STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER ARTIUM

in

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT

in the

Faculty of Arts

at the

Nelson Mandela University

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2018
DECLARATION

In accordance with Rule G5.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned proposal is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted for assessment to another university or for another qualification.

I, Bosede Olaitan Adesemowo, hereby state that I have had the Master’s Proposal proofread entitled: STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.

SIGNED :  
DATE : 24.11.17
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“For promotion, cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but from God, Giver of all good things” (Psalms 75:6). To God be all the glory. Great things He has done, only He can make this accomplishment happen. Faithful God, I have come to say ‘Thank You Lord’.

A big thank you to my wonderful husband, Kayode Adesemowo, for giving me the platform to further my education. Thank you. I am grateful to God for granting you the grace to weather the storm of workplace bullying. I pray for God’s blessings on my children for their constant support and understanding. Thank you Adeola, (my little girl), for making me coffee to study at night, to my son, Ademola, thank you for those hugs and kisses that bring life, smiles and the strength to continue working; and also to my sunshine, my first strength and my first child, Adedolapo, thank you for being my dictionary when I am short of words while typing and taking care of your younger siblings during my late nights in the library. You are the best “Nana”.

My supervisors, Professor Lyn Snodgrass and Dr Belinda du Plooy, I appreciate you both for imparting academic knowledge and confidence. Dr du Plooy, thank you for pushing me so hard to bring out the best in me. I appreciate your professionalism.

To Mr Imtiaz Khan and Mrs Dalene Gerber and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Research Capacity Development Department, thank you for always opening your door and for the funding assistance. To the recognised Union at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University: thank you for allowing me to put you in the spotlight and for your time and your commitment.

Thank you so much, Ms Januarie Jadine from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Research Capacity Development for the workshops that motivated me to achieve my goal and my academic dream.

To all my friends Brightness Mangolothi and Yemisi Oyedele thanks for the proofreading’s and for the encouragement for believing that I can do it. Yes! I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me!
ABSTRACT

During the past decade bullying has received growing attention in organizational research. Workplace bullying is a complex phenomenon with a variety of situational, dispositional and systemic influences and it has been defined as “status-blind interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person's health or economic status” (Namie, 2003:3). A literature overview revealed the destructive consequences of bullying, such as trauma, suicide, depression, anxiety, stress, lowered self-esteem, anger and a lessening of productivity for both the individuals and the organizations concerned.

This study presents the perceptions of staff members, in the form of recognized trade union representatives, of workplace bullying at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The theoretical framework that informed the study comprised the dispositional and the ecological model that emphasised Ubuntu and the cultural values of the University.

The research approach was carried out through qualitative and exploratory methods. Through primary and secondary data collection, a purposive sample of semi-structured interviews was collected in the context of the aim and the objectives of the study. It analysed the importance of an anti-bullying policy, management styles, power imbalances, the impact of bullying on staff and institution health and explored the existing supportive systems that deal with grievances procedures.

This study concludes with concrete evidence that workplace bullying existed in Nelson Mandela University and there were no policies to effect control over perpetrators’ acts. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are made regarding a strategy on how management can effectively address bullying complaints without prejudice and discrimination, such as an anti-bullying policy, and creating continuous awareness of the phenomenon.

Keywords: workplace bullying, health, university, perceptions, policy.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Since the early 1990s, workplace bullying (WPB) has received growing attention in organizational research (Cilliers, 2012:1; Georgakopoulos, Wilkin and Kent, 2011:1; Lewis, 2004:282; Leymann, 1996:65; Martino, Helge and Cooper, 2010:69; Razzaghian and Shah, 2011:13419). Researchers’ reports on workplace bullying are alarming due to the impact on the target and the organisation. According to Kravitz (2014:65), “bullies create a stressful environment that constitutes a significant threat to the health, safety and welfare of the employees; and [this] could potentially implicate [the] employers”.

According to Pietersen (2007:59), “South Africa is said to be one of the countries that has done less by way of research into workplace bullying”. Research with regard to workplace bullying in higher education (HE) institutions is minimal (Keashly and Neuman, 2010:49). De Wet and Jacobs (2013:447) hold that “by reading the workplace bullying literature, they found that there is a need for further research on workplace bullying among South African employees”. Findings reveal that the administrators in human resources often question the targets’ perception of the incident, questioning their intelligence and if they really know what bullying is. The question is “How do we know the difference between constructive criticism and bullying, or can a negative evaluation be misconstrued as bullying?” De Wet and Jacobs concluded that the definition attached to workplace bullying by human resource practitioners will determine how institutions respond to targets’ complaints (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:ix).

This study adopted the definition of bullying formulated by Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper (2003:1214-1215), which holds that “bullying is defined as repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or more individual(s), which involves a perceived power imbalance and creates a hostile work environment”. Workplace bullying can also be described as “incidents where persons are abused, threatened, assaulted, pressurised – or even terrorised – in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, wellbeing and health” (Martino et al., 2010:3).

A number of studies have found negative consequences associated with bullying in the workplace (Farmer, 2011:198; Johnson, 2009:36; Lewis, 2004:286; Salin, 2003:1213; Maiden
These include trauma, suicide, emotional depression, anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, anger, helplessness and ineffectiveness in the workplace as well as a general decline in the psychological health of the victims.

With these negative effects of workplace bullying, there is a need for increased awareness of the risk of this phenomenon for individuals and institutions. The Harassment Act of South Africa (Gazette, 2011:5 section 17(20)) states that “…The word harm, means any mental, psychological, physical or economic harm”. Organisations should provide a working environment that is psychologically protective of its employees. De Wet and Jacobs (2013:461) recommend that workplace bullying should be monitored by way of a policy based on an institutional platform.

The findings from research studies conducted by the Work Dignity Institute in 2000 indicated that a high rate (78%) of South Africans have experienced workplace bullying in various occupations (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012:2).

Another survey conducted in South Africa from 1998 to 1999 also indicated that as many as seventy-eight per cent (78%) of South Africans have been bullied in their workplaces (Steinman 2003:9). Comparing this rate with similar studies in other countries around the world reveals the prevalence of the phenomenon in South Africa. For example, Neuman and Keashly (2010:50) conducted research among university employees and found that bullying was prevalent “from 2% to 5% in Scandinavian countries, 10% to 20% in the UK and 10% to 14% in the United States”.

Workplace bullying is a global problem (Pietersen 2007:63). The absence of legislation or national anti-bullying policies to protect employees in South Africa exacerbates the situation (Steinman, 2003:4, 45, 52). Although there is currently no federal anti-bullying statute in the United States, there has been a surge of state legislation in recent years (McCallion & Feder, 2013:5; Sacco et al., 2012:14). The Department of Education (ED) in the United States found that from 1999 to 2010, 120 bills and amendments to existing bills were introduced by various states. Currently, 49 States have passed anti-bullying legislation and the majority of these laws target school districts to adopt anti-bullying policies (McCallion & Feder 2013:1). This is not the case in the higher education working environment in South Africa, as currently there are no anti-bullying policies. One possible explanation is that bullying is seen mostly through the lens of “bullying learners in high schools” (Laas & Boezaart, 2015:2669; Smit, 2014:16).
1.1.1 Institution Name Change

Based on this premise, this study explored the perceptions of staff members at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Effective 20th July 2017, the name of the institution changed to Nelson Mandela University. The researcher will use the two names interchangeably during the course of this study.

1.2 RATIONALE

According to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Institutional Climate Survey (2013:1), 74% of the staff members claimed to have experienced abusive behaviour from line managers and the same percentage claimed to have experienced abusive behaviour from their colleagues (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:1). Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMU) has many human resources policies, but none address workplace bullying exclusively.

According to the 2013 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Institutional Climate Survey, “51% of the surveyed respondents do not know about the institutional whistle-blowing policy” that will safeguard employees who disclose irregular conduct (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:22). As many as 56% of the surveyed respondents were “not confident in using the whistle-blowing policy for reporting any form of irregularity within Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University” (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:44).

This study acknowledges that bullying is a complex phenomenon with a variety of situational, dispositional and systemic factors. Findings that emerged from the 2013 NMMU Institutional Climate Survey calls for a closer investigation of the staff’s perceptions of bullying and the existing institutional policies and practices.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Workplace bullying has been identified as a growing problem in a variety of work environments globally. Extensive research has been conducted into children bullies as well as bullying in schools and bullying in the health sector. Research on workplace bullying in the higher education sector is limited, especially in South Africa. The 2013 Institutional Climate Survey at NMU, a comprehensive university in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, identified workplace bullying as a significant concern. This study used this survey as a point of departure and focused on the NMU as a specific case study.
The published 2013 Institutional Climate Survey document (http://vision2020. Mandela.ac.za/) reports on existing institutional policies and interviews with representatives of the two recognised trade unions active at the institution. These were triangulated with the existing literature on workplace bullying to obtain a more holistic perspective on the problem and to recommend possible steps to address this problem institutionally, at NMU specifically, and in institutions of higher education generally.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

- To conduct a literature study on workplace bullying globally and in South Africa with emphasis on the higher education environment.
- To determine the institutional policies and structures in place at NMU.
- To investigate workplace bullying as an employee concern.
- To make recommendations on how institutional workplace bullying can be addressed at NMU.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is workplace bullying and how does it manifest in the higher education sector as an area of employment?
- What institutional policies and structures already exist at NMU to govern workplace relationships, human resources and human-capital management?
- What are the perceptions of NMU staff with regard to workplace bullying at NMU?
- What can NMU as an institution do to address workplace bullying effectively?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Strauss and Corbin (1990:3) view methodology as a way of thinking about, and studying, social phenomena and see methodology as a collection of methods that essentially comprise “a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing the data”.

The research approach used in this study was qualitative and exploratory. Babbie and Mouton (2002:270) exemplify qualitative research as a way of understanding actions in depth,
especially how events unfold, thus making the qualitative approach most appropriate for this study.

Exploratory research is a design employed to begin the process of building knowledge about a problem or question. The study was explorative as it was appropriate to explore the identified problems in depth, especially when the understanding thereof is limited (Yegidis & Weinbach, 1996:92).

Some findings, identified as problems in the Institutional Climate Survey conducted at NMU in 2013, will be explored in this study.

The data were collected through three methods encompassing the following:

1) A study of the existing literature on workplace bullying, globally and in South Africa, with emphasis on the higher education sector;
2) An analysis of the relevant existing policies and practices at NMU (the case study for this research is based on the 2013 NMU Institutional Climate Survey);
3) Purposive, semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable experts on the topic at NMU.

1.7 ETHICAL PROCEDURES

The researcher requested and obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty of Arts as part of the student’s proposal submission process, as specified by the Ethical Policies and Procedures of NMU. Upon approval, the assigned Ethical Clearance number was quoted by the student in all correspondence. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, limited semi-structured interviews were conducted. Expert respondents were identified as 1 and 2 (representing the two unions at NMU) and no identifying characteristics of any staff members or union members were requested. Knowing that as a researcher, one is entering the private space of the respondents, obtaining their consent and gaining the trust of the respondents was crucial (Silverman, 2010:201). This was achieved through informing the participants on the process of the interview and the importance of ethics with respect to the research.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and creates awareness of workplace bullying in higher education institutions such as the NMU academic environment. A positive
working environment can be fostered through informed processes and programmes to eradicate workplace bullying. This study emphasises the formulation and implementation of anti-bullying policies in institutions of higher education. Given that workplace bullying is an emerging, ever-increasing labour phenomenon within South Africa, the need for researchers to focus on workplace bullying is fundamental (Momberg, 2011:3).

As knowledge regarding the behaviour of bullying was required, the consequences of the behaviour and tactics to tackle the phenomenon also needed to be explored. This study also identified elements of stress in employees in addition to the impact and causes of bullying in institutions of higher education in South Africa. This study determined the perceptions of bullying behaviours on staff through the views of union representatives, who are on the coal-face of workplace bullying experienced by their members.

1.9 DISSEMINATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study will be presented as a dissertation in the library portal at the NMU. The researcher might also draft a conference and/or journal paper. The recommendations may assist other institutions in need of an anti-bullying policy.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study comprises five chapters, which are summarised as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter is introductory and explains the background and rationale for the study, as well as the problem statement and the objectives of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical review

This chapter reviews the related theory alongside literature regarding research into workplace bullying, focusing on the various definitions and perspective of workplace bullying.

Chapter Three: The global perspective and impact of workplace bullying

The chapter provides an overview of the different countries’ responses to workplace bullying. It also examines various theories and impacts and explores union and management perspectives regarding workplace bullying.
Chapter Four: Research methodology

This chapter examines the research methodology and the design utilised during this research. It highlights the reasons for adopting a particular approach and design and provides an outline of the sampling procedures, data-collection techniques and the analysis of the data.

Chapter Five: Research findings and discussion

This chapter presents the research findings and provides an analysis and interpretation of these findings.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter six serves as the conclusion of the study by providing recommendations based on the findings.
CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

“All wars signify the failure of conflict resolution mechanism and they need post-war rebuilding of faith, trust and confidence” (Abdul Kalam).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the concept of workplace bullying that informs the study. It describes workplace bullying from the perspectives of the target, the bystander and the perpetrator, as well as the causes of workplace bullying and the negative effects, on the victim and the institution. The effects and roles of institutional watchdogs, such as unions, labour relations (employee relations) and management must be addressed when analysing the effects of existing policies and whether the policies are addressing bullying effectively. A proactive response to workplace bullying is discussed, both the target’s and human relations’ response (institutional representative’s), response to workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying comprises a wide array of abusive behaviour, such as persistent and destructive actions, usually exhibited by a perpetrator towards subordinates who are typically considered to be the targets (DeWet, 2010a:1450; Kelly, 2006:275; Schmitz, 2010:1). According to Hodson et al., “the workplace is an arena suffused by power relations” (Hodson, Roscigno & Lopez, 2006:385). Given that workplace bullying is an emerging, ever-increasing labour phenomenon in South Africa, there is a need for researchers to focus on workplace bullying (Momberg, 2011:3).

A study conducted in South Africa schools indicated that 90.8% of the teachers have experienced or have been exposed to workplace bullying during the last 12 months of 2013 (de Wet & Jacobs, 2013:459). Findings have shown that bullying often arises in the line of duty in the workplace and manifests itself through rivalry and power imbalance (Einarsen, 1999:17).

Workplace bullying has also been considered harmful and dangerous to the health of the target, who often suffers from illnesses associated with stress (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2009:350; Helge & Beale, 2006; Lewis, 2004:271; Leymann, 1996:65). The following discussion provides the theoretical framework of the study and explains how the various theories fit into it.
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is important to investigate the theoretical frameworks that inform this study, these include dispositions that explain behavioural patterns and the personalities that play various roles in bullying, the ecological model and the usefulness of the Ubuntu culture as an important role-player in the South African work environment.

2.3 DISPOSITIONAL THEORY

The dispositional theory was once considered as a shameful element and the prejudice around the theory still exists (Titscher et al., 2000:27). Dispositional expressions might be habitual ways of acting, a pre-knowledge of a person’s character that can be used to predict the reactions of such an individual under any circumstances (Acione, 2000:63). Siemer (2005:817) holds that personality is made up of experiences and thus, cognitions of the feeling or mood that triggers reactions to circumstances. The levels of harmony, weakness, emotion and receptiveness are usually enveloped in one’s daily understanding of life that also dictates one’s positivity or negativity at any given time (Acione, 2000:63).

It has been established that the roles of conflict and interpersonal conflict contain situational factors such as gender, target status, hierarchy and age and also comprise individual factors, such as goal-getting (Spector, Fox & Theresa, 2006). Namie (2003:2) described individual factors as the need to control others. Some research suggests that middle managers in higher education were often cited as bullies and that women embrace the ‘boys-own’ culture to survive (Shain, 2000; Lewis, 2004:282). Others suggest that bullying is derived from a set of social stressors at work and the basic characteristic of social stressors related to the social relationships of employees within and outside an organisation (Einarsen et al., 2003:7).

Concepts such as social attitudes and personality traits referring to behavioural dispositions have played an important role in attempts to predict and explain human behaviour (Ajzen, 1991:179). Individuals display a dispositional character and attitude that can contribute to the prevalence of workplace bullying unless the character is tamed and brought under control. Bullies derive fulfilment when controlling others or when ascribing power to themselves (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:23).
2.3.1 Behavioural Patterns

The principle of aggregation does not explain behavioural variability across situations, nor does it permit the prediction of a specific behaviour in each situation. It was meant to demonstrate that general attitudes and personality traits are implicated in human behaviour and that their influence can be discerned only by looking at broad, aggregated, valid samples of behaviour, such as workplace bullying. It may be argued that broad attitudes and personality traits have an impact on specific behaviours – but only indirectly – by influencing some of the factors that might have an influence on the particular behaviour in question (Ajzen, 1991:181).

Figure 2.1 below outlines the behavioural patterns of workplace bullying, the attitude towards the behaviour in the workplace and the subjective norms and personality cultures that promote workplace bullying. The researcher super-imposed possible outcome and/or possible intervention tools.

![Figure 2.1: Behavioural pattern](image)

Workplace bullying is an attitude so what is the institutional culture towards the attitude in its subjective norm? Anti-bullying policy has been a perceived behavioural control of the attitude. The intention of the perpetrator is to invoke negation emotions for the targets and aggressive behaviour from the perpetrators. The following heading explains the figure in detail.
2.3.2 Attitudes towards Bullying Behaviour

Bullying can be attributed to certain factors that include differences in social standing, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and/or even facial appearance. It has been noticed by some researchers that the term ‘bullying’ is not commonly used to describe workplace bullying behaviours in some countries, such as the United States of America and Germany and that in some cases it is referred to as emotional abuse or mobbing (Saunders, Huynh & Goodman, 2007:348). The participants in the climate survey at NMU described their bullying experiences as abusive behaviour and claimed that certain behaviour reflected traits of bullying (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:1). One of the reasons that the term abuse was used for bullying is the ability to understand the term bullying and define it in a workplace context. This speaks to the consequential effect of abuse towards a target.

2.3.3 Micro-Aggressions

Micro aggressions are reflections of worldviews that are filled with ethnocentric values, biases, assumptions and stereotypes that have been strongly and culturally inculcated into our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Sue, 2010:41).

The same can be said for institution knowledge of bullying and its dynamics. Understanding the term bullying and defining it in a workplace context with respect to race, gender, class, sexual-orientation and religious beliefs unveils aspects of ethnocentric values. Literature findings indicated that micro aggressions cause harm, particularly to marginalized groups of people, because they are already experiencing the stress of an insufficiency and imbalance of resources (Sue, 2010:40). Micro aggression can best be recognised in its natural setting as it manifests in a dynamic manner, especially in the environment, without appropriate preventive measures against it. Sue (2010:19) expressed that “as long as micro aggressions remain hidden, invisible, unspoken and excused as innocent slights with minimal harm, we will continue to insult, demean, alienate and oppress marginalized groups.”

2.3.4 Perceived Behavioural Control

Anti-bullying policy has been perceived to be effective in controlling behaviour. Findings reveal that the low level of bullying in Sweden is the result of strong anti-bullying policies that have been sustained through the help of politicians, professionals, parents and peers (Nordhagen et al., 2005:700). It was also suggested that creating awareness through the
educational sector reduces the occurrence of the phenomena and terminates the effects on individuals.

2.3.5 Intention and Negative Emotions

Much of the research to date has uncovered a consistent trait pattern that places the targets of bullying into two categories: passive and aggressive (Mumbi & Ryan, 2011:101). Individuals with traits of an agreeable or an extrovert personality are likely to perceive workplace bullying behaviour as abuse (Van Heugten, 2013:292). Such individuals usually get along with everyone, even difficult colleagues. Personal behaviour can be determined by how individuals are received by others (Ajzen, 1991:183). Einarsen (1999:23) describes a predatory form of bullying as highly aggressive, destructive and caused by a social climate in which hostility and aggressiveness prevail.

2.3.6 Aggression vs Bullying

Bullying seems to contain aggression-related behaviours (Cowie et al., 2002:47; Einarsen, 1999:19; Salin, 2003a:1214; Samnani & Singh, 2012:584). Findings reveal that envious dispositions can drive perpetrators to bully in an aggressive manner (Einarsen, 1999:20; Keashly & Neuman, 2013: 23).

Research indicates that workplace bullying behaviour is intentional (Raineri, Frear & Edmonds, 2011:22) and negative emotions develop, which consequently cause aggression. More reasons for workplace bullying will be discussed later in this chapter. Sue (2010:19) holds that an academic environment does not include dialogue free of tension, for instance, race issues are not tension free communication between the races.

2.3.7 Emotions

Emotions play a distinct role in research and theory pertaining to human aggression and violence (Spector, Fox & Theresa, 2006:29). Moods are classically viewed as being distinct from, or partnering with, emotions (Siemer, 2005:816). Experimental and social psychology evolved from an initial focus on frustration, to focusing mainly on the situational condition that is dependent on environmental conditions and events (Spector et al., 2006:29).

Emotions create a model of responses to situations based on the way we feel about an event. Raw feelings add to the core of object-directed emotions that involve other elements and
particularly cognitions (Siemer, 2005:816). One of the things that can motivate change is an understanding of the phenomenon of bullying and the resultant feelings of the target, such as their emotional pain (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik & Alberts, 2006:150). Emotion can also be evaluated from the trait perspective, as dispositions and personality variables arise at least partially from “genetic predispositions” (Spector et al., 2006:36).

Conceptualization and understanding of self are ways of thinking about problems and others and rationalizing our own behavioural attitudes (Acione, 2000:65). For example, repeated aggressive, hostile, angry feelings generated by hurtful memories are behaviours of choice, but these can become a concern when they trigger violent aggression towards others.

Critical thinking experts argue that the “scientific process, which has developed conventional testing tools to measure cognitive skills and human dispositions, summarize recent empirical research findings that human dispositions are neither hidden nor unknowable” (Acione, 2000:61). In that case, human dispositions might be perceived as appropriate but emotional and psychosocial factors that may arouse negative personality, aggression and negative emotions that escalate to repeated negative behaviour that transcends into aspects of daily life (Spector et al., 2006:31).

Emotions and cognitions endure over time, building in intensity until an act of revenge occurs but in some cases, it dissipates. This means that taking revenge immediately is not an impulsive reaction to circumstances but amounts to the intensity of cognitions and emotions over an extended period (Spector et al., 2006:31).

Aggression has been associated with workplace bullying in different ways and targets who are competent in their professions get bullied as a way of revenge to boost perpetrators’ egos (Cowie et al., 2002:2; Einarsen, 1999:19; Keashly and Neuman, 2010; Salin, 2003a; Samnani & Singh, 2012:582). One of the debates that surfaced from the book written by Hare and Babiak ‘Snakes in the suits’ is that psychopaths attempt to justify reasons for negative dispositional behaviours. These authors asked: “To what extent do nature and nurture influence the development of the traits and behaviours that define psychopathy?” This led to additional findings that there is a need for the application of behavioural genetics to the study of personality traits and behavioural dispositions (Babiak & Hare, 2006:24).

Kelly’s (2006:279) article describes the study of a psychopathic bully whose behaviours are usually destructive with deliberate behaviour that is not likely to change. Spector claims that
individuals with angry dispositions will find it easy to bully as this relieves their own internal 
aggression. It was further explained that personality has a way of interplaying within individual 
differences and in the work environment and these can combine to induce emotion and to 
produce behaviour.

They also explain that negative childhood memories have also been identified as something 
that could affect personal dispositions and processing these events provokes internal 
aggressions that lead to bullying (Spector et al., 2006:30). McKay, Arnold, Fratzl and Roland, 
(2008:81) hold that the importance of understanding bullying in universities from the context 
of workplace and personal life; that is, the transition of bullying behaviour from university life, 
the impact it has on teaching and learning, and the effects on students’ behaviours as they carry 
such behaviour into the workplace environment.

