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Masters Degree in Organisational Psychology University of the Witwatersrand

Faculty of Humanities

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Workplace bullying, personality and work engagement among South African employees

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities.

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

July 2017

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or another university.

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Tasneem Omar (442305)

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Date

Abstract

Workplace bullying is an unfortunate occurrence within organisations and has become a prevalent area of interest. However, research on workplace bullying and specifically its effect on work engagement within a South African context is rare. Additionally, research on the relationship between workplace bullying and personality traits is limited to the Big Five personality traits. This research thus broadened its range from the Big Five personality traits and focused on neuroticism, assertiveness, optimism, pessimism and hardiness. The research further assessed the moderating effect of personality on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The sample consisted of 200 white collar employees over the age of 18 that was obtained using a volunteer, snowball sampling method. The responses were obtained using survey methodology, which led to the cross-sectional nature of the study. Analyses of results were completed using a Pearson's product moment correlation analysis and a moderated multiple regression analysis. The results from the Pearson's product moment correlation mainly supported the hypotheses, however there were findings that countered the hypotheses, mainly assertiveness as this proved to be the most unexpected finding. The results from the moderated multiple regression showed that only neuroticism and pessimism moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement as opposed to assertiveness, optimism and hardiness that did not. The findings of this research thus contribute to the limited body of South African research investigating different personality types moderating the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement.

“IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT IS DONE” – NELSON MANDELA

FOR MY DAD

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Firstly I would like to humbly thank the Almighty for blessing me with the ability and the knowledge to complete my years of study and this thesis.

To my mother, my best friend, without you I would not be half the woman I am. Thank you for always being by my side and supporting me from strength to strength and for never faltering from my side. For your unwavering support, reassuring words and guidance, I am forever grateful. I love you.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Research has revealed that workplace bullying has become increasingly prevalent over the last 20 years and has become a concern in organisations (Beale & Hoel, 2010). Even though research is limited on workplace bullying in South African organisations, it is still an unfortunate occurrence. Bullying in the workplace can be identified as an extreme social stressor that leads to psychosomatic, psychological and physiological problems in an individual (Dehue, Bolman, Vollink, & Pouwelse, 2012). As a result of being bullied, individuals are likely to have a low self-esteem and tend to show anxiety in social situations (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012). Not only does bullying have a negative effect on the individual, it may subsequently have a detrimental effect on the organisation. Employees who are being bullied may show lower job satisfaction and display little or no motivation or engagement with their work (Dehue et al., 2012). Additionally, individuals may show extreme cases of withdrawal and turnover intentions (Houshmand, O'Reily, Robinson, & Wolff, 2012). Organisational costs of bullying may result in lower productivity and increased sick leave, as well as reduced commitment and increased willingness to leave the organisation (Einarsen, 2000). The effects on individuals and organisations are so severe that a study should be conducted on factors that are implicated due to perceptions of bullying in order to attempt to reduce the impact of bullying on individuals and organisations.

One of the factors that is perceived to have a major impact on the perceptions of workplace bullying is personality. Personality traits of victims of bullying include, but are not limited to: high levels of neuroticism, low levels of assertiveness, increased hardiness, a tendency towards lower optimism and increased pessimism, and these will be the traits of interest in the current study.

The present study aims to bridge the gap in South Africa between the above mentioned personality traits and their effect on perceptions of workplace bullying and subsequently the effect of workplace outcomes, more specifically the outcome of work engagement.

1.2 Defining workplace bullying

Workplace bullying constitutes repeated, deliberate, humiliating actions on an employee, that is unwanted by the victim and essentially creates an adverse working environment and leads to an interference in the employee's level of job satisfaction (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003).

Workplace bullying can be defined as "a situation in which one or more persons systematically and over a long period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative treatment on the part of one or more persons, in a situation in which the target has difficulty in defending themselves against the action" (Nielsen, Hetland, Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2012, p. 38). Negative treatment is seen as being the perception of inappropriate, negative, significant and unreasonable actions compared to trivial behaviour in the organisation (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013). In saying that; an individual needs to perceive the action as negative. If an individual does not perceive the behaviour to be bullying or if the behaviour has no significant negative effect on the individual, it cannot be constituted as bullying. In addition, bullying behaviour is seen as a subjective perception and can vary from individual to individual (Branch et al., 2013). There is no definite definition of what constitutes bullying behaviour. It can be an array of behaviours from different people onto the victim of such behaviour. In most instances, bullying behaviour involves being socially excluded, being laughed at and most commonly, being exposed to verbal hostility, spreading of rumours, threatening and belittling a person (Nielsen et al., 2012; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Notelaers, Baillien, De Witte, Einarsen & Vermunt, 2012).

Workplace bullying is influenced by many factors in organisational and social contexts, however there are two main types of incidents of bullying that occur, i.e. dispute-related bullying and predatory bullying (Einarsen, 1999).

