bullying within the workplace.

5.3 Contributions of the Study

To the researcher's knowledge, the present study is the first study that has examined the role of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability in the relationship between workplace bullying and employees' intention to leave. The present study thus contributes to existing literature through showing that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety can affect the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave. While most past research has focused on the relationships between bullying and its consequences, researchers have also acknowledged the need to study the role of mediators and moderators on these relationships. This study has thus contributed to addressing this need through the consideration of psychological conditions as mediators in the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave, particularly through the guidance of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. According to this model, an individual's appraisal of a stressful event and the resultant action taken is a function of the personal resources individuals use to cope and to respond to situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The present study has shown that an individual's intention to leave their current employment as a response to bullying may be influenced by the individual's experience of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety.

Moreover, in practice, this study indicates that organisations can intervene in the relationship between workplace bullying and intention to leave through the development and maintenance of psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety. As research has consistently outlined the negative outcomes of workplace bullying and of intention to leave, organisational leaders need to play an active role in lessening the prevalence of these factors. Managers should also be aware of the role played by different psychological conditions in the bullying–intention to leave link in order to ensure the development and protection of these psychological resources within the work context. This would entail creating a working environment that will 1) provide work requiring the application of new and old skills, independence, change, and challenge in order to achieve a congruence between an individual employee’s ideals and his or her work goals (for psychological meaningfulness) and 2) foster the development and maintenance of supportive relationships that will empower employees to be and to express themselves without fear (for psychological safety). When these resources are protected within the organisation, employees facing workplace bullying may seek other constructive measures towards addressing the problem, as opposed to considering departing from the organisation.

As the study required participants to have access to some kind of an employee assistance programme within their organisations, it was noted that some employees that were approached as potential participants of the study either did not understand what was meant by “an employee assistance programme” or indicated there was no such provision in their organisations. This indicated that some organisations do not have these programmes in place or do not promote the use of these programmes. Another practical contribution of the present study is therefore to recommend the implementation and promotion of employee assistance programmes within organisations.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The present study was not without limitations. One limitation of the study lies in the research design method utilised for the study. The present study made use of a cross-sectional research method. While this method allows for the examination of relationships between variables, it presents the disadvantage of not allowing for the exploration of cause-and-effect relations (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2017). Cross-sectional research may thus lack internal validity (Bryman, 2012).

A second limitation relates to the utilisation of a self-report questionnaire. While this data collection method offers the distinct advantages of being quicker and cheaper to administer (Bryman, 2012), its validity has been found to be questionable (Saungweme, 2010). A possible reason for this is that respondents may tend to provide responses deemed socially desirable (Vallone & Donaldson, 2001). The results indicated that participants mostly chose the middle point on the 5-point Likert-type scale instruments used for the study, which might have affected the type of inferences made based on this data. With this in mind, respondents may thus not have been entirely honest about their work-related experiences and thoughts due to the sensitive nature of the items from the study's instruments.

Thirdly, only points 1 and 5 of the study instrument's 5-point Likert-type scales had specific meanings attached to them. This means that respondents could have assigned different meanings to the three remaining points.

The final limitation pertains to the psychological safety sub-scale employed in this study. The three-item sub-scale revealed low internal consistency (in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient) which suggested lack of reliability for the instrument. As the sub-scale consisted of only three items, the sub-scale's mean inter-item correlation was utilised to assess the reliability of the instrument, which suggested good reliability. Thus, the low Cronbach's

alpha coefficient did not have adverse consequences on the results or the interpretations thereof.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

To address the drawback of the cross-sectional research design, future studies should look into exploring the effects of workplace bullying in relation to the psychological conditions and intention to leave over time or through longitudinal research means. The utilisation of a longitudinal research design is also encouraged as the present study's instruments only considered employees' experiences of workplace bullying over the past nine months and intention to leave over the past six months of employment, at a single point in time. Future studies should thus consider studying these relationships over time in order to examine long-term trends (Julien, 2008).