2.4 THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Ecological behaviour is described as the study of interrelationships between organisms of life 
and the environment, organic and inorganic. It is based on the assumption that life and the 
environment are inseparable parts of a greater whole (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:419; Scheiner & 
Willig, 2008:21). The perspective on ecology emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth 
century, during the period of social reform, urbanization and industrialization, expansion of 
public education and concern about the health and welfare of families (Bubolz & Sontag, 
1993:419).

The causes and consequences of phenomena interactions in environments are in the domain of 
ecology (Scheiner & Willig, 2008:23). The relevance of ecology to this study is to determine 
the association between individuals’ upbringing, how their primary environment influences 
bullying behaviours’ and whether our higher education institutions are really promoting 
diversity, as the Department of Education tends to promote diversity through social, cultural 
and economic development (Badat, 2010:10).

The community’s awareness of diversity and tolerance would influence the behavioural 
outcomes in most South African higher educational institutions. Researchers have noticed that 
highly punitive cultures, as well as cultures where free communications are not encouraged, 
promote bullying and counterfeit behaviours (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:23).
According to Steinmann (2010:10), “workplace and social ecosystems are interdependent and cannot be separated, meaning that whatever happens in the workplace has an impact on the society, and vice versa”. In the same vein, in the context of the ecological theory, we talk about the concept of ‘Ubuntu’ in which people are interconnected and interdependent. South Africa has been referred to as the ‘Rainbow Nation’, which is rich in diversity and diversity can be embraced by working together to achieve a prosperous life for every citizen (Lynham, Nafukho, & Cunningham, 2009:57, 61).

2.5 THE CULTURE OF ‘UBUNTU’

The cultural view of ‘Ubuntu’ has added value to the NMU and to South Africa as a whole but “white supremacy in the past has affected socio-cultural integration” (Lynham et al., 2009:59). There is an adage in the Yoruba language in the western part of Nigeria that says ‘people are my clothes that I use to cover myself’, which means [that] without people around me, I am naked. One of the core principles of Ubuntu is the acknowledgement that as human beings, we need one another, “we are people through other people” and we cannot exist alone (Lynham et al., 2009:61).

Bubolz and his colleague claim that individuals are a product of the combination of their environment and their genes (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:419). Steinmann (2010:10) advocated that the human ecosystem has become more vulnerable because of faulty leadership, which she referred to as “Hyena Governance”. It has also been established that holistic behaviours and the organizational structure of the workplace environment can generate systematic bullying (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:419; De Vos & Kirsten, 2015:7). Frequently, “structured internationalisation” fails to be exchanged between institutions during their academic learning year. Understanding differences in relative social class status and occupational position are also important for deeper knowledge of workplace bullying. Workers with the lowest wages can easily become targets and be disrespected among their colleagues and consequently be bullied by their supervisors. Similarly, the popular culture of an environment may contribute to employees’ perceptions of how colleagues could interpret workplace bullying differently (Roscigno, Lopez & Hodson, 2009:1564). An example of what is perceived as ‘unacceptable bullying’ in Scandinavian countries, are considered high degree form of bullying in other countries., maybe a managerial prerogative in a country such as the US is not consider bullying which can be categorised in terms of masculinity and position but consider bullying and misuse of power in Scandinavian countries (Parzefall & Salin, 2010:772).
A noteworthy point in this discussion is that workplace bullying encapsulates personality attributes with regard to the ecological placement of individuals, affecting thinking and behaviours, social class and emotional background and it is centred on aggression and the need to dominate others (Namie, 2003:2).

Literature exists on the effects of workplace bullying and the source of bullying behaviours but not on the definition of bullying. Various authors indicate that bullying is persistent and destructive in nature. The following section deals with the definitions and types of bullying behaviours in depth. One needs to differentiate between bullying and conflict, its causes, targets’ and bystanders’ perspectives. The discussion of workplace bullying begins from a global view and then narrows to the South African context.

Bullying is perpetrated in a variety of ways and at different levels, either downwards from superiors to subordinates, upwards from subordinates to superiors, or horizontally/laterally between co-workers (Smit, 2014:382). The consequences of bullying are frequently evident in the target’s relationships outside the workplace, such as with family and in their social life. These consequences can include feelings of negative self-worth, depression and an escalation of anger from the workplace to the targets’ living space (Manotas, 2015:1607; Thomas, 2005:274). The following sections describe the components of workplace bullying, which is one of the objectives of the study.

2.6 SCOPE OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature study with regard to the epistemology of workplace bullying is presented below. Key findings are highlighted in Tables 2.1 - 2.7

2.6.1 Defining Bullying

Although there is no clear universal definition of workplace bullying (Johnson, 2009:35; Saunders, Huynh & Goodman, 2007:341), there is a level of agreement that workplace bullying is aggressive, based on a power imbalance and manifests itself between two persons or in a group (Pietersen, 2007:59). For behaviour to be considered bullying, it has to be repeated, persistent and negative (Einarsen, 1999:22; Salin, 2003a:1214). Gary Namie, co-founder of the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute, which is an educational, research and advocacy organization in the United States, defines “workplace bullying as status-blind interpersonal
hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person’s health or economic status” (Namie, 2003:1).

Bullying and mobbing are used interchangeably by a number of authors (Faucher, Cassidy & Jackson, 2015:112; Leymann, 1996:65), but others distinguish between the two terms (Keashly & Neuman, 2010:50). In most instances workplace bullying is defined as the deliberate and systematic abuse of power or authority to persistently and repeatedly intimidate or criticise an individual in the workplace (Einarsen, 1999; Van Heugten, 2013; Thomas, 2005). Contrary to some opinions that bullying is incivility (Roscigno, Lopez & Hodson, 2009), Slain et al. posit that bullying is usually targeted towards one, or a few selected victims, rather than being a form of a more generalized workplace incivility (Salin, 2003a:1216).

In defining the term bullying, it is necessary to consider the frequency and longevity of the behaviour. It has been found that the targets of workplace bullying generally experience this behaviour for a period of 6 to 12 months (Salin, 2003a:1215). Einarsen et al. (2003:104) holds that for “practical reasons it is important to know how frequently bullying actually occurs in organisations, because efforts to develop measures against this phenomenon would depend on it”.

For this study, the researcher adopted the definition formulated by Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper. These authors define bullying as negative acts towards one or more individual(s). They involve a perceived power imbalance and can create a hostile work environment (Einarsen et al., 2003:1214–1215). Table 2.1 below presents various definitions of workplace bullying.
### Table 2.1: Definitions of workplace bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of Workplace Bullying</th>
<th>Authors’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A repeated negative act, including social isolation, silent treatment, rumours, attacking victim’s private life or attitudes, excessive criticism or monitoring, withholding information, depriving responsibilities and verbal aggression”.</td>
<td>(Salin, 20:1214)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Workplace bullying is “status-blind” interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe to harm the targeted person's health or economic status”.</td>
<td>(Namie, 2003:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bullying is a persistent, enduring form of abuse at work”.</td>
<td>(Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007:838)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is the deliberate and systematic abuse of power or authority to persistently and repeatedly intimidate, humiliate or criticise an individual in the workplace”.</td>
<td>(Thomas, 2005a:275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As a repetitive, targeted, and destructive form of communication directed by more powerful members at work towards those who are less powerful”.</td>
<td>(Leymann, 1996:165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Workplace bullying is perceived to be a repeated, health-harming mistreatment that takes one or more of the following forms: verbal abuse; offensive conduct and behaviours (including non-verbal) that are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating; or interference and sabotage that prevent work from getting done”.</td>
<td>(Lutgen-Sandvik et al. 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mobbing and bullying involves offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of workers”.</td>
<td>(Martino et al., 2010:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Workplace bullying is repeated attempts of torment to wear down, or frustrate another person”.</td>
<td>(Einarsen, 2000:382)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bullying and mobbing are “vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or groups of employees”.</td>
<td>(Denenberg &amp; Braverman, 2001:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or more individual(s), which involve a perceived power imbalance and create a hostile work environment”.</td>
<td>(Einarsen et al., 2003:1214-1215)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
By integrating the similarities, Faucher and colleagues identified the similarities between these definitions firstly as repeated negative acts that are unwanted and harmful. The second is the influence and misuse of power over others (Faucher et al., 2015:112) and thirdly, the frequency of the behaviour (Salin, 2003a:1214; Saunders et al., 2007:341). Regardless of the way in which workplace bullying is being perpetrated, targets still view the behaviour as negative, abnormal and inappropriate in the workplace (Saunders et al., 2007:342).

2.6.2 Bullying is not Conflict

In defining workplace bullying, it is important to differentiate between conflict and the act of bullying. Conflict cannot be labelled as bullying when the incident is an isolated event or if the two parties involved have equal “power” when they are in conflict (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003:15). Deutsch, Coleman and Marcus (2006:418) hold that “Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory thus instigating us to invention; it shocks us out of sheep-like passivity and sets us at noting and contriving.” Conflict at work ordinarily gears us towards discourse, but if left unmanaged it creates a hostile work environment and bullying can develop as a survival mechanism or relief therapy and a culture that promotes poor behaviour is created (Kircher et al., 2011:9).

Conflict and bullying are not the same but bullying can result from unattended or purposeful, constructive or destructive conflict. Bullying operates in an ideological and functional space, where ‘conventional’ conflict is not an option; or it is perceived as not being an option. The constructive or destructive phenomena of conflict can be framed by the feasibility of transforming adversarial relationships, being enhanced by mutual understanding (Jeong, 2010:13–14). For instance, the perceived power imbalance that bullying has in common with other forms of abuse, like child abuse, gender-based violence, arguably even terrorism, or sexual harassment. Bullying becomes possible once there is a sense and ownership of power – real or imagined.

2.6.3 Types of Bullying Behaviours

Some of the challenges in determining an appropriate definition of workplace bullying is due to the complexity of the behaviour (Saunders et al., 2007:341). A review of the findings of a study conducted by De Wet and Jacobs, indicates that 89% of bullies’ targets report three types of workplace bullying behaviours. According to de Wet and Jacobs, “The three most common negative acts experienced by the respondents are:
- The constant evaluation of target performance (32%);
- (32%) complain they are given more work than they can manage;
- (47%) claim perpetrators constantly find mistakes/errors in their work and the results of their work (de Wet and Jacobs, 2013:459).

A common characteristic of workplace bullying is that the behaviour is negative – whether verbal or non-verbal – ranging from the covert and subtle to the overtly aggressive (Saunders et al., 2007:342). According to Cowan (2011:307), “bullying-communication behaviours are extreme and intense, the behaviours persist over long periods; and [they] result in adverse effects”. Twale and De Luca found that the academic staff in the United States are becoming less civil towards one another and investigated the influence of the external environment over the academic environment (Twale & Luca, 2008:249). It has been suggested by some authors that workplace bullying can be seen as abuse, which can occur through negative communication, for example, verbal abuse, rumours/gossip, a negative tone of voice and body language, threats, withholding information and teasing (Cowan, 2011:308). Table 2.2 below provides more examples of workplace bullying behaviours.
Table 2.2: Types of workplace bullying behaviours identified from the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of workplace bullying behaviours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Withholding necessary information;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attempts to belittle or undermine work;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undervaluing efforts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ignoring or excluding;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excessive workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Thomas, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set up for failure;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social isolation – do not inform the target about events in department;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ridicule, insulting remarks, gossip and attacks on private life;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal threats, shouting, public humiliation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical violence or threats of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Einarsen, 1999:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Criticism, interference of work tasks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social exclusion/ isolation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undervalued, overlooked and undermined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Van Heugten, 2012:294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Isolation occasions, task below competence;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tight deadlines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Salin, 2003:1215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workplace bullying has been described as repeated negative acts, including among other things, social isolation, silent treatment, rumours, attacking the target’s private life or attitudes, excessive criticism or monitoring, withholding information, depriving responsibilities and verbal aggression (Momberg, 2011:21; Salin, 2003a:1214). Workplace bullying manifests in different forms of consistent behaviours. Some of the behaviours identified in existing research include persistent insults, criticism or ridicule, being ignored or treated as non-existent, given demeaning tasks, or being set up to fail (Blase & Blase, 2007:154; Cassell, 2011:34; Cunniff & Mostert, 2012:3; Lewis, 2004:283).

Actions that characterise bullying are subtle methods of intimidation or aggressive behaviour, which are often used to hurt, embarrass or cause discomfort to the target. Bullies always appear to have more power, officially or physically, than their targets (Fuller, 2015:2).

Smit (2014) in her doctoral thesis, contradicts the generally held view about bullying by describing an “obvious, visibly seen and wide power gap”; all that is needed is a stroke of meanness, which may present itself in many forms (Smit, 2014:1). Steinman-Marais, founder and chairperson of the Workplace Dignity Institute, first created the awareness of workplace bullying in South Africa in 1998 and elaborated that bullies resort to “dominating and getting rid of competent staff” (Steinman, 2010:9). The bullies’ behaviours have been identified as behaviours that work against the progress of others and the ethic of the workplace (Namie, 2003:2). Types of bullying include work-related, personal, direct, indirect and institutional bullying (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011:70).

It has been suggested that bullying may be deliberate or unconscious but it usually causes humiliation and it can be offensive and distressful for the target (McKay et al., 2008:78). Workplace bullying is perceived as a social phenomenon that cripples the economy of a society, drains the growth of an organisation and affects the health of a target negatively (Kravitz, 2014:66; McKay et al., 2008:77). Bullying also creates fear in witnesses (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Workplace bullies do not contribute to the success and aims of an organisation and it has been noted -

1) that bullying only thrives in an environment that tolerates it and
2) in an organisation such behaviour escalates when the perpetrators are not checked or properly supervised by management (Kravitz, 2014:65).

According to Lewis, possible causes of workplace bullying are as follows:
The culture of the organisation;
The leadership style;
Conflict resolution mechanisms;
The labour/management’s philosophy;
The organisation’s policy, grievances, discipline, counselling and employee-assistance programme provision.

Victims’ strategies can be actions that are likely to be defined as bullying and they could provide reasons for bullying (Lewis 1999:108).

Most workplace bullying is produced not by clear divisions of inequality and power but by abstruseness and the lack of a firm organisational structure that works effectively to organize productive activity to eliminate contradictions and unwarranted power struggles (Roscigno et al., 2009:1578).

Having discussed definitions and types of workplace bullying, the rest of this chapter explores power play. Power is described as one of the tools of the workplace bully; the imbalance and misuse of power created by inequality in our society. Individuals living in consciousness of power and obsessed with power are usually found to be bullies, forgetting the cord of leadership that is serving and leading others to influence and impact, both for professional/career growth and to psychologically boost their self-esteem. At times the layers of hierarchy in an institution’s organogram paves the way for the abuse and misuse of power and the people at the bottom suffer the effects of workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying seems inevitable in any given institution. However, bullying thrives in environments where it’s being allowed by the organisational structure or management style and policy (Jennifer, Cowie & Ananiadou, 2003:495). Power dynamics and management styles in responding to bullying is significant for anyone at the receiving end. Ferris’ findings have explained that some HR representatives respond insensitively when targets seek help with bullying (Ferris, 2004:393). It is important to pay attention to the process and impacts of workplace bullying from target to bystander and later focus on the manifestations and consequences of bullying within the institution.
2.6.4 Targets of Workplace Bullying

Targets of workplace bullying suffer, on average, for 22 months and several efforts have been made to explore the causes and effects of workplace bullying (Namie, 2003:2). These efforts highlight the deleterious effects of bullying on the health and wellbeing of victims (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003; Hoel et al., 1999; Razzaghian, Mariya and Shah, 2011:13420). Targets are vulnerable and are without the ability to secure freedom from the bully. Psychological and emotional traumas are often suffered by the target. Symptoms such as sleeplessness, low levels of self-esteem, post-traumatic stress, poor concentration and exhaustion are experienced. Psychosocial consequences can manifest physically as headaches, substance abuse and gastro-intestinal disorders (Schmitz, 2010:9).

Bullying does not differentiate between gender, race, religion or age but males bully others more often than females do, and a large percentage of females (about 50 per cent) are reported to be the targets, bullied mostly by males (Olweus, 2003:13–14). Research on bullying behaviour and its relationship with gender among faculty administrators, examines the elements of bullying and indicates that “there are 50 instances of bullying whereby the victims were identified by gender in the administrator results and approximately three-quarters of the bullies observed are male, with the remaining quarter being female” (Raineri, Frear & Edmonds, 2011:27). A study carried out among civil servants in the government sector in Nigeria identified that gender significantly moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and the organisational climate in such a way that the negative relationship between workplace bullying and organisational climate was non-significant for men at 5% but highly significant for women at 54% (Okurame, 2013:5618).

The majority of definitions for workplace bullying suggest that the target must, for one reason or another, feel unable to stop or prevent the abuse, which is usually as a result of a power imbalance. A power disparity either exists at the onset of bullying or develops over time (Einarsen et al., 2003:204). Even when targets are being bullied, some may not perceive their treatment as bullying, while others may simply avoid the situation by wishing it away (Cilliers, 2012:2; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007). While some researchers gave a reason for workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003:308), others such as Scott-Lennon & Considine (2008:13) believe that frequently, targets cannot really pinpoint or interpret why they are at the receiving end of bullying, neither can they remember specific incidents that led to these repeated acts.
It was observed that bullied targets suffer from a lack of social support at work, which is central to coping with the experience of bullying (Lewis, 2004:284). Many targets of bullying in Van Heugten’s research study, found social isolation to be one of the most challenging effects of bullying. Targets find it difficult to deal with the pain, trauma, and set-backs in their careers and life progression (Van Heugten, 2013:293, 297).

Table 2.3: Description of targets as identified in literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both genders are targets</td>
<td>(Olweus, 2003:13-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dynamic of a target is embedded in childhood psychological experiences.</td>
<td>(Cilliers, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets usually feel overwhelmed.</td>
<td>(Kravitz, 2014:67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research has found that as many as 58% of targets in a particular organisation are women.</td>
<td>(Farmer, 2011:196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets of bullies sometimes resort to alcohol and drugs in order to cope with the stress of workplace bullying.</td>
<td>(Van Heugten, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of workplace bullying endure their pain for an average of 22 months before requesting assistance.</td>
<td>(Namie, 2003:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The act is an infringement on the target’s human rights and a denial of his/her dignity.</td>
<td>(Khoo, 2010:65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6.5 Target Responses

According to Scott-Lennon and Considine (2008:9), the recommended practice for targets is to confront bullies constructively and explain how offensive the bully’s behaviours are. This resonates with Steinman’s (2010) ‘don’t take shit from hyenas in the workplace’. If this process fails or does not produce the desired result, then the target can initiate mediation through employee relations. The authors explain that if this process of mediation fails, the institution has the obligation to investigate the matter. Some measures do exist, such as negotiation through grievance and disciplinary procedures, as provided for in the Labour Relations Act (LRA), 2014 as amended in order to guard against unfair labour practice (VLP). Table 2.4 is a summary of some of the responses a target might choose.
Table 2.4: Responses to workplace bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to workplace bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Policies that mention the importance of polite behaviour in the workplace may be helpful to victims of bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Barker, Michael and Rayner, 1999:50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is important to include the staff from all levels of an organisation, as well as union representatives in the process of developing and implementing an anti-bullying policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Salin, 2008:223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free expression should be actively encouraged as it is fundamental to any preventive strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Khoo, 2010:65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Targets must be encouraged to confront (engage) their bullies constructively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Scott-Lennon and Considine, 2008:9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6.6 The Bystander

Bullying is sometimes carried out in the form of communication that shatters the experience and competencies of both the target and the witnesses (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:407). Witnessing co-workers experiencing bullying increases fear, emotional exhaustion, hyper-vigilance, stress and intentions of resignation (Vartia, 2003). Targets’ feelings of being overwhelmed can affect not only the target but also other workers who witness the bullying. Co-workers that witness bullying spend time dealing with the pressure rather than concentrating on their work and social lifestyle (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:427). The possibility of employees witnessing a co-worker being bullied, or sympathising with colleagues’ abusive experiences, can compel witnesses to take sides (Lars, Skogstad Anders & Sta’le, 2009:355; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:410; Namie, 2003:3). A circle of defence and an unhealthy workplace will begin to develop. These effects are summarised in Table 2.5.
Table 2.5: Descriptions of and impact on bystanders (a witness) taken from literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing or learning about the impacts of workplace bullying should promote empathetic responses. (Kravitz, 2014:67)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnesses who observe bullying know what goes on behind closed doors. When a conscientious employee is fired and humiliated by being fired and is then escorted by HR and security. (Namie, 2003:5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnesses are fearful of being described as whistle-blowers, especially when whistle-blowing protection is lacking or unknown. Witnesses are more likely to report by filing formal grievances. (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:421)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research has found that there is a risk in naming witnesses when reporting bullying, as there is also the likelihood of individual workers being labelled pejoratively. Joining resistance efforts is never without risk and the only safe witness is one who keeps his peace and does not take sides. (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:427)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnesses might be compelled to take sides. (Lars, Skogstad Anders &amp; Sta'le, 2009:355)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6 below was adopted from Khoo (2010:65) to explain the reasons why bystanders do not support targets.
Table 2.6: Reasons why bystanders do not support targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons why bystanders do not support targets.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues do not understand the emotional and psychological violence targets are experiencing through bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fear of not wanting to be the next targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being able to see beyond the bully’s mask of deceit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies infuse the work environment with negative stories/rumour of their targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues also suffer personal issues and are not ready to lose their source of income due to other people’s problems. Fear of the unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some gain gratification and satisfaction in witnessing the pain of a target.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7 POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

Society presumes that power and powerlessness are equals. Power can be addressed from three perspectives: shift in power relationships, a loss of power and a power gain. The bully holds the power while the target is referred to as being powerless (Sadan, 2000:44). The perspective of powerlessness is not a personal situation and should be seen as a social situation that has its roots in inequality that demands socio-economic solutions (Sadan, 2000:45).

Power imbalance has been identified as a potential source of bullying (Salin, 2003a:1216). It is important to balance power relationships between the targets and the perpetrators on a social level and even between the organizational contexts where the bullying is being perpetrated (Cowie et al., 2002:36). The issue of bullying from different authors’ perspectives has been of power rationing, in order to emphasise power as a useable tool in workplace bullying, while the perpetrator deliberately and systematically exhibits negative behaviours that pollute the workplace environment (Kelly, 2006; Lewis, 1999; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Thomas, 2005; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

Workplace bullying can also be defined as deliberate and systematic abuse of power or authority to persistently and repeatedly intimidate or criticise an individual in the workplace (Einarsen, 1999; Van Heugten, 2013; Thomas, 2005). Blau’s (2003) study on power and powerlessness indicates that factors attributed to individuals or groups are seen as fundamentally relational in nature and the current relationships shared by individuals determine the behaviour received (Roscigno, Lopez & Hodson, 2009:1563). John Wax, a sociologist,
defines power as follows: “Power is the ability to influence the beliefs and behaviours of others, in accordance with a wish or a plan”. Power is seen to increase the influence that the power-holder exercises over others, with the intention of decreasing the influence of others (Wax, 1971:274). Wax (1971:274) explains that the power structure is massive in any system and this often leads to high levels of control on one hand and resistance to change on the other hand.

Wax holds that most communities, institutions and organisations are too large, varied and complex to be decisively and comprehensively controlled by a single power structure. Wax suggests doing away with power structures and stimulating relevant power invention (Wax, 1971:274), because power is not confined within a power structure but can be found in every segment of society, such as organisations, institutions and in the family setting (Wax, 1971:275). Roscigno and his colleagues raised questions on how relational power is embedded in organisations and how one might exercise such power, and its manifestations in the form of bullying can be conditioned, reinforced, or mitigated by organizational structures.