Dispute related bullying arises from interpersonal conflict and interpersonal disputes within the organisation (Einarsen, 1999). There are three kinds of dispute related bullying; namely, aggressive behaviours that are used as tactics in interpersonal conflict, malingering as a tactic and resentment towards perceived wrongdoing or unfair treatment by one's opponent (Einarsen, 1999). Even though interpersonal struggles and conflicts are natural in all human interactions, and must not be considered as workplace bullying, there is a fine line between fights that occur between two parties in an interpersonal conflict and aggressive behaviour that is used in bullying (Einarsen, 1999).

Predatory bullying on the other hand refers to incidences whereby the victim has not done anything to provoke the bully however; an individual is abusing their power on the victim and as a result will take advantage of the victim by exploiting their vulnerability (Einarsen, 1999). Victims of predatory bullying may belong to certain out-groups and may be seen as an easy target of frustration and stress that has been caused by other factors within the organisation (Einarsen, 1999). Examples of predatory bullying include being exposed to a leadership style that is mainly aggressive, being singled out and acting out of prejudices towards or against these individuals (Einarsen, 1999). Therefore, dispute-related bullying is seen as negative acts towards a person in which the person responds by bullying their opponent (Upton, 2010). Whereas, predatory bullying is behaviour that is exhibited on a victim for no apparent reason (Upton, 2010).

1.2.1 Predispositions to workplace bullying

Mental or psychological health problems may be seen as one of the factors that place employees at a risk of being bullied in an organisation as these employees are usually depressed (Nielsen et al., 2012), and will perceive their environment more negatively than their peers. Such a negative outlook on their environment is one of the leading factors that cause individuals to be bullied in the workplace and labelling oneself as a victim of bullying usually stems from resulting mental health problems. Due to the fact that these individuals perceive their work environment in a slightly more negative way, they will perceive the slightest rudeness from a superior or colleague as workplace bullying and thus label themselves as victims thereof (Nielsen et al., 2012).

Predispositions of bullying can also be narrowed down to a victim's perception of negative acts and their reactions toward perceived negative acts (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003). Individuals who generally perceive higher levels of bullying in the workplace usually react in a more negative way and display more severe emotional reactions such as helplessness, anxiety, fear, depression and shock (Jennifer et al., 2003). Additionally, personality tests have shown that individuals, who are already naturally fearful and anxious in general, are more likely to perceive encounters with persons in a higher position of power as hostile, negative and as workplace bullying, even if it is not perceived by others as such (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). Therefore, it can be said that the severity of the encounter experienced by a victim of bullying depends alot on how the victim perceives the situation and the initial personality of the individual before they have experienced perceived bullying (Zapf &

Einarsen, 2003). Therefore this explains why certain victims experience higher levels of stress and anxiety due to encounters of perceived workplace bullying as opposed to others.

1.2.2 Consequences of workplace bullying

Exposure to systematic and long-lasting abusive and aggressive behaviours in the workplace may lead to a host of negative health effects in the target, e.g. illnesses relating to stress, insomnia and severe, long-term psychological trauma as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004). Victims of workplace bullying reported that they feel anxious, helpless and fearful which may be a leading cause of depression (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004).

In addition to workplace bullying leading to increased levels of psychological issues in individuals, it is seen to result in somatic complaints such as fatigue and muscle-skeletal pains, as well as problems with sleeping patterns and a lack of concentration (Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen, & Mageroy, 2015). Additionally, if the bullying behaviour on an individual is perceived as being extremely negative or traumatic over a long period of time, it may result in cases of post-traumatic stress disorders in an individual which ultimately affects the way in which they are able to go on with their daily routines (Nielsen et al., 2015; Wilkins, 2014).

Further, the negative effects that result from workplace bullying suggest that the victims suffer severely from bullying in the long term (Upton, 2010). Ultimately, the end result for many individuals who are exposed to workplace bullying is job loss. A study in the United States showed that 82% of individuals who were bullied lost their jobs, 44% of which left involuntarily, whereas, 38% left voluntarily (Namie, 2000, as cited in Upton, 2010). This job loss may be due to the stress that the victims experience, continuous negative effects or due to the fact that the victim sees no other way of dealing with and resolving the issue due to the organisation ignoring the problem or taking the side of the bully (Upton, 2010).

Not only does workplace bullying have an effect on the victims of the act, it has an effect on the witnesses as well (Vartia, 2001). In a study conducted, witnesses of bullying showed more health symptoms as opposed to individuals working in organisations in which no one was bullied (Vartia, 2001). Of those individuals who witnessed bullying, 34% reported that they had sleeping problems, as opposed to 19% of those who reported no bullying in their organisation (Vartia, 2001). The same trend was also seen, for physiological symptoms such

as headache, strain, fatigue, and lack of energy (Vartia, 2001). The current study however does not focus on the witnesses of bullying and as such will not be discussed further.