Future research should also look into the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological availability as the present study did not find this relationship to be statistically significant. As the researcher also noted a dearth in research pertaining to the relationship between psychological availability and intention to leave, future studies should also look into examining the relationship between these constructs.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the interpretation of the results provided in the preceding chapter. The study's main objective was to determine whether the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability can mediate the positive relationship between employees' experiences of workplace bullying and their intention to leave their current organisations. The findings discussed in this chapter indicate that psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety can indeed mediate the relationship between bullying and intention to leave. The identification of psychological meaningfulness

and psychological safety as mediators in the bullying-intention to leave link further answers the research question that guided the study. In addition to this, the chapter has also provided the contributions of the study, limitations, and the recommendations offered to future researchers.



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APPENDIX

Attachment 1: Letter of ethical clearance



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

CBE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dear Ms Mtshali,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

This letter serves to confirm that that the proposed research project has been granted ethical ethical clearance by the College of Business Economics Research Ethics Committee at the University of Johannesburg. Please refer to the report below for the ethical clearance number and specified conditions of approval.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE REPORT

Applicant	Ms Celiwe Mtshali
Supervisor	Dr. Crystal Hoole
Student/staff number	201473628
Title	The relationship between psychological conditions, workplace bullying and intention to leave
<u>Decision date at meeting</u>	25 June 2018, CBE REC
Decision at Department / School	
Decision at College Meeting	
Decision at CBE REC	
Reviewers	Members of CBE REC
Ethical clearance code	
Rating of most recent application	CODE 02

CODE 01 - Approved

CODE 03 - Not approved, may re-submit

CODE 02 - Approved with suggestions without re-submission

CODE 04 - Not approved, no re-submission allowed

RESEARCH COMPLIES WITH	COMPLIANCE	NON-COMPLIANCE / DETAILS / RECOMMENDATIONS / CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
The right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity	Yes	
The right to equality, justice, human dignity/life and protection against harm	Yes	As the topic is potentially sensitive, only participants that do have access to the appropriate support services at their organisations, can participate. The onus is on the researcher to ensure that this is the case. Any counselling or other support that may come forth as a result of the study, may not incur any costs for the participants.
The right to freedom of choice, expression and access to information	Yes	
Right of the community and science community	Yes	
The researcher will not experience any harm in conducting the research	Yes	
Informed consent/letters of request	Yes	Permission to collect data must be obtained from participating organisations before commencement of data collection. Only organisations that have the relevant support services (such as employee assistance programmes with counselling services) can be approached. Please email these permission letters to the CBE Research Ethics Committee (to the chairperson) for record keeping.

Attachment 2: Research instrument



Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking time to take part in this study. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between employees' psychological conditions, their experiences of bullying at work and intentions to leave their current organisations. Research has consistently shown that employees' experiences of bullying at work lead to increased desires to leave their current organisations. In order to understand this phenomena better and identify ways to reduce negative consequences, it is necessary to explore the role of psychological conditions in this relationship. The questionnaire for this study will ask you about your experiences, feelings and thoughts concerning your work and your working environment.

Please read the following carefully before starting the questionnaire:

1. This questionnaire will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
2. Ensure that you are in a quiet space where you can spend uninterrupted time on the questionnaire. As the responses you will provide are very valuable for the study, it is kindly requested that you give your full attention to the questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions as the researcher is only interested in your honest opinions.
3. The information you will provide through your responses will be held confidentially and will only be used for academic purposes.
4. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any point, without any negative consequences.
5. Questions pertaining to the study can be referred to the below mentioned contact persons.
6. Should any of the questions evoke any discomfort or emotional feelings, you will be referred to counselling.

Requirement for participation in the study:

I have at least 1 year's working experience.