### 2.8 DIFFERENT POWER SOURCES

Various sources can influence power. Wax listed the following as stimulators of power possession: money, votes, laws, information, expertise, prestige, group supports, contacts, charisma, communication channels and media, social roles, access to rewards, position and title, ideas, conceptual and verbal skills, the ability to gratify important needs, a monopoly of essential resources, coalitions and alliances, energy, conviction, courage, interpersonal skill and moral conviction. Above all, Wax holds that the “keystone of power in a professional environment is competence” (Wax, 1971:275).

### 2.9 TYPES OF POWER

The position of power can be said to influence individuals and their use of power. Power can be acquired through delegation, job titles or social roles as parents, as well as through education and degrees. Power can be “achieved” through different methods such as, competence, the ability to meet organisational or community needs and force of personality (Wax, 1971:276). Cooper and Snell elaborate by claiming that “people who bully take advantage of an imbalance of power, such as greater physical size, higher status or the support of peer group” (Cooper & Snell, 2003:23).
In most cases, the organisational hierarchy has been noted to influence social power, which creates barriers to the rights of cordial working relationships. For example, a line manager positions him/herself in a space where he/she dishes out insensitive authority because of the position he/she occupies and never cares who gets hurt or affected. Roscigno, Lopez and Hodson’s findings indicate that poor workplaces’ power structures produce platforms for bullying, and organisations without capable guardians create further vulnerabilities to bullying due to poor management or lack of self-control of tactics. In their view, bullying by immediate supervisors and managers is fundamental to workplace dynamics and stratification, given the formalized, "top-down" power differences and the many direct material and social-psychological costs emanating from hierarchical abuses of workplace power. They concluded that social power and organisational dynamics influence the workplace and all forms of abuse in the workplace (Roscigno et al., 2009:1562).

2.10 POWER FROM THE PERPETRATOR’S PERSPECTIVE

The behaviour of perpetrators fits the interpretation of Babiak and Hare (2006) who speak of “The snakes in suits” and Steinman’s (2010) “Don’t take shit from hyenas in the workplace”. Interpersonal behaviour tends to dominate over other types of behaviour. Relative discourse of organizational power and inequality between targets and perpetrators influences the perception of hierarchy as an imbalance of power (Cilliers, 2012:2; Keashly & Neuman, 2010:63). A theoretical study of multi-method analysis with 204 participants by Roscigno, Lopez and Hodson (2009), indicated that the workplace is indeed an area “thick with the smell of office and petty politics”.

They explained bullying by immediate supervisors and managers as fundamental knowledge through the general study of workplace dynamics, of which the "top-down" power ratio and many targets suffer social-psychologically inferiority emanating from the hierarchical abuses of workplace power (Roscigno, Lopez & Hodson, 2009:1563). Salin et al. (2005a) holds that in some cases subordinates, especially those in acting positions, may abrogate an amount of power to bully a supervisor (Salin, 2003a:1216). They attribute job insecurity, which creates vulnerabilities, to bullying behaviours. Whenever perpetrators notice insecure employees they use it as a platform of power against those vulnerable employees. It has been established that job insecurity diminishes workers' respect for their bosses (Roscigno et al., 2009:1565).
Invariably the excessive and abusive use of power in the workplace leads to supervisory bullying (Roscigno et al., 2009:1561).

From interviews in a research study undertaken in a university setting by Bjorkqvist et al. (1994), it could be seen that position/hierarchy was related to bullying and individuals of lower administrative and service jobs were more likely to be bullied by those in superior positions (Bjorkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck 1994:182; Thomas, 2005:275).

In a mixed methodology research study of 4500 academic support staff conducted by Thomas (2005:275), the findings revealed the “deliberate and systematic abuse of power and authority to persistently and repeatedly intimidate, humiliate or criticise an individual in the workplace”. Thomas (2005:278-279) reviewed “power differences” between the targets and perpetrators and noted that some participants emphasised the abusive use of power, position and seniority. Only one participant interviewed claimed to have been bullied by a colleague of the same status, which is unusual, as bullies are more often line managers (Thomas, 2005:280).

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the definitions of workplace bullying and discovered the lack of uniformity in the definitions. The findings, however, have established a concurrence among the authors that bullying, when isolated, is persistent, unwanted and humiliating. The negative impact of bullying on targets, such as stress and burn-out, psychological problems and absenteeism cannot be ignored, and institutionally, it creates a potential drop in productivity. The researcher opined that a power imbalance and the misuse of power between the perpetrator and the target play a significant role in workplace bullying, in situations of categorised power and in the various ways of acquiring power.
CHAPTER THREE

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

“All wars signify the failure of conflict resolution mechanism and they need post-war rebuilding of faith, trust and confidence” (Abdul Kalam).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter investigated the concept of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying was described from the perspectives of the target, the bystander and the perpetrator. The causes of workplace bullying and the negative consequences of workplace bullying, on the victim and the institution, were explored.

This chapter investigates the prevalence of workplace bullying globally by selecting a few countries and identifying their challenges and their solutions. And finally, it narrows the literature findings to those relevant to the South African Higher Educational Institutions.

The effects and roles of institutional watchdogs, such as unions, labour relations (employee relations) and management must be addressed when analysing the effects of existing policies and whether the policies are addressing bullying effectively. A proactive response to workplace bullying is discussed, both the target’s response and human relations’ (institutional representative’s) response to workplace bullying.

3.2 WORKPLACE BULLYING AROUND THE WORLD

Research on workplace bullying has increased in countries all over the world, and particularly in Sweden, which is the first country to have legislated bullying through health and safety laws and the Republic of Ireland (Edwards & O’Connell, 2007; Pietersen, 2007). Canada, the United States of America, Norway, Australia and Colombia (Barker, Michelle and Rayner, 1999; Cooper, Helge and Faragher, 2004; Lee, 2000; Manotas, 2015; McKay et al., 2008; Namie, 2003). According to Einarsen et al., the term ‘mobbing’ is used instead of bullying in some countries. It is still being used to describe a form of interpersonal aggression and hostile workplace behaviour, various forms of which overlap with each other, although some differences have been noted (Salin, 2003a:1215). One of the consequences of academic mobbing is that targets are ostracized, privileges are withheld and the individuals are isolated, not by one bully but by a number of their colleagues (Khoo, 2010:64).
Internationally, the increased perception of workplace bullying and its negative impact on employees has led to the emergence of policies to protect employees and employers. For example, the Irish Health and Safety Authority Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work, which came into effect in May 2007, which provides practical guidance for employers on identifying and preventing bullying at work (McKay et al., 2008:78).

3.2.1 Workplace Bullying in Canada

In Canada workplace bullying is particularly concerning for the newly employed or untenured workers, and those most challenged are the targets of health and welfare (McKay et al., 2008:77). For example, a study by McKay, Arnold, Fratzl and Roland showed that deliberate or unconscious bullying acts cause humiliation and distress for the target (McKay et al., 2008:78). The numerous negative ways in which the phenomenon has affected universities has given rise to second thoughts by employees with regard to the organisational structure and the costs of the increase in employee turnover has caused employees to change jobs (McKay et al., 2008:77). Their findings also indicate that workplace bullying is systemic in nature and employees carry the hurt and disappointment of being bullied from one place of employment to another (McKay et al., 2008:77).

The Canadian federal government has reviewed a bill that addresses workplace bullying among public service employees (Canada Safety Council, 2006). In Canada, workplace bullying is a concern for the newly employed or untenured workforce. This phenomenon is prevalent and presents a challenge for organizations, in addition to the crippling effect it has on the health and welfare of workers. McKay and colleagues reviewed more findings among the Canadian workers and discovered that whether bullying is committed deliberately or unconsciously, it causes humiliation and it can be offensive and distressful for the target (McKay et al. 2008:77).

Further findings in Canada confirmed issues that need to get settled and the process is clear with a positive outcome. When the targets seek an alternative, rather than going through university representatives, it results in bullies being protected and allows for the cycle of bullying to continue and increase. Whenever a case of bullying is reported and dismissed by management, it simply gives the bullies the opportunity to continue to act and it induces an imbalance of power between the workers (McKay et al., 2008:91). The targets of bullying find
another way to escape their tormentors, by reporting for work late, leaving work early and by applying for leave or sometimes taking unauthorised leave (Banks, Patel & Moola, 2012:3).

Changes such as downsizing are viewed from a narrow perspective and short-term solutions are sought, for what are so often complex problems. North America was the first to implement an anti-bullying policy. In June 2004, the Canadian Government in Quebec reformed its Labour Standards Act for psychological harassment in the workplace (Saunders et al., 2007:342).

### 3.2.2 Workplace Bullying in the USA

Dr Ruth Namie and Gary Namie introduced the term "workplace bullying" to the United States in the popular press in 1998, due to increased reports of the phenomenon and the need for workplace-protection (Namie, 2003:1). Targets reported the abusive misconduct to the perpetrators’ managers and their requests for relief elicited positive, helpful responses in only 18% of the cases. In 42% of the instances, the bully's boss compounded the problem and in 40% of the cases, the boss did nothing, which is not a neutral response as help was explicitly requested (Namie, 2003:2).

Namie’s findings indicated that a common attribute of all targets is the fact that they are “unwilling or unable” to defend themselves from the unwarranted behaviour of the perpetrator (Namie, 2003:3). An online interview survey on workplace bullying was conducted in the United States in 2007 and again in 2010 with 7740 participants (Kravitz, 2014:67). The results showed that:

- More than 37% of the workers had experienced bullying, and 15% had witnessed workplace bullying.
- 45% had experienced excessive monitoring.
- Bullying is not addressed by the legislation (Namie, 2003:2), even though the phenomenon goes beyond mere harassment.
- Organisations largely ignore bullying behaviour and about 62% of the reported cases of workplace bullying are not resolved, and in numerous cases the targets’ working conditions worsen.
- 72% of bullying perpetrators claim to be bosses and 55% of the targets are junior employees.
- 57% of the targets are believed to be females and 62% of the bullies are males.
Among organisations/institutions, workers collectively voice their grievances and both formal and informal lawsuit mechanisms are used to resolve unfair behaviours and labour disputes (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006:417). Glendinning (2001:269) referred to workplace bullying as a cancer that needs to be cured and emphasised the need for subordinates to develop a trusting relationship with their managers in order to enhance their chances of keeping their job. He described bosses that use coded words as likely to be bullies (Glendenning, 2001:270; 272).

### 3.2.3 Workplace Bullying in Australia

In 2006 the Work Choices Legislation was introduced in Australia, a piece of legislation that significantly altered employment rights and obligations. The legislation requires that “an employer must not engage in bullying, humiliating, intimidating or discriminating behaviour, as this is a violation of the employees’ mental rights contract (Saunders, Huynh & Goodman, 2007:346).

### 3.2.4 Workplace Bullying in New Zealand

During research conducted by Van Heugten among the 17 participants, 4 of whom were men and 13 of whom were women, the ratio was noted as being a reflection of the gender distribution in the social work profession in New Zealand (Van Heugten, 2013:293). Van Heugten’s report indicated that participants’ identification of workplace bullying experiences was consistent with the description of other researchers such as Einarsen et al. (2003), and this is in contrast to the findings on bullied nurses in a study by Duncan et al. (2001) (as cited in van Heugten, 2013:294).

### 3.2.5 Workplace Bullying in Europe and the United Kingdom

Scholarly and public awareness of workplace bullying has most obviously increased in Europe and the United Kingdom (Roscigno et al., 2009:1562), where bullying is a social problem and the potential need for anti-bullying legislation has been discussed in the House of Lords (Dignity at Work Bill, 2002). The Andrea Adams Trust Fund in the United Kingdom was founded in 1997 to support targets and to create an increased awareness of workplace bullying (Saunders et al., 2007:341). Researchers appreciate the work conducted by the late Andrea Adams, her contribution in bringing the issue of workplace bullying into the spotlight in the United Kingdom through conferences where she presented her papers (Barker et al., 1999). The role of unions in the United Kingdom is particularly meaningful in fighting against any
form of negative and imbalanced situation. Unions represent and present a way forward with logistical and strategic moves towards solving problems for employees and employers in workplace situations (Barker et al., 1999).

### 3.2.6 Workplace Bullying in Uganda

A quantitative research study using questionnaires was conducted among 102 of Makerere University’s academic staff members. The results from the Makerere University study proved that bullying and mobbing exist in higher education academic units and it is thriving due to a lack of policy to curb it, poor leadership styles and one-sided decision-makers. A workplace that fosters or promotes bullying. Kakumba, Wamala and Wanyama (2014:63) established that intolerance of other races and ethnicity can lead to bullying and urged the University to "develop a respectful organisational culture that fortifies colleagueship and harmonious coexistence through policy and open systems of communication with empowerment and participatory decision-making".

Kakumba et al.’s study explored the academic staff’s views with regard to bullying, particularly behaviours they considered to be bullying and their findings revealed that 60.8% of perpetrators were found among managers (Kakumba et al., 2014:67).

### 3.2.7 Workplace Bullying in South Africa

Research into workplace bullying in South Africa has received minimal attention (Bowman et al., 2015:301; DeWet, 2014:2; Momberg, 2011:3; Smit, 2014:1; Steinman, 2010:5), but a clear definition of workplace bullying is being addressed by the South African labour legislation (Le Roux, Rycroft & Orleyn, 2010:53).

Research has suggested that the lack of a clear definition of workplace bullying in South African labour legislation – apart from the definition of occupational detriment – has influenced the persistent spread of the phenomenon (Smit, 2014:6). Researchers hold that an enhanced definition of workplace bullying would have a positive effect on employees and organisations (Tracy et al., 2006:150). It is concerning that workplace bullying in the educational setting has the potential to negatively influence teaching and learning (Bradshaw, 2007:51; DeWet, 2014:1).
Literature on South African workplace bullying has indicated the necessity for further study and research in the higher education setting (DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:447; DeWet, 2010b:1450). In South Africa both workers and educators have rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution (RSA, 1996, 1998). Exercising of ones rights has not been made possible due to continuous victimisation and racism in the South African education system (DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:448).

Research has indicated that academic staff experience workplace bullying in similar ways, for example, in a New Zealand report, 65.3% of cases show that bullying events usually involve one person as an actor or bully and the behaviours are frequent intimidation, undermined authority, humiliating an individual in front of colleagues and shouting by colleagues (McKay et al., 2008:82). Within higher education sectors bullying is not a new phenomenon (Cassell, 2011:33). In organisations behaviours such as excessive monitoring, social isolation, humiliation and invalid criticism are largely present in the workplace, but the persistence and recurrence of the behaviours makes it bullying (Cassell, 2011:34). It is important to understand the frequency and nature of bullying in an organisation in order to determine a method for addressing such abusive behaviour.
Table 2.7: Countries highlighted for bullying from the literature study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Workplace bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>In Canada, workplace bullying is a particular concern for the newly employed or untenured workforce. This phenomenon is prevalent and also a challenging issue for organizations, in addition to the crippling effect it has on the health and welfare of workers (MacKay, 2008:77).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Further findings indicate that the common attribute of all targets is the fact that they are “unwilling or unable” to defend themselves from the unwarranted behaviour of the perpetrator (Namie, 2003:3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>The legislation requires that “an employer must not engage in bullying, humiliating, intimidating or discriminating behaviour as it is a violation of employees’ mental rights (Saunders, Huynh &amp; Goodman, 2007:346).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and United Kingdom</td>
<td>The role of unions in the UK is meaningful in fighting against any forms of negative and unbalanced situation between the workforces. Unions presented a way forward, logistics, strategies and solving disputes among employees and employers in workplace (Barker et al., 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Workplace bullying thrives due to a poor legal framework and policies, leadership styles that encourage dysfunctional management and control of decision-making by leadership (Kakumba et al., 2014:72).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>It is of great concern that workplace bullying in educational settings has the potential to negatively influence teaching and learning (Bradshaw, 2007:51; DeWet, 2014:1). Bullying is receiving attention in primary and high schools but not workplace bullying in higher education institutions (DeWet, 2014; Laas and Boezaart, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH WORKPLACE BULLYING GLOBALLY

The approach to dealing with workplace bullying varies depending on the level of awareness and the intention of the bully towards the targets and the witnesses (Einarsen et al., 2003:318). Ferris (2004:393) suggests two main practical implications when considering organisational representatives: Firstly, not every organisational representative’s responses are helpful when employees ask for assistance after being bullied; secondly, the need for training in managing allegations of bullying for supervisors, managers and HR professionals has become apparent. A better orientation of the phenomenon would increase the awareness of workplace bullying. Therefore, when it is discussed on a platform that does not create partiality or stereotypes, the
target will not feel unaided. Ferris (2004:393) suggests that counselling should include preparations in cases of negative organisational response, in case an employee is considering approaching the organisation for help.

Similarly, universities in general have been exhorted to consider the way and manner in which their faculties affect the university itself, because it was argued that the behaviour that students were exposed to in the university environment could be transferred to the workplace after they have been employed (McKay et al., 2008:81).

The formation of groups is a popular way of dealing with workplace bullying in Australia. Examples of such groups include trade unions, the Queensland Working Women's Service and Job Watch Inc. Victoria. Another group is the Beyond Bullying Association Inc., which is the foremost community action group addressing the problem of bullying in Australia. It was believed that the formation of groups would create an awareness of workplace bullying and targets would thus be able to get help and support. One of the aims of the ‘Beyond Bullying Association’ is to provide a mechanism of support and advice for bullied targets and to influence community and government leaders to address the problem (Beyond Bullying Association Inc., 1997).

In some European countries the problem of bullying is dealt with through public awareness, which increases daily through local, state wide and national media interviews, newspapers and magazine articles. A national current-affairs program recently presented a story about workplace bullying as part of its programme (Rayner et al., 1999:51).

According to Rayner et al. (1999:51), the Queensland Working Women's Service and Griffith University produced the ‘Guide to Bullying at Work’. The guide is designed as a step towards industry’s self-regulation within the auspices of the workplace, including an organisational development strategy. In Makerere University in Uganda, cases of bullying go unresolved and many targets have resorted to legal options for solving issues that should have been handled by human resources internally in the university (Kakumba et al., 2014:71).

Although still in its infancy, attempts have been made to deal with workplace bullying in the Republic of Ireland. While some unions have raised awareness of the problem at conferences, research into the problem is limited. The Anti-Bullying centre deals with workplace bullying through counselling and research. Research carried out in Ireland examined the extent of victimisation and the damage that workplace bullying has on employees’ physical and mental
health, as well as their careers (Rayner et al., 1999:52). Authors hold that the issue of bullying is neither a gender-specific nor an age-specific issue as the problem transcends sex and age boundaries.

Researchers have called for a clear policy on bullying that sets out the disciplinary actions that perpetrators of bullying face (O'Moore et al., 1998 cited in Rayner et al., 1999:52).

Strong anti-bullying policies in Sweden have reduced the level of workplace bullying through the support of politicians, professionals, parents and peers (Nordhagen et al., 2005:700). Concerns have been raised in Scandinavian countries that victimisation at work infringes people’s civil rights to physical and psychological health in the workplace. There are also concerns that such infringements could undermine national social and economic goals. Mobbing was identified as an area in need of research, one outcome of which was the development of Swedish policy initiatives to address the problem (Leymann, 1997). Significant identification of contributing factors within the work environment would give management the responsibility for the problem and for providing the relevant remedies.

Findings from a Scandinavian survey conducted in Finland indicated that most municipalities are responding to the call for an anti-bullying policy while 55.6% have already introduced and implemented the policy. Another 16% are working on developing anti-bullying policy and 65.9% of municipalities have initiated ways of creating awareness of workplace bullying among the employees and managers. Among the respondents, 27.3% claimed that training and leadership workshops had been made available for managers and supervisors (Salin, 2008:225).

3.4 HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is a stand-alone legislative structure recognised by the Higher Education Act of 1997 (Act No 101 of 1997). Part of the CHE’s mission is to contribute to the development of a transformed, equitable, high quality higher educational system capable of responding to the intellectual, ethical and human resource challenges facing a democratic society such as that of South Africa (DHET, 2014:3). South African higher education suffered social inequalities, systemic exclusion of people of colour and women in the past. Discrimination based on race, gender, class, institutional and other forms of harassment took shape and is still shaping South Africa’s higher education. Over and above those socio-economics phenomena, workplace bullying is another phenomenon to contend with. It has been established that higher education institutions (HEI) are monetarily and non-
monetarily affected by workplace bullying due to a lack of balance of distractive behaviours such as misuse of power (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:22).

Given the democratic government’s intention since 1994 to commit itself to transforming higher education structures and institutionalising a new social order, Badat (2010:10) claims that the apartheid higher education system was different, as a result of ‘race’ and ethnicity, which was an advantage to historically white institutions and a disadvantage to the historically black institutions (Badat, 2010:10). It was found that “apartheid had opened up increased opportunities for upward mobility among whites, allowing previously skilled white workers to enter supervisory and administrative positions” (Glaister & Wood, 2008:439). In so doing, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) decided to pursue values that were committed to integrity, public accountability in all sectors of higher education, transformation and independence (DHET, 2014:4).

The government and HEI have committed to restore human values of dignity, to eradicate inequality and to disband sexism and racialism and to provide human rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Bill of Rights and to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights” that are embodied in the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The Higher Education Act projected its desire of creating “a single co-ordinated higher education system”, restructuring and transforming “programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs” of South Africa, redressing “past discrimination”, ensuring “representatives and equal access”, and contributing “to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality” (Badat, 2010:3).

South Africa’s educational system is believed to be in crisis and it needs a systematic turnaround, but with the prevalence of workplace bullying, rebuilding the system without a workable solution to prevent the persistent abuse of power and position will not be possible. According to Ndebele (2004:1), “Higher education was perceived as a diseased body that required massive political and administrative surgery”. That is the reason for the Higher Education Act of 2008 (Act No 67 of 2008). As this Act is mandated to provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and request and be proactive in training with regard to matters that concern higher education (CHE, 2012:4). This mandate was sharpened in the revised Higher Education Act of 2010, signed into law in Jan 2017.
Through a transformation of the funding scheme in the higher educational system, CHE has developed and established equal rights to education for all citizens (CHE, 2012:5). There is a call for decentralisation of the academic environment due to, among other factors, the bullying dynamic, and there is a call for HR to take into consideration the intentionality and character of bullies because the behaviour is perceived to be part of the institutional behaviour (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:22).

Academics are not immune to bullying behaviours and students, administrators and academic staff can be the targets of bullies (McKay et al., 2008:77). The relationship between working conditions and the mental well-being of employees cannot be over-emphasized (Olivier, 2005:346). Ideally one would assume academia to be immune to petty behaviour like workplace bullying (Keashly & Neuman, 2013:23), but sadly this is not the case.

South African communities are fraught with moral degradation, racial conflict and violence, as well as lawlessness and economic distress (DeWet, 2010b). Workplace bullying has unfortunately been perceived to be an issue of “lower intensity and therefore, somehow, of less significance than other forms of harassment or discrimination” (Cassell, 2011:33; DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:459).

According to Olivier, “apart from the kinds of stress reported about academic work in other contexts, South African academics have had to face stresses associated with the radical transformation of the South African society and the demand that education itself becomes transformed; while making a contribution to the wider transformation of the society” (Olivier, 2005:346). Zabrodska and Kveton (2013:89) hold that “over the past decade, a growing number of Anglo-American and Scandinavian researchers have documented the extent to which the university environment provides opportunities for workplace bullying”. However, among other visions of a transformed and democratic institute of higher education, one is to “create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour” (Badat, 2010:4).

Part of the strategic plan of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) is to identify challenges facing higher education, and plans have been put in place to implement effective goals and objectives (CHE, 2012:11), although significant challenges are still contradicting the
commitments and vision of higher educational institutions, such as workplace bullying (CHE, 2012:9).

One of the transformations experienced in South Africa – especially in the context of academia – is the merging of colleges, universities and technikons. The consequences of this amalgamation could be a shortage of funding, employees’ insecurity, contract staff, stress and hierarchy restructuring. NMU was one of the higher education institutions that experienced a merger as part of the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:3). There is now a greater call for transformation of curricula and the workforce (especially at a professional level).

3.5 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although South African labour law is considered to be a liberal system when compared with other parts of the world, the managing of workplace bullying in the South African labour environment is undoubtedly challenging (Momberg, 2011:12). Fostering a culture of ‘dignity and respect’ for employees would enhance such issues and policies have been discussed to protect workplace practices and to enhance a culture of tolerance among staff members (Scott-Lennon & Considine, 2008:1). As mentioned earlier, the lack of a universal definition for workplace bullying allows for different interpretations of the phenomenon (Johnson, 2009:35).

Institutional cultures that encourage workplace bullying have been criticised by various authors (Momberg, 2011:22; Steinman, 2010:10).

According to Steinmann (2010:10), “some organisations willingly introduce a bully to perform a specific task, for instance, to get rid of ‘dead wood’ in the organisation.” In some cases this has triggered psychosocial problems that might not have been foreseen at the outset, and sometimes that ‘specific task’ becomes a ‘norm’.

3.6 ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

There is the growing attention to economic challenges and the continuous pressure to downsize and restructure in order to sustain competitiveness in an increasingly global economy. Authors have found that the uncertainty of job security has further aggravated this threat and increasing numbers of temporary contract staff are affected by workplace bullying. Authors indicate that this factor has influenced stress levels in the workplace and brought about a climate in the work
environment with the potential for interpersonal conflict and bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003:xiv).

Another reason for workplace bullying is the perception of the social incompetence of a presumed target and the lack of assertive behaviour that may cause colleagues and superiors to isolate themselves from the target socially, which could expose the target to workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003:178). One may consider a broad range of potential causes of workplace bullying and these may lie within the organisational culture, the perpetrators’ status, the social psychology and the dynamic of the work group and also the targets’ personalities (Einarsen et al., 2003:166).

Steinmann (2010:9) suggests that another “trigger factor” of workplace bullying could be the advent of new management, or a carefree culture that does not respect the rights of others. The system’s psychodynamic approach followed by the view of workplace bullying as a macro-systemic competition for power, privilege, status and more, has played out as an interpersonal behavioural dynamic that influences workplace bullying. These factors refer to the dispositional theory and how behaviour can play a part in daily relationships.

3.7 THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING (WPB)

The effects and consequences of workplace bullying vary depending on the level of targets’ tolerance. Bullying affects targeted employees mostly negatively, causing stress-related health trauma and with prolonged exposure, cardiovascular symptoms that can result from pathophysiological changes in the body, together with transformation of the social factors that cause biological consequences (Namie, 2003:3). Most organisations/institutions suffer financially as a result of subsequent absenteeism and other forms of unproductivity and turnover engendered by workplace bullying (Steinman, 2010:11).
One of the objectives of this study was to identify potential effects and the cost of workplace bullying on institutional growth in the specific higher education institution under investigation. This section deals with the effects and the cost of workplace bullying. Figure 2.2 indicates the impact of workplace bullying on staff members and the consequences to the department specifically and the university in general (Cassell, 2011:37). This can be illustrated in four main areas.

### 3.8 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The effect of workplace bullying on targeted individuals and bystanders is detrimental to the health of all concerned. The consequences have been researched using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A study conducted to investigate bullying in a Finnish university revealed that some participants displayed symptoms such as insomnia, nervousness and sociophobia (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Van Heugten, 2013:291; Thomas, 2005). An article by Thomas (2005:273) identified that changes and the pressure of transformation in higher education could generate new behaviours and the possibility that changes in the system could influence bullying. According to Thomas, “Bullying at Work”, a UNISON survey, found that 75.6% of employees who reported being bullied experienced negative health effects. The survey highlighted that 73% of employees who witnessed bullying also reported experiencing
detrimental health effects the most common being stress, anxiety and depression (Thomas, 2005:276).

Di Rosa et al. (2009) indicated that psychological abuse in the form of bullying, harassment or mobbing has been classified as the most serious threat to health in the workplace today. They identified the consequence of these negative behaviours as being physical trauma, the breakdown of the psychological and emotional health of the targeted individuals and physical health problems that include bowel disorders, headaches, abnormality of the digestive system, immune deficiencies and musculoskeletal problems. They stress that chronic diseases such as cardiovascular problems and prolonged medical conditions like hypertension are found in individuals that are being bullied (Di Rosa et al., 2009:308).

Other findings have indicated that occupational stress, such as depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, excessive weight gain due to overeating, or weight loss and post-traumatic stress disorder have been identified in targeted persons (Van Heugten, 2013:292). People have been more concerned about the health damage associated with workplace bullying suffered by targets than with the unethical behaviour of the perpetrators (Einarsen et al., 2003:6).

### 3.8.1 Stress

Stressful working conditions create an atmosphere that could lead to the development of bullying in the workplace (Leymann, 1996). Restructuring within an organisation can also cause stress for many employees. If not properly managed, the factors associated with change can contribute to an organisational climate that encourages bullying (Thomas, 2005a). This process might look simple, but the transition and outcome creates a hierarchy and power imbalance and the non-implementation of permanent staff contracts affects security and generates unnecessary stress and intimidation of some staff members (Thomas, 2005a).

Bullying by superiors can be devastating and building and maintaining trust can be difficult to achieve in such an organization.

Karasek and Theorell’s (1990:299) demand-control-support theory is a theory with regard to workplace stress. According to this theory, in highly demanding professional jobs where autonomy and mutual commitment are offered, especially in relation to job-related responsibilities and tasks, intensive high demands, lack of organisational control and the lack of support leads to illness. This theory describes and fits with the dynamics of the emerging
steps towards “resilience in the relationship between bullying, stress, and [the] impacts on health and well-being” (Van Heugten, 2013:292). This holds true for the academia profession’s autonomy, responsibilities and tasks.

Universities generally need to consider how their faculty-work environment functions within the university setting as a lack of responsible administrators can make targets more vulnerable and passive (Roland et al., 2008:91; Lars et al., 2009:355). Findings from a survey conducted by Roland et al. indicate that “a recurring theme among respondents has been the lack of action by the university administration to deal with the problem of the potential workplace bullying – after being informed or approached about such behaviour” (Roland et al., 2008:91).

Instances of workplace bullying that are reported are sometimes treated by organisational representatives as either personality conflicts, or as an opportunity to blame employees for a bad attitude when representatives confuse the concept of bullying with conflict between employees (Ferris, 2004:391). This encourages the bullying behaviour, as the issues are not given much attention and are usually dismissed by the university authorities without investigation or the constructive management of issues (Ferris, 2004:392).

Those who are most successful – despite bullying in a toxic culture – are those who adopt a silent stance, or are pushed out when the bad apples are vocal (Roland et al., 2008:92). Researchers noticed in their findings that often, perpetrators exhibit behaviour without knowing the significance of that behaviour (Roland et al., 2008:92). Researchers have cautioned that relationships between workplace conflicts, physical stress and emotional well-being are dynamic and interlinked with one another. “Stress can cause conflict, rather than being caused by it, and avoiding conflict, rather than experiencing or expressing it, can cause stress” (Heugten, 2013:292).

Studies have found that the breaking point of a target or witness is often a shock to colleagues and this is when the abuse finally comes to their attention, as the reason for the bullying mostly is quiet and passive as long as the target accepts the bullying (Mumbi & Ryan, 2011:101).

The prevalence of workplace bullying can sometimes lead back to a lack of an effective organizational structure (Lars et al., 2009:349). This emphasizes the importance of changing problematic organizational and work-related conditions as they are seen as being the underlying causes of this process. It has been identified that bullies engage in bullying as a result of their own incompetency, and the fear of being discarded by the organization. When
organizational policies are dysfunctional (or non-existent), bullies thrive (Einarsen et al., 2003:386). Combinations of various factors can promote workplace bullying. Managers are sometimes put under pressure to act (Thomas, 2005a:281), and some organizations knowingly introduce a bully to perform a specific task (Steinman, 2010:10).

In their study Roscigno et al. considered two routine activities in which organisations could be promoting workplace bullying. Firstly, direct personal supervision and chaotic organisational procedures. Direct personal supervision remains a widespread control strategy in workplace environments – an interpersonal control strategy that leaves managers and supervisors with few motivational tools besides threats and abuse, as seen in the study by Edward (1992) and Jacoby (2004 cited in Roscigno et al., 2009:1565).

This combination of factors often leads to escalating cycles of abuse as managers increasingly turn to despotic tactics in their dealings with underlings (Roscigno et al., 2009:1565). The NMU 2013 climate survey holds that “Management is employing bullying tactics in order to get their way” (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:11). Failure in an organisation is said to be the lack of managerial control over a situation by effectively applying structural principles, a biased system that is passive in responding to basic and underlying issues; while non-responsive action to bullying as a challenge in the workplace, has become a way of living because our society is not equal (Roscigno et al., 2009:1566).

3.9 NEGATIVE FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

A well-established fact revealed by the literature is that workplace bullying contributes to the ill health of workers (Kravitz, 2014:65). In the United States unions are equipped to handle bullying issues for the faculty and the administrative staff but members don’t utilize the mechanism because the issues get out of hand, conflict escalates and leads to accelerated victimisation (Keashly & Neuman, 2010:61). In a triangulation research conducted by Lewis, findings indicated that workplace bullying is increasing as institutions are becoming challenged financially. It was also identified that “managers and institutional leaders hide behind” this excuse of financial shortage with those who are victimised (Lewis, 1999). Recent studies have shown that the effects of bullying cripple productivity and the process of organisational goals (Kravitz, 2014:65). A university in America was sued in court by one of its professors, who claimed that his appointment was wrongfully terminated and he eventually won the lawsuit.
This process cost the university financially and with a loss of reputation and caused untold stress for the target involved (Cassell, 2011:35).

3.10 ABSENTEEISM

Einarsen and colleagues (2003:7) referred to repeated episodes of a victim being threatened by superiors with dismissal. The authors explained that the target’s response to this workplace bullying was to avoid the workplace through absenteeism, which had an effect on institutional turnover and lower productivity. More findings on the role of an increase in workplace stress and absenteeism have been traced to bullying and the lack of organisational structure to deal with bullies, in addition to the lack of employees’ rights to equality (Banks, Patel & Moola, 2012:2; Kircher et al., 2011:15).

In South Africa, equality has two dimensions: equality and equity (redress). Banks, Patel and Moola (2012) conducted research with a small-scale survey design by focusing on the perceptions of employees on inequity, i.e. the researchers measured the intentions of withdrawal of behaviours and recorded rates of absenteeism among the sample of 110 employees from various automotive industrial companies in KwaZulu-Natal. The researchers’ findings indicated that 17% of the participants had taken unauthorised leave for three to eight days; 39% were always late for work; 37% habitually left work early; while as many as 58% stay away from work (Banks, Patel et al., 2012:6).

Employees with negative feelings about their organisational structure, the environment and their job often find excuses to be absent from work, or they perceive that they have been bullied. They then resort to unauthorised absenteeism in order to escape the persistent terror of a bully (Banks et al., 2012:3).

3.11 POLICY

Policy development sometimes involves challenging a process, depending on the concern of the policy. “Sometimes it is a long and winding road with lots of detours and stops along the way” (Torjman, 2005:7). One of the dangers of policy implementation is that the policy may affect the use of existing power and the redistribution of power, because policies effect changes (Wax, 1971:276).
When making a decision to implement a policy, due consideration must be afforded to individuals or groups that might be affected. Either way, one party must expect to bend for another. Policy development involves the selection of choices to find the most appropriate means to achieve a desired end. The theory of formulating policies indicates that a policy decision is the result of a method, which in theory at least, considers a range of options and the potential value of each, weighing the options of who benefits more and who might be affected negatively (Torjman, 2005:18).

A holistic approach to a toxic workplace environment is needed (De Wet, 2010a:1451; Keashly & Neuman, 2010:59; Schmitz, 2010:6; Smit, 2014:52; Viljoen, n.d.:66). Strategic planning is required when adopting a policy to address the actions and behaviours that are jeopardising the health and well-being of the employees (Erasmus, Swanepoel & Schenk, 2011:399). There is an old adage claiming that prevention is better than cure. Adopting workplace bullying policy is the prevention in this case for the employees’ physical, social and mental well-being. Workplace bullying policy implementation in higher educational institutions in South Africa will address the serious problem affecting employees (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013:464).

Analyses of the policies based on the findings of the institution under study will be discussed in Chapter Four

3.12 THE WATCHDOGS

The South African Labour Relations Act (LRA) and Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) guarantee employee safety and an environment that is conducive to work. The LRA represents one of the watchdogs protecting employees. As discussed previously, workplace bullying induces dangerous, health-related, occupational diseases and it is fortunate that the Labour Act improvised the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The LRA gives effect to the right to fair labour practice entrenched in section 23 of the Constitution of South Africa (Bill of Rights).

3.13 TRADE UNIONS

South Africa’s democratic transition was marked by a policy shift towards greater neoliberalism with high levels of union penetration and collectivism in the formal sector, particularly in manufacturing and mining (Glaister & Wood, 2008:436). In a survey conducted on union members in South Africa, Glaister and Wood found a relationship with both
unionization and collectivism of present and alternative forms of collective workplace participation and their involvement. They also explored the relationship between the strategic choices made by managers and the extent to which their choices would affect their members. It was found even with the strong structure of a union, failure is inevitable (Glaister & Wood, 2008:437).

3.14 ROLES OF UNIONS

Traditionally, unions advocated for better wages for their members. The essence of unions was mutually based on protecting workers, championing their cause and defending their constitutional rights. Among unions’ traditional roles is the payment of workers’ remuneration, allowances and benefits, ranging from travel and paid leave to benefits and illness, death and funeral benefits and superannuation benefits in general (Jones & Morris, 1982:16). In section 14 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of South Africa, 1995, (as amended in 2014), a union is an association of employees whose principal purpose is to monitor the relationships between employees and employers, including any employers’ organisations, and the unions are free to exercise their rights under the Act (Act 1997:6). In most European countries, anti-bullying policies and procedures have been implemented as a result of unions pressing for change and equality (Einarsen et al, 2003:5).

In terms of Section 16 of the LRA, the employer must disclose a certain amount of pertinent information to the union’s representative in order for the union to perform effectively. Union representatives must ensure compliance by employers to institutional policies and labour law provisions as indicated in the LRA (Section 14 (4)) (Grossett & Venter, 1998:75). Lewis explained workplace bullying from the union’s perspectives, claiming that dependable counselling services are not available for targets and employees do not make formal use of counselling services as problems are usually swept under the carpet and not dealt with from the start (Lewis, 1999).

3.15 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM)

The HR department is considered to be an agent of change. It is HR’s responsibility to decide on the right person for a particular job, employee’s welfare and their organisation, promoting an internal candidate, performance appraisal and management. Mergers, innovations, inventions, acquisitions and a host of other viable planning options are credited to HR, for
example, job enrichment, right sizing, retiring voluntarily, managing performance, training and development, retraining and employee engagement (Dharmarao, 2009:xiii).

In Rayner, Hoel and Cooper’s Book, it is maintained that the employer has the responsibility for training and professionally updating their employees but in many cases employees seek training at their own expense (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002:5). Dharmarao explains that one of the roles of HR is to initiate leading and significant contributions to managing employees, especially if HR operates from the dimension of human capital, rather than just human relations (Dharmarao, 2009: xiii).

In Ferris’(2004) typology of organisational response to workplace bullying, he suggests two practical implications when considering organisational representatives. Firstly, not every organisational representative’s response is helpful when an employee requests help after being bullied. Secondly, Ferris emphasises the need for training line managers and HR personnel to manage allegations of workplace bullying effectively. Ferris indicated that better orientation of the phenomena among HR personnel and line managers would increase the awareness of workplace bullying and targets would feel safer, rather than being stereotyped (Ferris, 2004). Studies found that in several cases workplace bullying increased in severity after the target asked for help from organisational representatives, rather than approaching the union (Ferris, 2004).

Einarsen and colleagues’ findings indicated that management depend more on the perpetrator’s version of the event than on that of the target, which makes the resolution process biased and in favour of the perpetrator, thus leaving the target in a hopeless position (Einarsen et al., 2003: 178,179).

Dharmarao holds that the purpose of HR is management. However, one of the most difficult tasks is the management of human resources. Dharmaraos advice for HR managers is to be creative, to diversify in response to issues by providing fair solutions when dealing with employees’ disputes (Dharmarao, 2009: xiii). In some cases, pressuring management, especially by unions, has led to the identification of the source of bullying in an institution (Lewis, 1999).
3.16 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored workplace bullying globally and investigated the phenomena in the higher education sector in South Africa. Various trigger factors that cause workplace bullying, like change in management, societal stressors, institutional structure and job insecurity were discussed. The roles of unions in South African legislation were established and the obligation of employers to provide a safe work environment for employees was emphasised. Various countries’ approaches to the workplace and the need for anti-bullying policies and continuous educational training of management and line managers was identified as a way of solving workplace bullying, already approved in some countries of the world.

The next chapter will recap the aim of the study and present the research questions and objectives. It will also discuss the research methodology as well as the carefully selected research methods.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“Conflict and disputes are sometimes inevitable—conflicts and disputes do not inherently have to follow a destructive course; they can lead to growth and be productive for those who are involved” (Christopher Moore).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the research in terms of the methodology. Strauss and Corbin (1990:3) view methodology as a way of thinking about and studying social reality. They also see methodology as a “collection” of methods that essentially comprise a set of procedures and techniques for gathering, analysing and coding the data, after which the data are fractured, conceptualised and integrated to form theory.

The previous chapter laid the foundation for the study and discussed different definitions of bullying, the impact of the phenomenon on the targets and institutions, the causes of workplace bullying and more. Chapter four discusses the research methodology that consists of three methods, namely a document review, qualitative and thematic analyses. These, as well as the data-collection approach, the data analysis, the ethical considerations, the trustworthiness and the reliability of the research are discussed in this chapter, the objective of which is to explain the methodological concepts of the study.

4.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to explore staff perceptions with regard to workplace bullying in a higher educational institution (HEI) in South Africa through a case study. This research study focuses on workplace bullying as a phenomenon of concern in the higher educational (HE) environment.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is workplace bullying and how does it manifest in the higher education sector as an area of employment?
- What institutional policies and structures already exist at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) to govern workplace relationships, human resources and human-capital management?
• What are the perceptions of NMMU staff representatives, the union officials, with regard to workplace bullying at NMMU?
• What can the NMMU as an institution do to effectively address workplace bullying?

4.4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

• To conduct a literature study on workplace bullying globally and in South Africa, with specific emphasis on the higher education environment;
• To determine the institutional policies and structures in place at NMU;
• To investigate workplace bullying as an employee concern;
• To make recommendations on how institutional workplace bullying can be addressed at NMU.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design embodies decisions made by the researcher with regard to the planning process of the study. The strategies’ and context of the qualitative analysis of the whole research procedure from the stage at which a problem is identified to the written narrative (Strydom, de Vos & Fouche, 2005:268). According to Silverman (2010:9), “methods are only more or less appropriate to a particular set of research questions”. In this case, the study utilised an exploratory, descriptive and interpretive research design to understand the perceptions of workplace bullying, its impacts and what can be done in terms of policy.

4.5.1 Qualitative Thematic Analysis and Coding

The qualitative research method is appropriate for this study of human behaviour, which is bullying in the workplace. Babbie and Mouton (2002:270) exemplify qualitative research as a way of understanding in-depth actions, and more specifically how events unfold. Although the researcher did not consider qualitative analysis to be better than the quantitative approach, Silverman (2010:10) explains that in the case of “exploring people’s life histories or everyday behaviour, the qualitative methods may be favoured”. The qualitative method provides the researcher with a description of the institutional situation on the perception of workplace bullying. Qualitative data are richer in context than in numbers (Silverman, 2010:11). Numerous targets of bullying end up in hospital because of the stress induced by bullying.
(Kravitz, 2014:65). The effects of bullying, for example, absenteeism by staff because of illness and prolonged psychological effects, cannot be ignored.

At times researchers with to explore a topic that has not yet been studied to become familiar with that topic (Adler & Clark, 2015:13). According to phenomenologists, human behaviour is the reaction of the respondent to life experiences in an attempt to interpret their environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:271). An exploratory design is appropriate when the problems have been identified but the understanding and study thereof is limited.

The study explores the perceptions of the staff through the lens of the two recognised unions at NMMU.

Qualitative analysis is defined as a research method that gives rich and quality data, a subjective interpretation of the data through the systematic classification process of coding and formulating, or the identification of themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1277).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), thematic analysis as an independent, qualitative and descriptive approach mainly described as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within the data.

Much research on workplace bullying has been conducted in the healthcare sector. The phenomenon of workplace bullying in an institution (such as HEIs), includes a social-health challenge (Cooper, Hoel & Faragher, 2004:367; Duffy & Sperry, 2007:398; Edwards & O’Connell, 2007:26; Johnson, 2009:34). As this research aimed to explore the reality of workplace bullying, the adoption of conventional content analysis was used to explore the meaning of bullying and its impacts, through the analysis of secondary literature sources and articles (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1283).

Coding is an operation that codes the raw data from the participants’ transcribed responses in an interview. This transforms the raw data into a standard format so that it can be analysed (Babbie, 2001:309). Coding in qualitative analysis is also understood as the assigning of data to a category, whether by the association of words or labels (Adler & Clark, 2015:426). The researcher pre-coded and then manually coded the data, capturing recurring words and phrases. The coding process was carried out in a transparent manner.
The next step of the coding process was to assemble the coded data in order to reduce the data without any loss of meaning.

Adler and Clark (2015:427) justified the old-fashioned manual method by claiming that it is appropriate and simple enough for small-scale data. The researcher created a file folder for to each code or theme and then allocated each copy a label using coloured stickers. Multiple copies of the transcribed data were printed and the researcher made copies of the pages as they were coded. In order to protect the identity of the participants, Union 1 and Union 2 were assigned to the names of the interview transcripts. The researcher used various techniques in the process of analysing the data, such as writing memos and displaying data (Adler & Clark, 2015:429).

4.5.2 Document Review

The research methodology in this study is a review of the existing policies, institutional documents and other literature sources. Although research on bullying is usually conducted via the survey method, as seen in Laas and Boezaart (2015b:2675, 2692), it is essential to review the existing policies and legal documents for proper coverage and adequacy. A document review method refers to the secondary data or to the data that can be collected without any fieldwork (Hague, 2006a:59). Such secondary data are usually known as internal sources, such as the repositories, libraries, institutional reports and government agencies.

Secondary data collection is “frequently carried out at the beginning of a study to see if costlier primary research is justified” (Hague, 2006b:73). The researcher carried out an extensive literature review to gain a deep knowledge of workplace bullying. Due to the sensitivity and psychological effect of this study, the interview process, meant for the staff members, was abandoned. The staff perceptions of workplace bullying have been reviewed and analysed through literature and the findings of an institutional survey.

4.6 SAMPLE POPULATION

Purposive sample was used in this research study. Purposive sampling “gives access to someone with specialized insight, or [with] a special perspective, experience, characteristic, or condition” (Yegidis & Weinbach, 1996:122). The selection procedure was performed by the researcher in order to select elements based on the needs of the research and investigation
process (Adler & Clark, 2015:118). The objective was to identify a number of key respondents with specific knowledge and experience of workplace bullying from among the staff members.