1. Yes 2. No

My agreement to the study:

1. I agree to participate in this study.
2. I confirm that I have free access to an Employee Assistance Programme at my organisation
3. I understand what my participation in the study entails
4. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.
5. I understand that the answers I provide will be held confidentially and will only be used for academic purposes.
6. I understand that I can refer any questions and reports of discomfort or emotional feelings to:
 - a) Ms Celiwe Mtshali (celiwecelzmtshali@gmail.com) (Researcher)
 - b) Dr Crystal Hoole (crystalh@uj.a.c.za) (Research supervisor)

Please provide your name and signature below as indication of your agreement with the above stipulated conditions. (*Your name will be kept separate from the answers you provide*).

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Part 1: Biographic Information

Please complete the following by making a cross (X) in the appropriate box or by filling in the provided blank spaces.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Please indicate your ethnicity

Black

Indian

White

Other

Coloured

3. Please indicate your home language

Afrikaans

IsiZulu

SiSwati

English

Sesotho

Tshivenda

IsiNdebele

Sepedi

Xitsonga

IsiXhosa

Setswana

Other

4. Please state your age (in years): _____

5. What is your current level of position in your organisation?

Trainee/Intern

Middle manager

Other

Non-manager

Senior manager

Junior manager/Supervisor

Executive

6. What is your occupation? _____

7. How long have you been in your occupation (in years or months)? _____

8. How long have you been in your current organisation (in years or months)? _____

9. Please rate your English reading ability:

Very poor

Good

Poor

Very good

Part 2: Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised

The following questionnaire assesses your experiences at work. Please read the following carefully and rate how frequently you have experienced the following acts at your workplace over the last 6 months. Please note your responses with a cross (X).

		Never	Now and then	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
1	Someone withholding information which affects your performance					
2	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work					
3	Being ordered to do work below your level of competence					
4	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks					
5	Spreading of gossip and rumours about you					
6	Being ignored or excluded					
7	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life					
8	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger					
9	Intimidating behaviours such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way					
10	Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job					
11	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes					
12	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach					
13	Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes					
14	Having your opinions ignored					
15	Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with					
16	Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines					
17	Having allegations made against you					
18	Excessive monitoring of your work					
19	Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)					
20	Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm					
21	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload					
22	Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse					

Part 3: Intention to leave Scale

The following questionnaire assesses your desire to remain at your current organisation. Please read the following questions carefully and note your responses with a cross (X). As per the scale provided for each question, please rate your experiences ranging from 1 to 5.

Over the past 9 months:								
1	How often have you considered leaving your job?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
2	How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?	Very satisfying	1	2	3	4	5	Totally dissatisfying
3	How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
4	How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
5	How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?	Highly unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	Highly likely
6	How often do you look forward to another day at work?	Always	1	2	3	4	5	Never

Part 4: Psychological Conditions Scale

The following questionnaire relates to your feelings concerning your work and your organisation. Please read the following statements carefully and note your responses with a cross (X). As per the scale provided for each question, please rate your experiences ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1	The work I do on this job is very important to me	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
2	My job activities are personally meaningful to me	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
3	The work I do on this job is worthwhile	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
4	My job activities are significant to me	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
5	The work I do on this job is meaningful to me	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
6	I feel that the work I do on my job is valuable	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
7	I am not afraid to be myself at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
8	I am afraid to express my opinions at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
9	There is a threatening environment at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
10	I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
11	I am confident in my ability to deal with problems that come up at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
12	I am confident in my ability to think clearly at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
13	I am confident in my ability to display the appropriate emotions at work.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
14	I am confident that I can handle the physical demands at work	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

If any of the questions have evoked any discomfort or emotional feelings and you would like to be referred to counselling, please contact:

- a) Miss Celiwe Mtshali (celiwecelzmtshali@gmail.com) (Researcher)
- b) Dr Crystal Hoole (crystalh@uj.ac.za) (Research supervisor)

I would be very grateful if you could provide me with the contact details of another employee with at least 1 year's working experience who could also participate in this study.

Name: _____

Contact number: _____

Email address: _____

This is the end of the booklet. Thank you for your assistance.