Babbie and Mouton (2002:287) hold that smaller samples are often more suitable to studies where qualitative methods are involved.

A sample of four (4) people currently employed in the NMU by the unions in both South and North campuses, Port Elizabeth, South Africa were chosen by means of strict ethical procedures. This sample includes two officers from each of the recognised Unions, namely NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union) and NEHAWU (National Education, Health Allied Workers Union) and both unions’ chairpersons.

The following are the criteria for participants’ selection:

- Respondents must be active in the transformation process at the university;
- Respondents are ideally well-known and conversant with the institutional system and staff complaints;
- Respondents are, or could be, part of the stakeholders for policy-formulation/revision;
- Considering the sensitivity and predicted psychological danger of workplace bullying, the researcher did not approach or include any staff members besides those mentioned above.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION

Beyond the thematic themes, other data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This method is appropriate for this research study because of its potential for the extraction of rich text. Babbie explains that the process of in-depth, individual interviewing allows for the content of the conversation to come into being (Babbie, 2001). As a researcher, one should not only be objective but should also adopt the construction and interpretation of the respondents’ claims from a critical perspective, as the position of a researcher is to carefully sift through the gathered information (Lichtman, 2014:247).

For the purpose of this study, apart from the secondary data, other data were gathered by face-to-face, semi-structured, strategic interviews with specific respondents. The purpose of the interview sessions was to gather information on the perception of workplace bullying in the
institution under study and to explore the impact of workplace bullying from the perspective of the unions (Lichtman, 2014:246).

An extensive critical analysis of the literature review was conducted in order to triangulate the findings. According to Babbie et al. (2002:275), “triangulation is generally considered to be one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research”. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicated, “[The] data can consist of interviews and observation, but also might include documents”.

A review of these documents assisted the researcher to develop the questions posed in the interview sessions.

4.8 FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

In the process of semi-structured interviews, the researcher developed a single set of questions that was used with all the respondents. The questions were restructured when necessary and as the situation permitted (Lichtman, 2014:248). According to Babbie et al. (2002:271), the semi-structured interview process creates an atmosphere of non-intervention or non-interference by the researcher, as the respondents are encouraged to express their opinions freely. Another benefit of face-to-face interviews is that the researcher is able to observe the body language of the respondents.

The researcher also developed a clear set of guidelines to direct the interview process. These allowed both the researcher and the respondents to be more comfortable during the interviews. The prepared guideline outlined the specific questions that aimed to achieve the purpose and objectives of the study.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewees’ consent (Lichtman, 2014:253). The researcher listened to the responses and made notes of the relevant key points that emerged from the responses and additional questions were asked based on the responses received. The interview was later transcribed verbatim was repeatedly checked for any sign of errors or omissions in order to capture the exact responses of the respondents. The researcher cross-checked and verified the transcribed documents during the analysis process.
4.9 RECORDING METHOD

Recording the responses allows accuracy when transcribing the data, which is critical (Lichtman, 2014:253). Recording took place with the permission of the respondents and this allowed the researcher to focus on the process and to specifically observe non-verbal and body reactions, which cannot be captured by the recorder.

4.10 INTERVIEW SESSION

Once permission was granted by the union 'gatekeepers' (Refer to Appendices 3 & 5 for letter of permission from the unions), the researcher planned the interviews. In order to gather meaningful and useful data, the researcher used the interview technique of developing a rapport with the respondents by creating a relaxed atmosphere that made the respondents feel comfortable at the beginning of each session (Lichtman, 2014:252). The consent form was made available to the respondents (Refer to Appendix 2). The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and that all information gathered was to be used only for the study. All ethical concerns were addressed and as the interviews were strategic the respondents did not mind revealing their identities. However, the cases that were discussed had to remain anonymous.

All the interviews were conducted in English. English is a recognised medium of communication in tertiary institutions, especially in a multilingual society such as South Africa. Although the interviews varied in duration they each took from 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews were conducted at a time and venue identified as convenient by the respondent.

The following questions guided the interviews:

- How would you describe or explain the term ‘workplace bullying’ in your own words?
- In your experience, in employee relations work, what would you identify as the effects or consequences of workplace bullying for an institution and individual staff members?
- In your working in employee relations, what are the common causes or factors contributing to workplace bullying?
- In your experience in working in employee relations, what are some of the different types of bullying, or ways in which bullying manifests, in higher education as a workplace?
Are you aware of the 2013 institution-climate survey and its finding that between 73% and 74% of the staff report that they have been exposed to workplace bullying/abusive behaviour?

In your opinion and experience, is this an accurate reflection?

In your opinion and experience, what measures can be implemented institutionally to assist in addressing problems relating to workplace bullying?

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis has been described as a process of merging together the meaning and the formal structure of the collected data in an orderly format (de Vos, Strydom & Fouche’, 2005:30). All the recorded data were transcribed by the researcher. An inductive word-by-word reading of the data was transcribed to derive the emerged data and their codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1280). This was achieved with the help of the theoretical lens of the dispositional (Trait) theory and the ecological theory that informed the study.

The interview transcripts were coded and categorised into different categories and then conceptualised and reformatted through the thematic analysis. De Vos et al. (2005:338) explained that the coding may take several forms, such as coloured dots applied in the process, through which categories and themes can be built from the data in this study. The colour-coded themes were then summarised and organised into patterns and categories, or basic descriptive meaning units common to all the interviewees and themes emerged from these meaning units.

These results are “grounded” by quoting from the interviewees and the two theoretical models in the presentation of the findings.

4.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS

It is important to obtain data that are credible and transferable, as these are the most important concepts for measuring trustworthiness (de Vos, Strydom and Fouche, 2005). The researcher ensured that the interview schedule questions were aligned with the research study’s objectives. To ensure reliability is to check how consistently an instrument measures the phenomenon of interest, or the accuracy of the data, in the sense that it reflects the true measures of the phenomenon under investigation (de Vos et al., 2005:11).
The reliability of the study was triangulated through the theoretical models. This is generally considered to be one of the best ways to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Babbie, 2012:275). The literature review assisted with identifying and describing the concepts and those aspects relating to the workplace-bullying phenomenon.

4.13 ETHICAL PROCEDURES

Ethical clearance was requested from the Faculty of Arts as part of the researcher’s proposal submission process. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic limited semi-structured interviews were conducted, as described above. Expert respondents were only identified as One and Two (representing the two recognised unions at NMU), and no identifying characteristics of any staff members or union members were requested. Informed consent from the participants was obtained prior to the commencement of the study (Silverman, 2010:201). This means that the human subjects were informed about the interview process and the reason for the study as well as any possible consequences of taking part in the study and the importance of ethics in research.

4.14 INFORMED CONSENT

Lichtman (2014:59) explains that the purpose of obtaining informed consent by every researcher is because of the dynamics of research that can make the participants uncomfortable and unwilling to continue. In this study, written information that informed the participants about the purpose of the study, the purpose of the unions’ representatives and the nature of the study were sent to the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. The participants had also been informed of their right to withdraw at any point (Strydom et al., 2005:11). The researcher explained the process of the research to all the participants and consent forms were presented for them to sign that they consent to take part, prior to the interview.

4.15 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher explained the concept of anonymity to the participants and reiterated that their participation was voluntary and they could provide information that they felt comfortable sharing. The privacy of the institution under study was compromised, as the institutional climate survey document, which was part of the secondary data, had already been published online. However, the privacy of the participants had to be protected, as individuals and as union
members and representatives. The researcher coded the union representatives’ data as Union 1 and Union 2 respectively and no photographs of the participants were taken. The participants’ information was kept strictly confidential. Even the transcriber could not identify any of the participants by name, only by their voices.

The researcher accepted the responsibility of keeping the information confidential and was sensitive to the process and content of the interviews (Lichtman, 2014:59).

4.16 CONCLUSION

Chapter three explained the research design and the methodology used for the study. The aim and objectives of the study were also discussed in this chapter. The sample population and the justification for the sample was discussed. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used and the method of data analysis was explained. This chapter also discussed ethical procedures, trustworthiness, privacy and confidentiality. The following chapter is divided into two parts: the first part presents the relevant findings from institutional policies and the second part presents the findings from the interview sessions. These findings will be discussed, analysed and supported by the extensive literature review conducted in Chapter Two.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

“Successful conflict resolution aptitude and techniques can be learnt easily” (Christopher Moore).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters of this study provided the background, the theoretical framework and the methodology of the study, which seeks to explain workplace bullying as a phenomenon that affects individuals and organisations/institutions negatively.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the analysis carried out on the primary and secondary data collected in relation to the aim and the objectives of the study. The secondary data consists of the existing policies, institutional documents and the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

Existing NMMU policies were analysed to find possible contributing factors to workplace bullying and gaps to articulate important steps to be considered when formulating and implementing policies to address the problem of workplace bullying.

The data analysis required familiarisation with the gathered information from the participants and identifying the themes and categories to which they belong.

During the process of analysing, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts while making notes (memo). The researcher utilized coding to reduce the data into themes and categories.

5.2 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

As stated in Chapter one, three methods were used to obtain data in this study.

- A document review on workplace bullying, globally and in South Africa, with emphasis on the higher education sector.
- An analysis of the relevant existing policies and practices at NMMU (the case study for this research is based on the 2013 NMMU Institutional Climate Survey).
- Purposive, semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable experts at NMMU with regard to the topic.
The findings from the literature review were presented in Chapter two and reference to the findings was made in the discussion. In the following subsections, the researcher aims to present the findings in respect of the 2013 NMMU Institutional Climate Survey and the relevant existing policies. Thereafter, the findings from the semi-structured interviews are presented.

5.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Organisational climate surveys are used as assessment tools to determine an area that essentially requires change in terms of transformation, to improve service and create a better working environment for effective employee relations.

According to Reichers and Schneider (1992), the organisational climate is defined “as the shared perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures, both formal and informal”. Ehrhart, Schneider and Macey (2013:362) extended the definition of organisational climate as the “shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to [organisational] policies, practices, and procedures that employees experience and the behaviours [employees] observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected”.

In the case of the organisational climate (institutional) survey conducted at NMMU in 2013 (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:3), the two objectives were:

- To assess the current perceptions, attitudes and experiences of NMMU staff with regard to their working environment.
- To examine NMMU employees’ experience of their working environment as enabling and supportive with respect to support services, facilities and equipment.

It can then be said that these policies could, to some extent, shape the degree to which employees perceived the organisational climate.

5.3.1 The Findings from the Climate (Institutional) Survey Conducted at NMMU in 2013

These are the highlighted findings from the survey (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:1–2):

- Leadership and management by senior management;
- Effectiveness of line management in my department/unit;
• Peer and collegial relationships;
• Career progression and development opportunities;
• Working environment;
• Experiences in relation to support services.

5.3.2 Executive Summary of the Survey

NMMU as an institution has also faced workplace bullying syndromes. The Institutional Climate Survey conducted in 2013 aimed to assess staff perceptions and experiences concerning leadership, line management, peer and collegial relationships, career progression, working environment etc. The total number of staff who participated amounted to 290, which is a 15.1% response rate (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:1).

According to the definition of Moran and Volkwein (1992:20), climate is referred to as a way of assessing the characteristics of an organisation that distinguish it from other organisations. It also embodies members’ collective perceptions of their organisation with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness. These qualities reflect the prevalent norms and attitudes of the organisation's culture.

The findings that emerged from the survey indicate and confirm that workplace bullying behaviours do exist among NMMU staff. It was identified that “management employed bullying tactics, in order to get their way; and management did not listen to what the workforce was saying” (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:11–12).

An important issue that emerged is that management does not take issues that concern staff seriously and the role of the unions is being undermined by the management (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:11).

5.4 THE NMMU AS WORKPLACE

NMMU ranks 10th among the universities in South Africa in terms of academic and diversity (Tucker, 2015:2). It is also ranked among the top 20 best universities in Africa, holding the 14th position (Webometrics, 2014).

NMMU also accommodates people with disabilities. In terms of multiculturalism, NMMU is the most diverse university in South Africa, with African students coming from 34 countries.
on the continent. Irrespective of staff gender, 85% of the staff claimed to be respected and valued by their students (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:19).

NMMU acknowledges the challenges of the post-merger and has implemented strategies to address the challenges, such as enhancing staff morale (NMU, 2010:9).

Currently, massification and the increase of the student ratio counts against the academic staff and this has increased stress levels and reduced performance.

NMMU claims to have been lauded by the HEQC for its initiatives in putting in place the potential for developing research capacity, particularly among young black and female academics, and for its investment in staff development by enabling academics to acquire higher qualifications (NMU, 2010:2). However, 76% of the participants in the climate survey claimed, “I have not benefited from any international partnership/collaborations established by the NMMU, which have enhanced my research capacity”.

Similarly, 76% claim that they have not been able to successfully apply for research sabbatical/leave in the past three years and 66% claimed they have not been able to access research funding external to the NMMU, such as from NRF, MRC, etc. (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:30).

The staff complain about the workload that consistently prevents them from personal growth and the opportunity of taking up research projects. Low salaries were also given as a reason for staff not becoming involved in research (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:31, 37).

Workload has previously been explain as one of the symptoms of workplace bullying behaviours (Thomas, 2005:276).

Another issue is that of job security and the contract staff among the participants expressed their feelings and the lack of support from management towards the contract staff. One of the participants advised that there should be “more regular promotions for contract staff, who have already been working here for over ten years” (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:37). The management of secondary appointments policy section 1.3.3 provides a system of monitoring all secondary appointments (Hlohlolo, 2014:1).

The position of management and leadership is sensitive in any given organization. More co-ordination and the display of true leadership is always expected from people in positions of
authority and power. A demonstration of the inclusiveness of all employees by management matters to the employees at all levels. For instance, the findings from the survey indicate that 47% of the participants “have not experienced positive changes within the institution since the implementation of Vision 2020 strategic plan; while 44% claim they are not inspired by the leadership provided by senior management” (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:11).

Such gaps must be rectified through the total inclusion of all employees by management in issues pertaining to the growth of the institution, bearing in mind that inspiration from the leadership inspires productivity and growth.

As discussed in the theoretical review chapter, the concept of Ubuntu (umuntu ugebantu ngabantu), is a core principle that acknowledges that as human beings we need one another, “we are people through other people” and we cannot exist alone (Lynham et al., 2009:61). In achieving transformation, leaders must be positive role models by adhering to the official policies implemented by the institution.

5.5 INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Policies are formulated in human resources to address the needs of the working environment. These policies are designed to promote equality, orderliness and fairness in an organisation among the employers and the employees. These policies tone down the use of power. The most appropriate way of designing a policy is to make the policy inclusive and not involve the power ratio. Inclusiveness involves the dynamics of balancing the diverse interests of the multiple stakeholders.

5.5.1 Policy as a Challenging Process

Policy development sometimes involves a challenging process with diverse formulation, depending on the concern of the policy. “Sometimes, it is a long and winding road with lots of detours and stops along the way” (Torjman, 2005:7).

Findings have indicated that workplace bullying policy implementation in higher educational institutions in South Africa will address the serious problem affecting employees (DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:464). One of the dangers of policy implementation is that policies affect the use of existing power and the redistribution of power, because policies effect changes (Wax, 1971:276).
5.5.2 Theory of Policy Formulation

While considering decisions to implement or effect anti-bullying policies, individuals or groups will lose either way, as one party is expected to give way for the other. Policy development involves the selection of choices, i.e. the most appropriate means to a desired end.

The theory of formulating policies indicates a process of decision and a method in which the theory of other options is considered and the potential value of each is weighed (Torjman, 2005:18).

A holistic approach to a toxic workplace is conducted by investigating the existing policies (DeWet, 2010a:1451; Keashly & Neuman, 2010:59; Schmitz, 2010:6; Smit, 2014:52; Viljoen, n.d.:66). Strategic planning is needed in adopting policies and in addressing actions and behaviours jeopardising the health and well-being of employees (Erasmus, Swanepoel & Schenk, 2011:399).

An adage in the Yoruba language of Western Nigeria claims that, “prevention is better than cure”. Adopting a workplace-bullying policy is the prevention in this case of the physical, social and mental harm of employees, as well as the stability of the institution.

Policies that protect and value health and safety provide employees with a conducive atmosphere and fair labour practice at any institution.

5.5.3 The Value of a Health-and-Safety Policy

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993, compels employers to provide and maintain a safe working environment for employees. This implies a reasonable and practical work environment, without any risk to health.

According to this policy, it is not compulsory for all organisations to formulate and implement a health-and-safety policy but the employer is, nevertheless, duty-bound to inform employees of the work-related risks and dangers. Research findings have shown that workplace bullying in South Africa has received minimal attention (Bowman et al., 2015:301; DeWet, 2014:2; Momberg, 2011:3; Smit 2014:1; Steinman, 2010:5).

The assurance that bullying is not occurring among adults might prevent employer intervention regarding the reality and the impact of workplace bullying (Smit, 2014: 1).
Findings have indicated that workplace bullying tends to target people who suffer from occupational stress, such as depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, excessive weight gain due to comfort eating, weight loss and post-traumatic stress disorder (Van Heugten, 2013:292). Occupational stress and diseases reduce productivity in the workplace, both for the individual and for the institution (see Chapter Two).

One of the purposes of this policy is “to provide a work environment that is safe and without risk to the health of [the] employees”. The primary objective of a health-and-safety policy is to prevent or reduce work-related accidents and occupational diseases as far as is reasonable and practical. The value of a health-and-safety policy indicates what the policy should contain but it is not necessary to provide any commitment in the area of disciplinary procedure if the policy is being disregarded by the employees or the employer.

5.6 EXISTING HR POLICIES AT NMMU

The policies in place at NMMU, such as sexual harassment, racism and radical discrimination, gender equity etc., are illustrated in the table below with their purposes/objective/goals (Levendal, 2009:4, 2010:5; Paul, 2005:2, 2013:4; Lange, 2008:6). A high percentage of the policies were drawn from the organisational transformation and equity.

Table 4.1: NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Policies related to workplace bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>“The removal of gender inequalities that currently exist, denying individuals fair access to resources, employment opportunities and academic achievement”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism and radical discrimination</td>
<td>“To promote racial equality at NMU”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMU employment equity plan (2012-2017)</td>
<td>“To ensure that all unfair discrimination is eliminated in every NMU policy and practice, current and new, on an on-going basis”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on religion / belief/ opinion</td>
<td>“Promote an institutional culture of equal opportunities, fair treatment, inclusivity and respect for diversity. Protect persons from being unfairly discriminated against on the basis of religion / belief”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment policy</td>
<td>“Provide appropriate procedures for dealing with sexual harassment complaints by staff and students in a fair and sensitive manner, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on disclosures relating to criminal and irregular conduct (whistle-blowing policy)</td>
<td>“To create a culture which will facilitate the disclosure of information relating to criminal and other irregular conduct and to promote the eradication of criminal and other irregular conduct in the university”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee disciplinary procedure and code</td>
<td>“To establish a fair, common and uniform procedure for the management of employee discipline at NMU and to act as a guideline to assist management with decision-making in respect of disciplinary measures”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievance policy and procedure</td>
<td>“To provide a policy and procedure for the handling of employees’ grievances, to reduce the possibility of grievances being expressed as conflict”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of ethical behaviour</td>
<td>“To motivate and encourage employees to display good conduct and teamwork; and to reflect the values of NMU and how employees are expected to comply with these values”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on persons living with a disability</td>
<td>“Remove barriers by way of provision of effective and inclusive communication, the training of staff, and the necessary infrastructure to ensure an enabling environment”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit interview policy</td>
<td>“To provide the university with information that may indicate trends in voluntary terminations, assist efforts to improve circumstances contributing to staff turnover”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on the management of leave</td>
<td>“To set general rules for the various types of leave available to employees, to regulate the taking of such leave; and to establish a standard procedure for the application of leave”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 below presents the percentage of 2013 institutional climate survey (ICS) participants who have been subjected to different types of discrimination (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:25).
Table 4.2: ICS discrimination percentage and types in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis of Discrimination</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th></th>
<th>PASS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibility</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Status</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Mental Disability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race /Ethnic origin</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/Belief</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (age, contract type, financial, merger, professional elitism, who you know)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from 2013 ICS

As previously discussed, the impact of workplace bullying both on targeted employees and institutions is mostly negative.

The Harassment Act Section 17(20b) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 2011), indicates that the word harm, means any mental/psychological, physical and economic harm. The literature has revealed that workplace bullying causes these three traumas. According to Namie (2003:1), “workplace bullying can be defined as "status-blind" interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe, as to harm the targeted person's health or economic status".
Hence, this research has critically investigated whether the policies suggest any provisions related to the three types of harm a victim of workplace bullying can experience. It has been found that the code of ethical behaviour contains the expectations of behaviour to be encountered in a professional working environment.

5.6.1 Gender Equity Policy

Gender-equity policy takes into consideration and supports women in retaining their jobs during and after pregnancies (Paul, 2005:3).

Section 5(1) of the gender-equity policy is “to ensure [that] women’s advancement [goes] beyond formal and strictly equal access” (Paul, 2005:3).

Authors such as Salin and Hoel (2013:235) have argued that bullying is a “gendered, rather than gender-neutral phenomenon”. It is of importance to realise that the different genders react to the experience of bullying differently. It is equally important to bear in mind that bullying may also involve pursuing a particular ‘personality characteristic’ of the target, such as gender (Simpson & Cohen, 2004:165).

Gender harassment is not sexual behaviour. The aim does not seem to be to gain sexual access to the target. Rather, it could be better described as “sexist behaviour”, or behaviour that denigrates or mocks their targets (Einarsen et al., 2003:88). This calls for concern as it is an act of bullying.

5.6.2 Racism and Racial Discrimination Policy

The racism and racial discrimination policy has no provision set aside or emphasis on the three identified phenomena that cause harm: mental/psychological, physical and economic trauma in the workplace. – This is despite complaints by staff indicating their experience of discrimination based on racial, cultural and gender grounds (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:2). However, the policy provides protection against any form of unfair discrimination in section 5(3) that addresses racial discrimination (Levendal, 2009:4).

Similarly, section 5(4) of the gender-equity policy protects staff against demeaning stereotypes that can psychologically affect targets (Paul, 2005:3). For any unfair gender-discriminatory behaviour, disciplinary and grievance procedures have been formulated to deal with any offender.
Section 6(3) of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) (EEA) recognises “harassment or bullying” as a form of unfair discrimination and discourages this behaviour if it is based on one’s race, colour or sexual orientation.

The findings revealed the possibility of one being extremely dejected, socially isolated, with a feeling of despair that one’s race is inferior and this leads to the inability to focus on the work (Viljoen, 2013:66).

Studies have also highlighted the possibility of workplace bullying being due to race and ethnicity, as particular races are vulnerable to bullying (Hodson, Roscigno & Lopez, 2006:386).

5.6.3 The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Employment Equity Plan (2012-2017)

According to this policy, specific objectives have been set and will be monitored over a period of five years. This is a plan to “ensure equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in all levels in the workforce” (Paul, 2013b:4). One of these objectives is “to ensure that all unfair discrimination is eliminated in every NMMU policy and practice, both currently and new, on an ongoing basis” (Paul, 2013b:4).

Under section 2(8) of the NMMU employment equity plan (2012-2017), NMMU and its management team have committed “to institute measures and corrective actions to eliminate such inhibitors and barriers effectively, either through disciplinary actions, changed policies or any other means possible under the employment-equity plan. From this management objective, policy is considered as a mechanism to eliminate counterfeit behaviour in a working environment. Policy should be implemented to regulate behavioural victimization.

5.6.4 Policy on Religion/Belief/Opinion

The objectives of this policy pertain to the diversity and tolerance of others’ religious beliefs. Looking at sections 5.1 and 5.2 respectively, the intention is to “promote an institutional culture of equal opportunities, fair treatment, inclusivity and respect for diversity; and to protect persons from being unfairly discriminated against on the basis of their religion/ belief” (Levendal, 2009b:3).
One of the fundamental values of NMMU is that it is committed to “mutual respect” and “respect for diversity, irrespective of a person’s religion”.

Formal and informal procedures are laid down if employees perceive that they have been unfairly discriminated against (Levendal, 2009b:4).

5.6.5 Sexual-Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment and racial discrimination in the workplace are viewed as separate forms of unfair and counterfeit workplace behaviours. The staff at NMMU have the minimum privilege of protection against what might cause them physical, psychological and economic harm. As NMU is committed to confidentiality in dealing with any complaints of sexual harassment, such complaints cannot be lodged anonymously if they wish to go through the NMU complainant-grievance procedure (Levendal, 2009b:6).

Researchers’ findings have indicated that bullying is a form of discrimination of the same order as sexual harassment and racial discrimination. They also claim that the impact of bullying on the target could be equated to one of being “raped” (Kircher et al., 2011:16). While the traditional sexual harassment research focuses on sexual harassment as an unwanted sexual attention behaviour (Salin & Hoel, 2013:243), workplace bullying has also been considered as an unwanted behaviour (Kircher et al., 2011:8).

Sexual harassment in the workplace is destructive and contrary to workplace progress. In Europe, Australia, and to a growing extent North America and Africa, the term workplace bullying is frequently used to cover different kinds of non-sexual and non-racial harassment in the workplace (Einarsen et al., 2003; Hoel and Cooper, 2000).

The sexual-harassment policy at NMMU Section 2.16 comprises “unwelcome verbal conduct”, such as insults, as well as inappropriate enquiries about the person’s private life, which are also types of bullying behaviour (Levendal, 2009b:3).

The sexual harassment policy still does not cover various vital aspects of workplace bullying, as both are completely different forms of harassment. Verbal phrases used during sexual harassment are different from those used during bullying.
5.6.6 Whistle-Blowing Policy

This policy was intended to protect whistle-blowers but it may do otherwise in an organisational setting. 51% of the surveyed participants were not aware of any institutional whistle-blowing policy. Surprisingly, 56% of those who are aware do not have faith in the policy and the participants have called for improvement in this regard (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:22).

According to one of the respondents: “We have a policy regarding whistle-blowing, or for theft or anything else and for the protection of the person who does the whistle-blowing but we have nothing for protecting a person, when whistle-blowing on bullying in the workplace; so, those are areas that are of an immediate concern for me regarding bullying” (Union 1b). It was deduced from this response that blowing the whistle over some issues is acceptable, but not in the case of bullying.

Another respondent claimed that there’s no report regarding the whistle-blowing procedure, as the staff do not get any reports or feedback on complaints. “Well, it’s not as effective; because we do not hear any reports on a quarterly basis of what is the state of the university as far as that particular institution is concerned or that particular mechanism is concerned; we don’t hear anything, you know, there are no reports” (Union 2a).

5.6.7 Employee Disciplinary Procedure and Code

Glendinning (2001:269) refers to workplace bullying as a cancer that needs to be cured, and emphasises the need for subordinates to develop a trusting relationship with their managers to enhance their chances of keeping their jobs. The intention and main purpose of this Disciplinary Procedure and Code is to establish a fair, common and uniform procedure for the management of employee discipline at NMU. It is designed to act as a guideline to assist management with decision-making in respect of disciplinary measures (Gary, 2015:2).

The NMU disciplinary policy has the capacity to deal with bullies when their behaviour warrants discipline, but if the phenomena are not recognised as a problem, any measures to curb it would be an illusion.

Section 3.5 of the disciplinary policy states that it is “subject to the requirements of substantive and procedural fairness, the Chairperson of the disciplinary inquiry has the right to determine the sanction to be applied having regard to the seriousness of the offence, provided that it is
consistent with the provisions set out herein” (Gary, 2015:2). Equating the level and impact of workplace bullying, its effects on an employee (target) and institution in general, it should be considered a serious offence (Cassell, 2011:37).

5.6.8 Grievance Policy and Procedure

The NMMU as an institution has designed different policies for different purposes. The grievance policy deals with the procedure of dispute resolution without dealing with the root causes of dispute, such as workplace bullying. Applying grievances procedures to all dispute complaints among staff members without investigating the sources of the grievance is already unfair. According to De Wet and Jacob, “escalating unfair treatment and grievances could be attributed directly to workplace bullying” (DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:451).

Most grievances and disputes in NMMU are resolved through a dispute-resolution procedure, which claims to be an exhaustive procedure (Gary, 2007:2). Findings have shown even from the policy itself in section 5.8, that the procedure might not yield positive results, as disputes are sometimes not resolved to the satisfaction of either party (Gary, 2007:2).

5.6.9 Code of Ethical Behaviour

The code on ethical behaviour of NMMU Section 7.1.9 states that it is to “protect employees against physical and mental or emotional harassment” (Levendal, 2009:7). Harassment and workplace bullying are not defined similarly, as an employee can be harassed for a limited time whereas bullying is a repeated behaviour. On the one hand, “workplace bullying is not often viewed as a form of harassment falling into a recognised category, let alone behaviour which attracts legislative protection for employees” (Rycroft, 2009:1431).

Even though NMMU’s code of ethical behaviour of “expects managers to protect employees against harm; this does not mean that managers are bound by this policy” (Levendal, 2009:7). In Section 8.1.9.8-10, “it expects employees not to make a false accusation against a fellow employee, not to intimidate a fellow employee, and to recognise fellow employees’ rights to freedom of association” (Paul, 2013a:8). Codes of ethical behaviour are just expectations of behaviour that ought to emerge in the workplace.

Section 6.1.5 of the code of ethical behaviour (Paul, 2013a:7) assures of doing no harm, physically, emotionally or mentally. Section 6.1.3 states “to treat all colleagues, students and
members of the community with fairness, respect, dignity and honesty by encouraging and respecting a multiplicity of opinions and backgrounds (Paul, 2013a:7).

All these are expectations regarding the professional conduct of employees in the workplace. The researcher’s findings show that the code of ethical behaviour policy has no disciplinary procedures that can prevent harm, such as physical, emotional or mental trauma of employees.

“The Code of Conduct clarifies the standards of behaviour that are expected of staff of the Department of Education and Training (DET) in the performance of their duties; It gives guidance in areas where staff need to make personal and ethical decisions” (NSW, 2006:1). Although the code of conduct and policy are similar they are not the same, as the code of conduct is not binding; it is an expected behaviour of staff to prevent an actual workplace bullying from occurring.

NMMU expect their staff to portray the values of the institution: “To reflect the values of NMMU and how employees are expected to comply with these values; and also, to motivate and encourage employees to display good conduct and teamwork” (Paul, 2013a:4). Most importantly, NMMU expect its staff to embrace the spirit of “Ubuntu”, whereby people respect the dignity of others and treat all people equally (Paul, 2013a:6).

Nevertheless, measures to deal with workplace bullying through policy implementation at NMMU are not yet in place. The University of Sydney has adopted a “Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy that took effect from 1 January 2016. That policy clarifies what is and what is not bullying.

The policy also explains that “low-level conflict is interpersonal conflict or disagreement, which is not sufficient to constitute bullying; because people can and will disagree with each other” (Levendal, 2009:8). The university of Sydney policy addresses workplace bullying in terms of bullying not as unfair discrimination, although discrimination is included in the policy as a stand-alone entity (Levendal, 2009:8).

5.6.10 Policy on Persons Living with Disabilities

This policy protects disabled people’s economic freedom, which means that this enables them to be in service and to have a source of livelihood and it is intended to protect such people against any form of discrimination based on their disabilities (Levendal, 2009a:3).
74% of the participants in a climate survey stated their displeasure about how disabled staff members are not benefiting equally (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:23).

5.6.11 Exit Interview Policy

The exit interview policy is seen as a mechanism to evaluate the termination of appointments. One of the main purposes of the policy under section 1.3 was: “to make available a mechanism for permanent staff and fixed-term contractors, who voluntarily resign from the university, to provide information pertaining to their work experiences and [to] establish relevant causes for their departure” (Paul, 2011:1). The exit interview policy under the same section 1.3, was also useful as a risk assessment, as the exit interview data “provided the university with information that may indicate trends in voluntary terminations and assist efforts to improve circumstances contributing to staff turnover” (Paul, 2011:1).

5.6.12 Policy on the Management of Leave

The management of leave has always been an area of concern, judging from the findings revealed in the institutional climate survey, a situation where 76% of the respondents had claimed unsuccessful application for research sabbatical/leave in the past three (3) years (Levendal and Mafunga, 2013:30). Although the policy to claim leave for whatever reasons are printed, “policies are often one-sided, written by unrealistic authors; these authors are not really involved with what it is like to be a true lecturer; and that study policies need scrutiny to confirm the practicality of the benefits the policy assures” (Levendal and Mafunga, 2013:38).

One unfair clause of this policy was that “leave may be refused for cogent operational reasons” (Hattle, 2017:6). This was the reason one of the institutional climate survey participants argued that such policies are wrong and unfair, claiming that “leave should be a right that is 100% non-negotiable for staff members who actually deliver as researchers!” (Levendal and Mafunga, 2013:31).

These examples indicate how inclusive NMMU policies are and how unfair it is that some employees, at times, did not benefit from the implemented policies.

5.7 SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT OF NMU’S POLICIES

The study’s findings revealed that NMU employees perceived these policies as being either positive or negative as explained below.
These perceptions can occur simultaneously depending on the employee’s experiences.

An analysis of what could have been a positive or a negative perception of the policies from the perspective of workplace bullying is presented in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Positive and negative aspects of policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Positive aspect</th>
<th>Negative aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>Due to perspective of one’s gender, an individual can be bullied.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit interview policy</td>
<td>It’s a mechanism useful for risk assessment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job evaluation policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manager’s displeasure of an employee can negatively impact the evaluation process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on persons living with a disability</td>
<td>Probably not being able to meet up with tasks due to disability influencing bullying behaviours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of ethical behaviour</td>
<td>This code prevents the act of bullying; but it is not a legally binding policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievance policy and procedure</td>
<td>This policy creates a platform for employees to complain about unfair actions. However, the procedures lack the underlying causes of grievances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee disciplinary procedure and code</td>
<td>The procedure can be masterminded and handled unfairly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on disclosures Relating to criminal and irregular conduct (Whistle-Blowing Policy)</td>
<td>At the same time, the policy also protects and corrects irregularities</td>
<td>A whistle-blower can be stigmatised and mobbed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment policy</td>
<td>Different sections of this policy deal with unfair behaviours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Positive aspect</td>
<td>Negative aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on religion / belief/ opinion</td>
<td>Based on religious belief, employee can be isolated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism and radical discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td>It is most likely for an individual to be victimised or bullied, due to his/her race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on the management of leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leave denial has been the greatest weapon/tactic applied by line managers to bully subordinates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on the management of secondary appointments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Most employees appointed under this policy experience excessive monitoring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8 POLICIES’ ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Given these facts, the policies are then analysed along the line of positive and negative to highlight how these policies can contribute to, or mitigate against workplace bullying.

Hence, this research findings in the policies under Table three categories should have covered an anti-bullying policy, whether by inclusion as a subsection, or as a section on its own addressing bullying and its implications.

This research findings have also shown that even with the best of policy implementations, policies are “uneven”. And this results in the persistence and prevalence of workplace bullying that is affecting the “well-being” of staff (Woodrow & Guest 2014). Undeniably, at policy level things seems logical; however, on the ground level, such practices become absurd; and commitment to the policies is uneven (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:21).

The data emerged from the researcher’s findings on policies during the document review data collection; and a set of codes was developed that is appropriate to the themes. For not repeating sentences. The above-presented themes and categories were incorporated with the finding themes and categories from the interview sessions; and both were triangulated; and references were drawn from the literature. Having presented the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of institutional policies, the next sub-section shall present findings from the semi-structured interviews with union officials with expert knowledge of workplace bullying.
Table 4.4: Themes and categories identified in the existing policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Trade Unions                | • Employee relations  
|                             | • Representatives                                                          |
| Conflicts                   | • Strategic  
|                             | • Grievance  
|                             | • Conflict resolution mechanism: mediation and CCMA                        |
| Management/Human Relation   | • Disputes  
|                             | • Monitoring  
|                             | • Power dynamics  
|                             | • Confidentiality                                                          |
|                             | • HR procedures  
|                             | • Manager/employees relations                                               |
| Diversity                   | • Staff/ethnicity                                                          |
|                             | • Age  
|                             | • values  
|                             | • Discrimination                                                           |
| Harassment                  | • Racial conflict of races  
|                             | • Inequality  
|                             | • Harm  
|                             | • Emotional  
|                             | • Micro aggression                                                          |
|                             | • Discriminatory humour                                                    |
|                             | • Demeaning stereotypes                                                     |
| Health implications         | • Physical  
|                             | • Emotional well-being                                                     |
|                             | • Mental  
|                             | • Psychological                                                            |
The table 4.4 above shows the themes and categories obtained from the most related policies through the perspective of the literatures.

5.9 THEMES AND CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED IN THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interview with the two recognised Unions at NMU; however, the privacy of unions is protected; as it is for individuals.

The researcher coded each union as Union 1 and Union 2. Since the respondents are two representatives from each union, they will be presented as Union 1a and 1b and Union 2a and 2b.

Table 4.5: Themes and categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace bullying definitions and perceptions</td>
<td>Workplace bullying tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Workload -assigning excessive work beyond job description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Leave denial – refusal to grant leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-'Setup' for failure - setting difficult or unreasonable tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Mobbing – when a target is targeted by perpetrator close colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Bystander- witness of bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Target - Perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management style of problem solving</td>
<td>• Conflict management resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grievances procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trade unions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributing factors</td>
<td>• Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conflict resolution mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts of workplace bullying</td>
<td>• Physical symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Psychological effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.10 DISCUSSION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING THEMES

In presenting the core findings of the study, the researcher meant to make a space that allows for the authentic voices of the respondents to come through. Therefore, while the chapter seeks to analyse and interpret the policies and their provisions, also the experience and perceptions of staff through the union’s perceptions about workplace bullying. The qualitative approach allowed the respondents to speak for themselves via narration which induce 'thick and rich data'.

According to Snodgrass (2005:239), a study has two 'voices' for presentation: The emic (interviewee’s voice) and the etic (the researcher’s voice), which must be kept separate from the data. In this way, the researchers concentrated on the ‘emic’ and used verbatim quotes to support the discussion. Briefly, the major theme that occurred through the interview sessions with the unions representatives are discussed in the following paragraphs.

It is important to bear in mind that union representatives’ views are not based on their personal experiences, but rather the reports they had received in their offices; although we cannot generalise. It is acknowledged the union officials has been at the coal face of engaging directly with their members.
5.10.1 Workplace Bullying Definitions and Perceptions

Extremely similar responses have emerged from the data collected; for example, the definition of workplace bullying. However, a universal definition for workplace bullying does not exist, (Johnson 2009:35; Saunders, Huynh, & Goodman 2007:341). This was also echoed by (union 2b): “If I may say so, there is no fixed definition of the term or a phrase for workplace bullying”; but each of the participants agrees that workplace bullying is a form of mistreatment.

From the definitions of the participants below; it was ascertained that they are aware of the phenomenon (bullying); and their opinion in relation to the union is vital. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher has adopted the definition giving by Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper. These authors define “bullying as repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or more individual(s), which involve a perceived power imbalance; and [this] creates a hostile work environment” (Einarsen et al., 2003:1214–1215).

Another common perception of bullying, which was also reviewed by Diana Smit (2014:1) in her PhD thesis is the fact that people generally think bullying happens in school, and not necessarily among adults. Sexual harassment draws more attention and priority in the workplace, one of the respondents explains, thereby agreeing with Diana Smit’s view saying,

“Also, if you have anything that speaks to sexual harassment, people sit up and listen; but if you say bullying, they think that only happens at school; it doesn’t happen in the workplace” (Union 1b).

Bullying is committed in a variety of ways and levels – either downwards from the superior to a subordinate, upwards from a subordinate to the superior, or horizontally/laterally between co-workers (Smit 2014:382). Cases, such as downward and upward bullying, were also identified through the union experience; however, the case of a subordinate bullying a superior is quite new to the union representative:

“We even had maybe two cases where the bullying took place in a different format, where it’s not from a person in power or authority bullying down; but this was a very disruptive staff member, who was bullying even the people he or she was reporting to and colleagues. To me, that was a new experience; because it’s someone that then bullies everyone – no matter they report or up or around – so, I’ve seen two of those cases in my time. So, that’s a different dynamic. But the normal bullying is normally with the power, a person of some authority or power that does the bullying” (Union 1b).
“...sometimes it’s not the boss who bullies you; maybe it’s just a fellow colleague; that’s also the problem – because now the boss must try and manage this between the two of you; and it’s difficult because you don’t want to choose sides; but you must manage the situation” (Union 1a).

Table 4.6 provides different definitions/understandings of workplace bullying by the union representatives. Their definition/understandings are not too far from those identified in literature (see chapter two)

Table 4.6: Workplace bullying definitions by union representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unions</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union 1a</td>
<td>“Workplace bullying is the repeated mistreatment of one or more employees. Conduct is abusive in that it harms health, is threatening, it intends to humiliate and intimidate. It creates work interference health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators. It can also escalate to verbal abuse”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 1b</td>
<td>“I would say this is any forced, unwanted oppression from someone in power or even in the same area on another person, which creates discomfort to that person; and it’s done in such a way that there’s no clear dialogue and agreement to what the pressure is that’s being put on the person”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 2a</td>
<td>“Workplace bullying is anything that involves the ill treatment of one by another in any institution – be it an institution of higher learning, or be it government institutions; so, any ill treatment of one person by another, especially one that inflicts that ill treatment being the one who has authority in that particular environment”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 2b</td>
<td>“Workplace bullying, it’s a process where colleagues mistreat or treat each other in an unfair manner”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.10.2 Types of Workplace Bullying Behaviours and Tactics

Research findings particularly in developed countries, such as the USA and the Scandinavian countries, have led to the adoption of an anti-bullying policy. However, some organisations did not tag it as a bullying policy, Cowan, in his findings, insists that “the term bullying was not used in the policy; however, they all believed bullying was covered” (Cowan 2011:314). As many as 73% of the participants (Levendal & Mafunga 2013:1) in an institutional climate survey at NMU claimed to have been abused by their line managers. Further, the activities of the abuse indicate bullying behaviours. Examples of such behaviours mentioned in the climate institutional survey are:
• Lack of promotion and ignoring of targeted person;
• Gossiping, back-biting and the lack of team spirit;
• Frequent ill treatment;
• Delay in giving information;
• Not rewarding hard work;
• Workloads are not sympathetic;
• Insulting;
• Breach of confidentiality (public mockery of an employee);
• Employee is mobbed between line managers;

While a subtler form of bullying, such as verbal abuse, can not only create more psychological damage; but it can also lead to severe depression. Verbal bullying can run the gamut – from the use of demeaning language or sarcasm towards the victim – to the spreading of rumours and openly humiliating the victim. Prevention of verbal bullying is more difficult; because, as the initiator understands, it is difficult to document.

For victims, those words and feelings can be replayed repeatedly in the mind and heart of the victim, causing the person to feel those feelings again and again, creating feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and sometimes resulting in poor work performance and overall depression. For example, a participant of the climate survey stated that “the only memorable thought is that my line manager is not tactful. She is rude and abusive; and she cannot work with other human beings; and she is constantly aggressive – not only with the staff, but with students as well”(Levenda and Mafunga 2013:14).

When one or more employees are at the receiving end of repeated, malicious, health-endangering mistreatment exhibited by perpetrators, such phenomena describe workplace bullying. Bullying is said to reduce simultaneously if there is transparency, accountability and a proper capacity for the HR to effectively use policies (Einarsen et al., 2003:390).

Similarly, findings also emerged from a interviews sessions, which were in agreement with the findings of the institutional climate survey conducted at NMU, as listed in the following paragraph.
5.10.3 Workload

Thomas (2005:276) has identified excessive workload as one of the causes of workplace bullying, some participants also agreed that workload is a form of workplace bullying. “What I have seen at this institution very often has something to do with workload” (Union 1b). Correspondingly, workload as a means of bullying in some departments is creating de-fragment, according to the institutional climate-survey participants. Some staff members work harder than others; some are overloaded; while others are not (Levendal & Mafunga 2013:36).

In the same vein, another respondent explains the reason for an increased workload: “Obviously, the workload; the consequences of the merger which result to having more students in one class and having a challenge of the lack of human capital or a lack of lecturers to lecture or split that particular workload” (Union 2a).

“The superior personnel would try to push as much on a junior person, who is the more gentle person; and just load and load and load and make that person who is the victim then feel responsible for everything” (Union 1b).

5.10.4 Leave Denial

Workload has been perpetually blamed for leave denial; and leave denial has been the greatest weapon/tactic applied by line managers to bully subordinates. According to the findings of the institutional climate survey, “some staff are eligible for sabbatical leave; but cannot take the leave due to the high workload that they have; and no-one being available to take up their workload” (Levendal & Mafunga 2013:45). Meanwhile 76% of the survey participants claimed: “I have successfully applied for research sabbatical/leave in the past three (3) years” (Levendal & Mafunga 2013:30). This has been mentioned earlier under the NMU, as a workplace heading and management of Leave Policy.

However, the policy on the management of leave objectives includes “… general rules for the various types of leave available to employees, to regulate the taking of such leave; and to establish a standard procedure for the application of leave” (Hattle 2017:4).

“There was a case recently with a lady and a guy who were working in the office; and the boss was also female; and there was an opportunity for the lady to go to an empowering workshop for ladies; but the boss refused, …opportunities would come up; but she would refuse, …no reason given just blatant refusal, blank refusal, that is not right, so we see that” (Union1a).
Another form of denial is the area of subordinate promotion, which is also another method of bullying, according to (Union 2a)

“Which in the scale of one to five, what scale do they give you, and that they will give you a two; and yet you have performed remarkably well; but because they do not like you anyway then that constitutes, or should constitute as part and parcel of the so-called workplace bullying”.

More than 50% of the climate survey participants negatively reacted to the promotion criteria applied by the management: “People must be promoted – not only on the qualifications they have – but also on experience and character.

5.10.5 “Set-up” for Failure

Respondent recalls how a staff member was complaining in the union office of how she was set up to fail: “so we see that setting staff up for failure absolutely…but, you can’t set me up for failure, that’s not right, you can’t do that” (Union 1a).

Workplace bullying manifests itself in different forms of consistent behaviours. Some of the behaviours identified in existing research include persistent insults, criticism or ridicule, being ignored or treated as non-existent, given demeaning tasks, or set up to fail etc. has been indicated by some researchers (Blase & Blase 2007:154; Cassell 2011:34; Cunniff & Mostert 2012:3; Lewis 2004:283).

Cilliers (2012: 4) illustrates how different methods are employed by perpetrators repeatedly, in order to undermine their target’s effort at work: For example, they are “set up to fail, through criticism, exclusion, or by denying him or her information.” These are common workplace bullying behaviours.

5.10.6 Mobbing

Di Rosa et al. (2009) indicate that psychological abuse in the form of bullying, harassment, or mobbing has been classified as one of the most serious health issues in the workplace today. Mobbing was also identified as an area of research, one outcome of which was the development of Swedish policy initiatives to address the problem of workplace bullying (Leymann, 1997). Extreme cases of mobbing have been identified among the line managers in this institution:
“Then we also get in extreme cases like the boss, I bully you and then I ask them, I coerce them also to gang up against you; so at the end of the day, it’s like four-five of us in the office against you, we see that and that’s not right” (Union 1a).

Bullying and mobbing are “vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees” (Denenberg & Braverman, 2001:7).

5.10.7 Bystanders

Targets’ feelings of being overwhelmed can impact not only the target, but other workers who witness the bullying; co-workers that witness bullying spend time in dealing with the pressure, rather than concentrating on their work and social lifestyle (Lutgen-Sandvik 2006:427).

“The relationships in the office, so if I’m the boss and you work for me; and I bully you, then your colleagues see what’s happening; but they don’t say anything; so, it harms your relationship with them; so that interpersonal relationships are also harmed. This is seen often in the workplace” (Union 1a).

Research has shown that co-workers witnessing colleagues (target) experiencing bullying tend to themselves increases fear, emotional exhaustion, hyper-vigilance, stress and the intention to resign (Vartia, 2003: 38).

The table below displays the highlights of workplace-bullying behaviours.
Table 4.7: Types of bullying behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union1a</th>
<th>Union 1b</th>
<th>Union2a</th>
<th>Union2b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“leave denial”</td>
<td>“overload a staff”</td>
<td>“judging one because of skin colour”</td>
<td>“constantly making one inferior”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Insult/ verbal abuse/shouting”</td>
<td>“Verbal abuse”</td>
<td>“workload”</td>
<td>“denial opportunity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Body language”</td>
<td>“exclusion of target”</td>
<td>“denial promotion”</td>
<td>“sexism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Physical aggression”</td>
<td>“constant slight bump”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“setting staff up for failure”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“spreading rumours”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unreliable time frames for tasks to be completed”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sexism”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.10.8 Profile of Targets

In conceptualising the phenomenon and coming to terms with being bullied is difficult for some targets. It is undeniable that bullying is an institution-wide phenomenon.

Age is no indicator of maturity; thus workplace bullying is not only a serious problem; but it is often an undetected problem amongst adults. A reflection of workplace bullying was demonstrated as follows: “So, sometimes that is slapping on the table, I’ve heard of managers who’re angry with the lady, she’s sitting working there, they’ve got an argument, he slaps on the table, from a standing position to her sitting down, that’s very aggressive. I’m sorry that’s not acceptable. I don’t care who you are. I don’t care what happened. That is not acceptable; so we see that, definitely we see that as verbal abuse and shouting” (Union 1a).

“Yea, then obviously we’ve seen like last year, the year before, when a person feels like they can’t cope at work; and the boss is bullying them, that pours over into their private life unfortunately; so, they go home; they talk to their husband; they talk to the boyfriend; and we find in many cases that once the member is facing something with which she can’t cope, especially with the women, that the husband is going to come with to the consultation, that’s bad, that is bad because he is not
a staff member; he is from outside; but things are so bad in the office, he feels he has to come and protect his wife by coming with her to the consultation with the union” (Union 1a).

Literature revealed that “… targets sometimes resort to alcohol and drugs to cope with workplace bullying” (Van Heugten, 2013:203).

“So, an assertive staff member would set boundaries and would immediately start taking control of the situation; but those who are quiet and not skilled to do this, would withdraw further; and some in desperation would actually decide to leave the employment of the work – just to get out of the situation; so, it depends on the personality of the victim as well” (Union 1a).

One of the reasons why targets don’t voice out their experience is because of further victimisation from their perpetrator. For example, unions handle the issues of faculty and administration in U.S.; but the members don’t utilize the mechanism because issues do get out of hand and escalate into conflict and more victimisation (Keashly & Neumann 2010:61).

A respondent recalls that the reason why most union members complain about the inability to pursue a case further is “because they are scared that if they now identify the bully, there would be further victimisation” (Union 1b).

5.10.9 Profile of Perpetrators

One of the participants described perpetrators in the following way: “The type of person who likes to put others down, who likes to manipulate, who likes to, what’s the word, some people just tend to be bullies right from a young age; and it goes with them when they come to ‘varsity; when they go into the workplace, it’s still there” (Union1a). One of the perceptions of staff members is the area of fault-finding, which can be de-motivating: “Even if people are doing something for years, the same task every year, the same time, that boss always finds fault; that, to me is a problem” (Union 1a).

According to de Wet and Jacobs, “[One] of the most common negative acts experienced by the respondents is the constant evaluation of target performance (54%); As many as 51% complain that they are responsible for more work than they can manage; and 47% claim perpetrators constantly find mistakes/errors in their work and in the results of their work (DeWet & Jacobs 2013:459).
5.10.10 Management Problem -Solving Styles

Management propels the efficacy and the implementation of policy and its applications – whether these are being adhered to, or altered. The position of management on issues that concern the employee and management’s perceptive reactions concerning the obvious issues are vital; nevertheless, a positive attitude from the top management towards unfair and abusive behaviours in the workplace should minimize the phenomenon called bullying.

5.10.11 Managers Perceived as Bullies

Line managers have been accused of unfair treatment and the misuse of power.

“Those who are in positions of authority rush into taking their subordinates into a disciplinary hearing – without any proper investigation – and successfully so, thereby managing to inflict punitive measures on those who are subordinates to them” (Union 2a).

While the university has not recognised the concept of bullying; and the management are in denial of the effect on victims:

“It happens, it happens at this institution; and it needs to be formalised, to be understood not only by the victims of the bullying; but also [by] those that try to assist from the union’s side” (Union1b).

Another area in which line managers misuse their power was also mentioned; and an example was given:

“There was a case recently with a lady and a guy who were working in the office and the boss was also female; and there was an opportunity for the lady to go to an empowering workshop for ladies; but the boss refused, not once; as other opportunities, would come up, she would refuse, No! No reason given – just a blatant refusal, a blank refusal, that is not right; so we [can] see that” (Union1a).

This is quite like a report gathered during the 2013 climate survey of the Institution, when a participant expressed frustration on the denial of leave for a sabbatical.

“I deliver approximately 10 peer-reviewed publications per year; and yet, despite applying for sabbatical leave several years in a row, I cannot get it because the department does not have the capacity to replace me as a lecturer. Sabbatical leave should be a RIGHT that is 100% non-negotiable for staff members, who actually deliver as researchers!” (Levendal and Mafunga, 2013:31).
5.10.12 Human-Resource Leadership

Given that policies have a role in ‘shaping’ the perceptions of an organisational climate, what then is the role of Human Resources (HR)? Phenomena, such as workplace bullying require interventions to be put in place by the employee-relation sector of the HR department. However, the management are yet to face the reality of workplace bullying. A respondent explains:

“One of the early challenges was that of workplace bullying not being formally identified or classified as an area by our HR or ER ... So, we don’t have that as a recognised concept at the university; this makes it challenge; because bullying in the workplace is definite; it happens at this institution. .... When lodging a grievance, bullying was not something that you could cite as the reason for it. It would have to be harassment, sexual harassment, or racism, or unfair treatment in some way; but they would not allow us to refer to this as bullying” (Union 1b).

It is important for Human Resources (HR) to lead by example in the consideration of others, advocating equal rights for all, irrespective of race, gender and class. Using policies to deal with differences in organisations has appeared to be normal on a daily basis, following the “clear statements” of policies about the preferred standard of an organisation with regard to certain issues relevant to it (Cowan, 2011:308). A call for line managers in NMU to be equipped and to engage in “appropriate training”, for them to be able to perform excellently in their positions.

The following suggestions have been made by institutional climate-survey participants (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:38):

- “Become better people managers”
- Attend courses and programmes to develop important skills needed for management
- Be transparent on work matters and build a team spirit.

The study from the Scandinavian shows described HR management as potentially contributing to workplace bullying – instead of curtailing it. The study further explained that the literature on workplace bullying “hardly had any empirical research conducted on the kind of measures used by organisations to combat bullying” (Salin, 2008:222).

However, there is an agreement that workplace bullying is aggressive in behaviour, power imbalance; and it manifests in interpersonal work relationships between two persons or groups (Pietersen, 2007:59). The use of power by the authorities, such as line managers, was
mentioned by most of the respondents. For example, the issue of job performance and evaluations.

“Within the very same institution that we’re in is that one called the FRE, where those who are in positions of authority would be able to determine how much you should earn in a bonus based on your performance, you know, so they can easily flex their power and say no! You were not performing very well; and yet you were doing your work properly – without any complaints. But when it comes to rating your performance, they are biased” (Union 2a). So what is FRE? It is a system that help in rating job performance in the university.

“A performance-management system, like the FRE, is supposed to reward excellence” (Union 1a).

Simply put, the phrase ‘supposedly means that FRE is being used for other purposes, such as bullying previously mentioned by Union 2a.

“Hence you find a situation; where today, the institution is resorting to formulating or establishing an appeals committee for an FRE; because they have identified that certain managers purposefully use their power to punish those who are subordinates to them – even if they have performed remarkably well – but because they do not like them, whether it’s because it is a question of racial differences or whatever it is, that could also be constituted as workplace bullying” (Union 2a).

5.10.13 Conflict Management

The participants shared the method in which management handle grievances and disputes between line managers and subordinates. A respondent revealed this by saying;

“Currently, the employees’ relations in this very same institution are suffering from a very serious challenge of disputes between a line manager and an employee; and those disputes end up being heard at a disciplinary hearing of the university. Those who were not supposed to be there were at the hearing, which is another sign of serious workplace bullying around; since those in a position of authority can easily flex their power and suppress those who are subordinates” (Union 2a).

Another respondent’s view of management is that “line managers play a very huge role in making things flow smoothly and working properly; [but] sometimes, they’re the problem” (Union 1a).
5.10.14 Grievance Procedure

Grievance policies were formulated to determine the reason for conflict; and to manage this between the employer and the employee.

According to Lewis, the possible causes of workplace bullying are as follows: “Organisational culture, leadership style, conflict resolution, labour/management philosophy, policy, grievance, discipline, counselling and employee-assistance programme provision, victims strategies, actions likely to constitute bullying and reasons for bullying behaviour” (Lewis 1999:108).

One of the respondents claimed a repeated problem must be reported via a grievance channel

“We must know if this happens; and it is definitely bullying, if it is over a long period; so, we must be able to go to the employee-relations offices and make a complaint for something to be done. They must intervene; or if it’s so bad you can’t deal with it anymore; you must be able to lodge a grievance; and there must be a process; and it must be dealt with” (Union 1a).

“And the mere fact that a lot of disputes ending up landing at the CCMA is another typical example that really, that particular system is not effective” (Union2a).

Among U.S. organisations, workers’ collective voice, grievances, complaints, both formal/informal and lawsuit mechanisms are used to solve unfair behaviours, (Lutgen-Sandvik 2006:417). Part of the complaint reported in the union office is the lack of trust in the workplace:

“If I’m going to lodge a grievance, nobody’s going to listen. I wonder if that person is going to change his attitude or behaviour towards me. It’s not going to change. Therefore, it is a very difficult thing to deal with. What would you do? Grievances require a formal process; and it’s difficult for me, as with bullying, to lay a formal charge. Even though I work with the union and I see a lot of people use it; I’m not in favour of it. I like to go and talk and say, look I don’t like this, won’t you please stop because this is elevated; now the whole world knows; the boss knows; the union reps know; it’s a big thing; there’s a hearing…” (Union 1a).

5.10.15 Trade Unions

As discussed in Chapter two, the role of trade unions is to act as a protector of the employees’ interest regarding issues that concern their employment and well-being.
The role of unions in the UK is particularly meaningful in fighting against any form of situations; the unions represent and present the way forward, thereby solving any conflicts between the employees and the employers in the workplace (Barker et al., 1999:53).

The average worker associates or affiliates with a union at a time guaranteeing employee representations. Unions are obliged to represent their members in dispute procedures that are workplace-related. A respondent narrates that the union office is like a safe space for employees to pour out their heart and talk about their pain and challenges. “To just be there for the person who knows it is a safe space, I can come here have a cup of coffee, sit down, cry, dry my tears; then we go on again, sometimes that’s all they need, but bullying that is a problem” (Union 1a).

Findings indicate that unions are involved in some policy formulations and transformational processes as stakeholders (Gary 2015; Hattle 2017; Levendal 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Newton 2009). Meanwhile, from the union perspectives, workplace bullying is real; and it manifests in various ways among institutional staff members. Its effects and dynamics differ from individuals to departments.

Creating awareness of workplace bullying among union members is a key element in fighting and combating bullying; and it is notably effective in the Republic of Ireland (Rayner et al; 1999:52).

One of the respondents said that as a union, “we send to members who belong to our union; we get a weekly contribution bulletin; we send this out on a Thursday; it says what’s up? Sometimes we say things in there about bullying, or just to make people aware of what is happening” (Union 1a).

5.11 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Apart from the fact that people get away with bullying, as mentioned by union 1a; there are the following issues: Systematic racism, sexism, ethnic differences and issues of regional and religious beliefs (Union 2b). These can also be the cause of workplace bullying.

Olweus (2003:13–14) explains that bullying acts do not differentiate between gender, race, religion or age; however, males bully others more than females do; and a large percentage of females about 50 per cent reported to being targets; and that they are bullied mostly by males.
Another important contributing factor perceived is the fact that there are “too many academic personnel in management positions that are not good leaders, or managers” (Levendal & Mafunga 2013:17).

5.11.1 Bullying and Racism

One of the research respondents argued that racism can be linked and identified as bullying, by giving the following explanation. “So you might want to also call racism within institutions as forming part and parcel of the workplace bullying itself; because you’re judging someone because of their skin colour; and because of their race; and then, you abuse them. You can also call that, as racism. It can also be called workplace bullying” (Union 2a).

According to Badat, there are claims that the apartheid higher education system was different and diversified, as a result of ‘race’ and ethnicity, which was an advantage to historically white institutions and a disadvantage to the historically black institutions (Badat, 2010:10).

Another research finding reviewed that, “apartheid had opened up increased opportunities for upward mobility among whites, allowing previously skilled white workers to enter supervisory and administrative positions” (Glaister & Wood 2008:439).

“I’m saying structural racism; because if you’d understand very well NMU is predominantly a white institution; and by its very nature, it was designed to serve the white folks; so more than 80% or more than 75% of the workers in this institution are white and then the majority of black individuals are falling within the lower grades as far as the remuneration scales; so the majority of those who are in managerial positions, middle management are predominantly white, you know, so that on its own in any institution is going to create serious challenges; because now here you’re going to have a racial contest, where those who are black are subjugated; and they are suppressed by those who are white; and those who are white in economic scales are earning more than those who are black in this very same institution. Twenty years into a democratic dispensation and we still have such challenges; so those are one of the causes of workplace bullying” (Union 2a).

Racism was said to be out there; because “we’ve seen in years like the one year it would just, like last year it was racism, last year was very bad about racism, we had a lot of complaints” (Union 1a). In a contrary opinion, “Definitely I see the pressure regarding workload being pushed onto a junior staff member and the bullying being, manifesting in that way. I don’t want to link racism to it; because I feel racism is completely different to bullying” (Union 1b).
5.11.2 Bullying and Religion

There are situations where “colleagues would ill-treat each other because of religious beliefs” was indicated by (union2b). The findings also described cultural influences and “the culture plays a role from what we’ve seen; we find that, especially the Muslim ladies, sometimes they don’t have a place to talk, except when they come to the office” (Union 1a).

5.11.3 Bullying, Sexism and Status

Findings from the interview also indicate sexism. This was confirmed with a quote from (Union 1a) “Sometimes the ladies are in managerial positions; and then the men find it difficult to deal with that, to accept that authority”.

A study carried out among civil servants in the government sector in Nigeria identified that “gender significantly moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and the critical organisational climate for effectiveness; such that the negative relationship between workplace bullying and the critical organisational climate for effectiveness was non-significant for men 5%; but highly significant for women 54% (Okurame, 2013:5618).

Another phenomenon observed by a respondent was the issue of status: “There is also a strange phenomenon in some of the academic departments; it’s linked to academic status, where a person is not seen as equally qualified” (Union 1b).

Steinmann (2010:9) suggests another “trigger factor” of workplace bullying, could be the arrival of a new management; or a carefree culture that does not respect the rights of others is been implemented with force; but the most important is the view of workplace bullying as a macro-systemic competition for power, privilege and status. These issues and more played out in the form of an interpersonal behavioural dynamic that influences workplace bullying.

5.11.4 Bullying and Ethnicity

Bullying is rationalised by blaming factors, which include differences in social background, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and or even facial appearance. For example, “in an environment like the NMU, where you’ll find a line manager coming from a Sotho background and the subordinates coming from a Xhosa background; so you’ll understand what will happen there; obviously, they’ll question, they’ll ask questions, such as “how can we be led by a Sotho-speaking person?” So, those are of the things that will happen.
For example, if you’re in a historically white Institution; and you happen to be a line manager and your subordinates are white people; so obviously, you’ll get a reaction from those white colleagues; and some of the questions that will be asked might include: “How can we be led by a black person?” In their view, he would be seen as incompetent” (Union 2a).

5.11.5 Lack of Transformation

Lack of transformation in the institution was alluded to as one of contributing factors to workplace bullying, the respondent explained:

“That underlying issue is the lack of transformation within the Institution. I think if we address and we give priority to the question of transformation within the Institution, then we’ll be able to address the underlying issue, which is structural racism and workplace bullying – because of the lack of transformation, especially among managers themselves. So, that is one way in which we can try and address the question of workplace bullying” (Union 2a).

According to Olivier: “Apart from the kinds of stress reported about academic work in other contexts, South African academics have had to face stresses associated with the radical transformation of the South African society and the demand that education itself becomes transformed; while making a contribution to the wider transformation of the society” (Olivier 2005:346).

However, among other visions of a transformation and democracy of higher education is to “create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour” (Badat 2010:4). But meanwhile:

“So long as there is structural racism, there is inequality in the structure, there is a lack of transformation; and we’re going to experience workplace bullying by any means possible” (Union 2a).

5.11.6 Lack of Policy

One of the respondents claimed that the absence of an anti-bullying policy crippled staff (target) reactions to workplace bullying; so that after complaining at the union office, they had no motivation to pursue their complaint further; and the union perceived the reason behind this attitude as the lack of a policy to support such complaints of being bullied.
“Very often, the staff members who are bullied, because it’s not clear what their rights are, or the university has not clearly defined the rights of a victim in a bullying situation, very often we find that those members approaching the union office they will first start to share; but they will be very reluctant to do anything, to action anything; because they are scared that if they now identify a bully, there will be further victimisation” (Union1b).

“….and so it is the absence of formalising bullying in the workplace and having a policy and supporting processes and procedures to support incidents, which reach us as the union or HR or ER office, where a staff member is bullied” (Union 1b).

It has been reviewed that in most European countries anti-bullying policies and procedures have been implemented, as the result of unions pressurising for change and equality (Einarsen et al., 2003:5).

5.11.7 Disciplinary Mechanisms

The perception of the lack of a proper disciplinary procedure was indicated; and the practicality of the mechanism, and the fact Ubuntu has become a philosophy rather than a lived experience. The respondent points out that,

“It’s the lack of proper disciplinary mechanisms within the institution, currently the employees’ relations are incapacitated; and they have completely lost a proper philosophy of Ubuntu; or the mere fact that the cases are all sent to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). It shows that there is a serious crisis within the institution; it’s a serious problem that needs to be addressed” (Union 2a).

For example, unions handle the issues of faculty and administration in the U.S.A; but members don’t utilize the mechanism; because the issues do go out of hand and escalate to conflict and more victimisation (Keashly and Neuman, 2010:61). A similar case was also discovered in this study: “Very often, we find that those members approaching the union office they will first start to share; but they will be very reluctant to do anything, to take action; because they are scared that if they now identify a bully, there will be further victimisation” (Union 1b).

5.11.8 The Power Factor

A power imbalance has been identified as one of the potential sources of bullying (Salin 2003a:1216).
It is important to balance power relations between the targets and the perpetrator socially, and even between the organizational contexts, where bullying is being perpetrated (Cowie et al. 2002:36). The issue of workplace bullying from different authors’ perspectives has been embedded in power rationing to emphasise power as a useable tool in workplace bullying; while the perpetrator deliberately and systematically exhibits negative behaviours that pollute the workplace environment (Kelly 2006; Duncan Lewis 1999; Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik 2006; Thomas 2005; Zapf & Gross 2001).

5.12 THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Bullying has proven to have negative consequences for the Institution; as productivity is usually affected; and the health of both the targets and the bystanders (witnesses) suffers. Most of the consequences identified through the literature study also emerged through the course of the interviews. According to Thomas, “Bullying at Work” UNISON survey found that 75.6 per cent of employees who reported being bullied experienced negative health consequences. In addition, the survey highlighted the fact that 73 per cent of the employees who witnessed bullying also reported experiencing detrimental health effects; but the most commonly mentioned effects were stress, anxiety and depression” (Thomas 2005:276).

5.12.1 The Implications for the Victims

The impacts of workplace bullying usually occur in both directions: the impact on the target as an individual and the impact on the institution. While the individual’s health: psychologically and emotionally, is affected. For the institution, the impacts are usually different and obvious. Both impacts are interwoven between the responses of the respondents. Researchers have identified the consequences of negative behaviour as follows: physical harm, as well as the psychological and emotional health of the targeted individuals, They further stress that chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular problems and prolonged medical conditions like hypertension are found to be common in the individuals experiencing bullying (Di Rosa et al., 2009:308).

“…you must be available like the whole day, at night, after work, on weekends, that’s a big problem; so people can’t switch off; so their health is definitely impacted. We’ve got cases on campus where people can... there’s a 24-hour hotline where people can phone in if they battle, if they can’t cope; and a lot of people phone; people can’t cope so their health is definitely affected” (Union 1a).
“.... psychologically and emotionally it affects that individual; and therefore, it affects the performance of that particular individual in any position that person currently is placed in. So, they’ve got a very negative impact, not only for the institution, but also for those particular individuals” (Union 2a).

“If a victim is in a bullying situation very often it’s a sense of losing control of the workplace situation; and unfortunately, if that sense is there in the workplace, it often gets carried over to the home life; so that it not only affects the working environment, it affects the person in the private capacity; because then the person takes it home as well; and it could have very negative effects there on the home life” (Union 1b).

Another instance was given of a husband who attended a consultation with the union with his wife (staff member), who couldn’t cope with the stress any longer:

“We find in many cases that once the member is here and she can’t cope, especially with the women, that the husband is going to come with her to the consultation; that’s bad, because he is not a staff member; he is from outside; but things are so bad in the office, he feels he has to come and protect his wife by coming with her to the consultation with the union” (Union1a).

5.12.2 Implications on the Institution

Others have resorted to leaving their employment in the quest for a permanent solution.

Findings from the literature gathered indicate negative ways in which the phenomenon had implicated the growth of higher education institutions and secondly, employees are concerned with the organisational structure. Another implication on the institution is the increase in employee turnover when employees change jobs to escape bullying (McKay et al., 2008:77). Authors explain that targets respond to workplace bullying by avoiding the workplace environment through absenteeism. This has a negative effect on institutional turnover and it lead to lower productivity. More findings on the role of increases in workplace stress and absenteeism have been traced to bullying and the lack of an organisational structure that deals with bullies and the lack of employees’ rights to equity (Banks, Patel & Moola, 2012:2; Kircher et al., 2011:15).

“They will withdraw further; and some in desperation will actually decide to leave the employment of the work environment – just to get out of the situation.

So, for an institution at large, it is unhealthy to have a staff member in an emotional state of not being well because of bullying; and it affects the work performance.... of the targeted victims; and their work performance and their personal health and wellness suffer from it....... some people just want to resign; they just want to resign.” (Union1a).
“That is a risky one; because once there is workplace bullying, it can affect production, when a staff member will underperform; and that can lead to many things. It can lead to disciplinary enquiries, which are time-consuming; and it can lead to what I’ve already mentioned, wellness programs, which are expensive. So, it can lead to many things” (Union 2b).

“A person who feels bullied is obviously not able to perform as well as one would want to work; because the stress that’s related to bullying and the sense of the unfairness and the injustice of what is happening very often becomes the focal point for the victim; and the day-to-day routine in business, the key performance areas suffer from that; because the person is trying to deal with it” (Union 1b).

A respondent argued that the lack of utilizing the university’s conflict management and transformation department is a sign of a serious problem within the institution. The prevalent workplace bullying can sometimes be subject to the lack of an organizational structure (Lars et al., 2009: 349).

“…..cases are all sent to the CCMA. This shows that there is a serious crisis within the institution; it’s a serious problem that needs to be addressed” (Union 2a).

“We have, on numerous occasions engaged the human-resource department to say currently in the institution we have got a department that deals with dispute settlement and dispute resolutions or conflict management and transformation; but they have never utilised that particular department; and they would rather take a facilitator outside the institution, which is very costly and expensive for the institution; and that particular individual doesn’t even understand the dynamics within the university” (Union 2a).

“So, for an institution at large it is unhealthy to have a staff member in an emotional state of not being well, because of bullying; and it affects the work performance” (Union 1b).

“Some people can take people to the CCMA, which they have, and fight it internally, dispute, CCMA, they fight the bullying; but everybody’s not that strong” (Union 1a).

5.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher has identified that NMU policies were mostly implemented and adopted for specific reasons, none of which has been formulated for workplace bullying, except the code of ethics, which is not binding.

The primary purpose of this study was to create an awareness of workplace bullying and how the phenomenon is being addressed in the institution through the unions and the staff
representatives. In as much as a blind eye and a deaf ear are turned towards the bullying act, this has promoted abnormal behaviour resulting in organisational cultures, which may be intentionally or purposefully promoting workplace bullying, injustice and silent pain. This will continue to destroy the workforce, as bullying is becoming a persistent dilemma in higher education institutions.

Bearing in mind that the policy protects against unfair discrimination and any bias against gender, people living with disabilities, race and whistle-blowers etc.; and through the grievances and disciplinary procedure perpetrators, or anyone who breaches the policies, are being disciplined.

HR’s way of handling procedures/complaints has been questioned due to inexperience and the lack of understanding of workplace bullying. As mentioned earlier, understanding the staff’s perceptions of workplace bullying will encapsulate the root causes of grievances and will allow appropriate strategic procedures in combating workplace bullying. Frequently disputes are dealt with on the surface, without really knowing or understanding the causes of the grievances.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“To practice the process of conflict resolution, we must completely abandon the goal of getting people to do what we want” (Marshall B. Rosenberg)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented and discussed the findings. In this chapter, the findings are summarised in three broad categories. The conclusions are a reflection of the findings and responses of the participants, as the sample results are supported by the findings from the literature and document review and produce recommendations to the institution under study.

In focusing on the objectives set out in Chapter One, the researcher commenced:

- To provide an overview of workplace bullying globally and in South Africa, with specific emphasis on the HE environment;
- To investigate which institutional policies and structures are in place at NMMU;
- To investigate workplace bullying as an employee concern via the importance and the roles of the two unions’;
- To make recommendations on how identified institutional workplace bullying can be addressed at NMMU.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Workplace bullying has been recognised as a growing problem globally and research into the causes and implications of workplace bullying are being researched, but the researchers are focusing their attention on other sectors, especially the health sectors, without considering whether higher education is a field to be studied.

The researcher compares findings by triangulating the literature review findings, the case study of the research, which is the 2013 NMMU Institutional Climate Survey and the semi-structured interviews. This study is relevant and significant to the tertiary educational sector (HEIs) in South Africa. One of the respondents stated: “Not only here; but I’ve got a sister in Johannesburg and a son in Johannesburg. When I hear their stories of what happens in their institutions, it’s a problem” (Union 1a).
The methodology suggested for the study in Chapter Three was adhered to precept by precept and made use of triangulation as illustrated in Figure 6.1. Triangulation was made possible by using secondary data from the literature review, the review of the policies and the primary data, which consisted of the responses from the semi-structured interviews. The findings are summarised and presented below.

Figure 6.1: Methods of triangulation used in the workplace bullying research

6.2.1 Inadequate Information and Awareness

The respondents revealed an inadequate awareness of the phenomenon at the managerial level, which increases the percentage of the stress level and the misuse of power. The findings revealed that abuse in the workplace manifests itself in diverse ways, from repeated bullying and verbal insults to public shows of physical aggression and mobbing on the basis of religion, race, disability and gender in any workplace. Bullying may be perpetrated by anyone (Martino et al., 2010:4). In all these findings, workplace bullying has been identified as the cause of negative behaviour that impedes institutional growth and negatively affects the psychological health of the targeted person.

From the perception of the respondents, line managers are ‘guilty’ of workplace bullying and most of them are unaware of how their behaviour is affecting their subordinates. It is therefore necessary for line managers to realise the effect of repeated workplace bullying on the
employee, which can lead to an increase and a manifestation of high levels of stress, anxiety and depression that could affect productivity negatively – both at work and in their personal lives.

6.2.2 Institutional Policies

Results have shown that the university is under stress due to the merger in 2005 and an insufficient number of academic staff members compared with the student numbers. The recent fees must fall students protest and call for transformation has brought a new dimension to the problems (which is outside the scope of this research study).

Line managers are overloading subordinates with work and that denies them opportunities for career growth e.g. research and benefits, such as sabbatical leave. Findings reveal the gaps in the Management of Leave Policy, where the line managers have the final say regarding the approval of leave, especially if the department has no arrangement for replacement leave. Hence, the leave cannot be approved. Workplace bullying should not affect the ability for institutions to get work done. Therefore a repeated denial of sabbatical leave for three years in a row has been classified as bullying (Levendal & Mafunga, 2013:11, 30).

Despite the range of policies in NMMU, most of these policies do not protect employees effectively against unfair discrimination. These are referred to and addressed by disciplinary procedures. NMU policies that should cover anti-bullying focus instead on grievances and disputes on one hand, and disciplinary action on the other hand, resulting in unfair discrimination without considering the root causes of these grievances. Smit (2014:9) explains that the harassment Act in South Africa has been taken before tribunals to address workplace bullying as a form of unfair labour practice, discrimination and victimisation. It is not clear whether workplace bullying falls under harassment in South Africa, as it is not mentioned or explained in the Act. It is unclear whether employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy working environment through implementing an anti-bullying policy.

According to some researchers, there is no clear definition of workplace bullying and it appears that harassment policies do not necessarily address workplace bullying (DeWet & Jacobs, 2013:451). It is also unclear why many institutions have no policies to address workplace bullying (Cowan, 2011:308).
6.2.3 Unions’ Concerns

One of the main concerns of the unions is the mechanism and the approach that the institution adopts when addressing complaints. HR and line managers have been accused of side-lining policies for the betterment and the privilege of the employer. These disciplinary and grievance procedures have created a lack of trust, thereby contributing to the stress level and anxiety of the targets. Most of the complaints that have reached the unions’ offices are when targets are still bullied after laying a grievance or complaint against their superiors, because the HR office usually reports such complaints to the superior. This should not happen until after HR has carried out preliminary investigations.

An enquiry into the procedures used in settling disputes has been on the unions’ agenda for some time. The findings revealed that various factors can lead to workplace bullying and the ways in which they are addressed are very important, due to the emotions attached to the phenomenon. There is a belief that an understanding of the real and underlying cause of a dispute would generate a long-term mechanism for addressing those grievances by avoiding the CCMA’s long process or procedures that are stressful, and which emotionally drain the targets and others that are involved.

As near perfect as the NMMU Code of Ethical Behaviour Policy might look, it reflects a generally expected standard of behaviour that ought to be exhibited in the working environment. For anyone manifesting negative behaviour, there is no disciplinary procedure to address the offenders. The efficacy and importance of a code of ethical behaviour is not known to many. This was claimed by one of the respondents: “NMU is supposed to adhere to the code of ethics. That’s just how it is, that’s why it’s there; but I bet you people don’t know about it” (Union1a).

6.3 CONCLUSION

To create a conducive work environment, workplace bullying needs a policy, a transparent process and a legal approach. The failure in addressing it can have further negative influences on academics’ quality production and a negative health impact on the individual (target).

The variation in the data collected implies that the complaints that reach the unions’ offices are diverse and the interpretations by the union representatives are based on experiences of complaints with regard to workplace bullying. One of the objectives of this study was to
investigate workplace bullying as perceived by the employees concerned through the eyes of the two recognised unions, and to develop a policy that can protect employees from experiencing abuse in the form of workplace bullying.

The study has confirmed the existence of workplace bullying and has highlighted the inadequate tactics and measures to deal with the reported cases. HR management needs to be able to differentiate between what is bullying and what is not. The management tackling mechanism for dealing with workplace bullying is to be considered weak and a course of action is needed by management within the institution and the profession to initiate a sustainable procedure to deal with the complaints speedily and to provide institutional support for the victims.

This study attempted to explain bullying through different theoretical frameworks, such as the dispositions theory that tends to explain the behavioural patterns and how different personalities play various roles in bullying, as well as the ecological model and the usefulness of practicing the culture of Ubuntu.

The researcher acknowledges the limitations of the interview data, which comprised a purposive, semi-structured interview. However, the issues mentioned in the interview session cut across the findings in the literature, as well as the findings from the 2013 climate survey conducted by the university itself.

The study found imbalanced and abusive use of power and systematic racism were also identified as tools of bullying in the workplace. Findings indicate that implementing and adhering to an anti-bullying policy promises to bring about change in the workforce.

The most important perception of staff that emerged from the study is that “bullies get away with bullying”. This makes the phenomenon problematic and worrisome in academic circles and one way to combat it is to implement an anti-bullying policy that will actualise the values and vision of the institution. In the case of the NMU, this can be seen in one of its vision 2020 goals; “We provide a vibrant, stimulating and richly diverse environment that enables staff and students to reach their full potential”.

Combating the counterfeit workplace behaviour through anti-bullying seems faultless and important but it is high time we reconsider the contents of our institutional policies. The things that are important are whether we are using the correct phrases/wording, are the policies being
adhered to and are the disciplinary procedures being followed fairly and equally and finally, what other measure can be explored to make our policies more firm and accessible to everyone?

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Bullying has a deeper impact than we would like to admit. Research has disclosed that a person who has been bullied somewhere else, would most likely eventually become a bully. It is essential for HR to be aware of what workplace bullying is and to be cognisant of its implications.

6.4.1 Adherence to Policies

Institutionally, at the management level, it was noted that policies are frequently overlooked and side-lined with regard to the policies’ functionality and implementation procedures. Findings established that adherence to policies is lacking and there is no punishment or disciplinary procedure to convict the perpetrators of the psychological harm caused by workplace bullying, such as that provided for in the code of ethics. This has increased the level of the phenomenon and the targets have lost confidence in the mechanisms in place for resolving any grievances.

“We have a lot of policies at NMU like any other company, but forcing people to adhere to them – that’s a problem; that really is a problem; so, for me I say it’s good to have policies and procedures; but then they must be adhered to” (Union 1a).

“….but to have a document itself is not enough; you need to ensure that you implement it; because it can be there; but if it’s not implemented correctly, then the problem will continue; so, you need to have that; but you also need to make sure that you implement it correctly” (Union 2b).

“At the first meeting we had with her (The Executive Director: HR), she said there appears to be a problem with the policies; because people don’t adhere to them. Now, that’s the HR’s function; they must ensure that the policies of the institution are adhered to” (Union 1a).

These two respondents believed that enforcing institutional policies and values are the responsibilities of HR and institutional management, including line managers.
6.5.2 The Need to Promote Effective Communication and Cohesion

Emphasis has been placed on the use of professionals in dealing with workplace bullying among the institution’s employees (Union 1a, Union 1b, Union 2a). This will prevent misinterpretation of the phenomenon and the generalising of the dispute factors. Information regarding the phenomenon will empower the targets to discern the stressor and any unethical workplace behaviours. Particularly, the ability to develop a culture that understands and supports the vision and values of the institution. These can only be achieved through cohesion from the management level through to the subordinate level through effective communication.

One of the staff’s perceptions is that people engage in work and produce effectively based on their line manager’s behaviours and this can only be possible if line managers display Ubuntu by focusing on employee’s wellness, instead of on tasks.

6.5.3 Management Stance

One of the study’s findings on how to prevent and combat workplace bullying is by management implementing harsh disciplinary measures to the perpetrators. The belief that bullies get away (Union 1a), and the lack of leadership transformation (Union 2a), should be addressed by management. Implementing measures that address inequalities in terms of the disciplinary process is another concern among the union representatives.

“We must set the tone in our institution; and it must be done from the top right through; and then people can’t get away when they’re caught; they can’t get away because then they’ll just do it again; they’ll just continue to do it; but we can’t have it; we can’t carry Nelson Mandela’s name and do that; we can’t allow that; we can’t; it’s just that we can’t” (Union 1a).

“It’s a constant thing, I mean; that’s why I’m saying the NMU must put out a strong position against bullying; that’s the end of the story. It must come from the top down to my line manager; it must come down from there; and they must know it’s not acceptable” (Union 1a).

6.5.4 Managerial Awareness

A proper awareness of workplace bullying will prevent blaming factors in that targets will not be blamed at disciplinary hearings for manifesting a “personality that irritated the bully” (Ferris, 2004:392). The respondents in this study suggested workshops and seminars with professionals in the area of bullying, for employee relations practitioners and line managers to analyse and understand bullying through an educational approach.
“The anti-bullying workshops, I mean we’ve got Dr X; she’s in our institution; use her; give her the opportunity. I mean the only way that people are going to come forward is if, is when they know what it is and what to do” (Union 1a).

“Secondly, we need proper workshops within the institutions, departmental workshops; where all those who are in that particular department are in one place; and in that particular workshop. They are told how to conduct themselves within the workplace. We need a proper training, even if it’s one or two trainings in a department a year that would work. It can’t be that departments will go 5 years; and there is no workshop on work ethics and how to conduct yourselves” (Union 2a).

Continuous staff and managerial training and awareness of the phenomenon is thought to be the key to the eradication of workplace bullying. Ferris advocates that training and awareness for management in the area of workplace bullying should be mandatory (Ferris, 2004:394). Increasing the awareness of bullying reduces the repetition of behaviour. De-classifying hostile verbal and non-verbal interactions into an attitude that later becomes workplace bullying is something to guard against.

“It is de-formalising the concept of bullying to work it into the different categories of unfair treatment at the institution; and then desensitising the working community at large regarding bullying in the workplace” (Union 1b).

Awareness of workplace bullying also means that unprotected grounds must shift; targets should be able to complain and be granted assistance, for example, protection based on the written document ‘policy anti-bullying policy’ (Ferris, 2004:392), the same as a sexual or racial harassment policy (Union 2b). Table 5.1 is adapted from Khoo, 2010:66 and outlines phrases to be avoided by institutional representatives when dealing with targets of workplace bullying.
Table 5.1: Pitfalls to avoid in consultation with targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitfall</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid telling the target to snap out of it. “it is like telling a depressed person to get out of his depression”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling the target that he/she was just too sensitive will further victimize him/her. The sensitivity of the target is actually the insensitivity of the perpetrator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To comment that a target was obsessed with past incidents and could not “let go” means abdicating the bullies of responsibility for their wrongdoing. Bullying activities will continue even if the target is able to “let go” of the past. The target might enter a state of denial or ultimately ‘snap’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To suggest arranging for mediators to “diffuse conflicts” will not work in the case of workplace bullying. It just gives the bully an opportunity to put up a good front to deceive the mediator and to justify the bullying activities. Nonetheless, labour’s preventative mediation activity, such as Relationship by Objective, might be explored.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological abuse is not obvious to the naked eye. Each incident may appear petty and trivial in isolation but the pattern and progression of these events helps in the recognition of workplace mobbing. Psychosocial support from wellness must be utilised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To advise a target to submit to the bullying boss’s demands to keep the peace will not work. Bullies will not back away, they will continue until the target is completely eliminated. Confrontation and standing up to target’s human and legal rights will be a better approach. Bullies back away once they realize they cannot win or when their bullying activities are exposed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Khoo, 2010:66

6.5.5 Institutional Policies

The need for an effective mechanism to address workplace bullying was emphasised by the respondents. The main barrier between reporting bullying and the perceptions of doubt as to whether bullying exists, is very important. The perception that situations of maltreatment from bullying will not end can prevent targets from taking the necessary steps to expose it. As mentioned earlier, line managers have been labelled as bullies. Another effective mechanism, apart from the anti-bullying policy, is the disentanglement of human resources personnel and line management. This study recommends independent personnel to handle the claims of bullying in order:

- to strengthen and restore trust in the human resources personnel process;
- to formulate an anti-bullying policy that is effective;
- to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.
“We need a serious policy that is going to be reviewed on a yearly basis, you know; because if policies are designed; and they are not reviewed, time changes and issues change as well; so, we need that particular policy to be designed; and we need that policy to be implemented with immediate effect” (Union 2a).

The following table presents the respondents’ views on adopting a policy to combat workplace bullying.

### Table 5.2: Respondents advocating for policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union 1a</td>
<td>“Yea, it would be good”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 1b</td>
<td>“Yes, you must have policy supported by the protocol”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 2a</td>
<td>“We need to develop an anti-bullying policy; a policy that is designed to make sure that there is no one who can misuse their power against another”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings revealed that in countries such as Sweden, legislation has been adopted to ensure the health and safety of employees, beyond directly-observed occupational health and safety issues (Smit, 2014:7). Anti-bullying policy is perceived to control bullying behaviour. Findings reveal that the low level of bullying in Sweden is as a result of the strong anti-bullying policies that have been sustained through the help of politicians, professionals, parents and peers (Nordhagen et al., 2005:700).

Research has established the urgent need for institutions to address “bullying activities” by way of a policy, in order to empower HR professionals when investigating allegations of bullying (Cowan, 2011:308). The policies currently in place in NMMU lack the wording to address workplace bullying, which is a possible indication of a lack of commitment to a disciplinary process against bullies. Various reports from other countries have suggested that an anti-bullying policy is a reaction to bullying behaviour rather than a preventative measure (Cowan, 2011:309).

**6.5.6 What an Anti-Bullying Policy Should Contain**

The following paragraphs analyse the contents of an anti-bullying policy from the University of Sydney, which is named: The Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination-Prevention Policy, 2015. An anti-bullying policy should contain the word ‘bullying’ and it should cover specific
bullying behaviours. For example, the University of Sydney’s anti-bullying policy contains the following:

- What is bullying and what is not bullying;
- Consequences of breaching the policy;
- How the anti-bullying policy can be applied to other laws and policies, especially health and safety legislation;
- Entitlements of, and responsibilities to targets;
- Procedures relating to complaints and the training of HR personnel (The University of Sydney, 2016:6, 7, 10, 11, 12).

6.6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The initial intention of this study was to gather information from the victims of workplace bullying and to ascertain whether there is any relationship between bullying and racism. However, due to the sensitivity of the topic and working through the unions, thereby avoiding the staff members directly, it was suggested that this plan was inappropriate. The views of the unions turns out to be important as they are involved in a consultancy capacity in the process of drafting institutional policies.

It is suggested that future research covers a wider view of this topic across South African higher educational institutions in order to ascertain the nature and implications of workplace bullying. Any future study should include researching strategies that can deal positively with the phenomenon, in addition to a continuous evaluation of a strategic plan for addressing workplace bullying and an effective awareness campaign of the consequences of bullying. An area worth investing is the possible link between workplace bullying and systemic racism.
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National Education, Health & Allied Workers Union
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Summerstrand 6031

E-mail: nehawu@nmmu.ac.za
Tel No: 041 504 2063
Fax No: 041 504 1863

Date 30\textsuperscript{th} May 2016
Ref: (HI/16/ART/PGS-0010)
Contact person: Bosede O. Adesemowo
ATTN: Dep. Chairperson – (sandilempepo@nmnu.ac.za)

Dear Mr Mpepo

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting that aims to explore the
perceptions of workplace bullying in a South African higher education institution. As part of this
process I would like to interview you on your views on this subject.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in this
research, but if you do participate, you have the right to withdraw at any given time, during the
interview, without being penalised. Furthermore, the interview will be recorded, however, your
identity will at all times remain confidential; the results of the research study may be presented at
scientific conferences or in specialist publications. All information gathered during the study will
be kept strictly confidential; and all documents and digital recordings will be stored safely.

In order for you to participate in this study you will need to provide written consent that indicates
that you have been fully informed about your rights as a participant in this study. I have attached
in my research proposal the informed consent form you will have to sign.

The informed consent statement you will be asked to sign has been prepared in compliance with
the current statutory guidelines.

Yours sincerely,
Bosede O. Adesemowo

RESEARCHER
Mobile: 074 656 2679
Email: olaitana1@gmail.com
APPENDIX II: WRITTEN CONSENT TO NTEU

National Tertiary Education Union
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
South Campus
Summerstrand
E-mail: nteu@nmmu.ac.za
Tel No: 041 504 2462
Fax No: 041 9332
Date 30th May 2016
Ref: H/16/ART/PGS-0010
Contact person: Bosede O. Adesemowo
ATTN: Chairperson - NTEU (Lynette.Roodt@nmmu.ac.za)
Dear Mrs Lynette. Roodt

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting that aims to explore the perceptions of workplace bullying in a South African higher education institution. As part of this process I would like to interview you on your views on this subject.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in this research, but if you do participate, you have the right to withdraw at any given time, during the interview, without being penalised. Furthermore, the interview will be recorded, however, your identity will at all times remain confidential; the results of the research study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications. All information gathered during the study will be kept strictly confidential; and all documents and digital recordings will be stored safely.

In order for you to participate in this study you will need to provide written consent that indicates that you have been fully informed about your rights as a participant in this study. I have attached in my research proposal the informed consent form you will have to sign.

The informed consent statement you will be asked to sign has been prepared in compliance with the current statutory guidelines.

Yours sincerely,
Bosede O. Adesemowo
RESEARCHER
Mobile: 074 656 2679
Email: olaitana1@gmail.com
APPENDIX III: LETTER OF APPROVAL – NMU RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ref: H/16/ART/PGS-0010
09 September 2016
Mrs B O Adesemowo
School of ICT
North Campus
NMMU.

Dear Mrs Adesomowo

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Your above-entitled application for ethics approval served at the FPGSC Higher Degrees sub-committee of the Faculty of Arts Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee.

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee.

The Ethics clearance reference number is H/16/ART/PGS-0010, and is valid for three years, from 06 September 2016 – 06 September 2019. Please inform the FPGSC, via your supervisor, if any changes (particularly in the methodology) occur during this time. An annual affirmation to the effect that the protocols in use are still those for which approval was granted, will be required from you. You will be reminded timeously of this responsibility.

We wish you well with the project.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N Mongonyama
FACULTY ADMINISTRATOR

cc: Promoter/Supervisor
    HoD
    School Representative: Faculty FPGSC
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Michele van Niekerk, declare that I have done the language editing for the thesis of:

Bosede O. Adesemowo

entitled:

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela University.

I cannot guarantee that the changes that I have suggested have been implemented nor do I take responsibility for any other changes or additions that may have been made subsequently.

Any other queries related to the language and technical editing of this treatise may be directed to me at 076 481 8341.

Signed at Port Elizabeth on 13 November 2017

Mrs M van Niekerk