1.3 Workplace bullying in South Africa

A study conducted in 2000 conducted by the Work Dignity Institute found that approximately 77.8% of South Africans have been a victim of workplace bullying (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). As per the date of the article and date stipulated in the article that the research was conducted by Cunniff and Mostert (2012), there were no further, more recent studies on workplace bullying in the South African context, to the researcher's knowledge. A few studies examined the differences in socio-demographic groups and their experience to workplace bullying which is important because the South African workforce is composed of multicultural and multiracial individuals and as such, these should be studied as well (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). The study aimed to create awareness amongst employers and employees to the prevalence of workplace bullying by conducting a study on overall bullying. The results showed that 31.1% of individuals stated that they were always bullied and 4% of individuals were often bullied (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

A small body of research on workplace bullying was conducted and completed by Steinman (2003) which was aimed at providing some sort of research on the nature of workplace bullying. According to Steinman (2003) workplace bullying had reached abnormal levels. During the period of 1998-1999, an internet communication survey was conducted and the response rate showed that 78% of the individuals stated that they had been bullied at least once during their careers (Steinman, 2003). During 2001, workplace bullying research was conducted at a large organisation (Steinman, 2003). The organisation was facing some serious restructuring and the employees were unsure of whether or not they would be keeping their jobs. The sample consisted of employees in the lower levels of the hierarchical structure and was representative of the demographics of the population. The results of the study showed that 68% of the respondents reported excessive levels of stress but not only due to workplace bullying. However, results from the study showed that 10% of the respondents experienced physical threats daily and 2.5% were physically attacked daily (Steinman, 2003). This situation is common and may result from an organisation that is undergoing restructuring. However, in the current study it is not known to the researcher whether or not any of the organisations have undergone restructuring but it may have been a possibility.

Based on the above information pertaining to the lack of research found by the researcher on workplace bullying in South African organisations, the present study aims to bridge the gap in research relating to workplace bullying among South African white collar employees.

1.4 Toward a better understanding of workplace bullying

There are various models that are used to describe and understand workplace bullying, however, for purposes of this study, the transactional model will be used.

1.4.1 The Transactional Model

Workplace bullying is a perceived stressor in the environment that an employee is faced with. Lazarus (1966) indicated that stress occurs when an individual is faced with demands that exceed available resources that are used to deal effectively with those demands. Attention has been drawn to the fact that each individual will appraise a perceived stressful situation differently and the extent to which a particular individual will react to the stressors in his/her environment.

Stress is seen as an individual phenomenon and as a result of the transaction between the person and the situation that they are in (Cox & Mackay, 1981; Lazarus, 1966). The transaction process that occurs has an active and adaptive nature and results in an interaction between an individual and their environment (Cox & Mackay, 1981). An individual is continually being faced with demands from the situation and it is up to the individual to find ways in which to deal or cope with the stressors that they are faced with.

Each individual is unique in their responses to stress as they are presented to them in their environment. In order to conceptualise workplace bullying in this study, the transactional model is used, whereby bullying is the stressful situation/demand that individuals are faced with in the organisational environment. Therefore, like stress, bullying can be considered against a background of the transactional model where bullying is a part of a dynamic transaction between an individual and their environment (Cox, 1978).

The first stage of the transactional model is the demand stage (Cox & Mackay, 1981). Demand is characterised in two ways; i.e. perceived demand and actual demand. Perceived demand is a subjective concept because this is determined by how threatening the demand is believed to be by the individual (Cox & Mackay, 1981). On the other hand, an actual demand is an objective construct because it is an accurate estimate of how threatening the demand from the environment is on an individual (Cox & Mackay, 1981). Furthermore, the capabilities of an individual in relation to a particular demand are present in this stage of the

model. This refers to characteristics or behavioural patterns which allows an individual to deal with the stressor (Cox & Mackay, 1981). With regard to the current study, workplace bullying is a perceived demand as it is a negative act that is perceived as being harmful by an individual. As such, it is not necessarily an actual demand if it cannot be objectively categorised as harmful by everyone else in the organisation.

The second stage of the transactional model matches the perceived demands with the perceived capabilities in the first stage in order to expand on appraisal of the demand. This link is characterised by "balance and imbalance". A balance arises when an individual perceives their capabilities to be sufficient to deal with the demand at hand (Cox & Mackay, 1981). An imbalance or stress arises when an individual experiences an imbalance between demands and capabilities in that the demands they are faced with exceeds their perception of their given capabilities (Cox & Mackay, 1981). Within the context of the present study, the way in which an individual perceives the bullying demand and his/her capability to deal with it will determine the extent to which they feel capable or incapable of dealing with the bullying and therefore more or less threatened or stressed by the demand.

Within the second stage of the transactional model, an individual's cognitive appraisal of the perceived demand is important in order for the individual to be able to use their personality traits to cope effectively with the perceived demand as it has been appraised by the individual. The transactional model therefore looks at three types of cognitive appraisals of the situation; primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). Primary appraisal evaluates the relevance of the encounter to the individual, i.e. how relevant perceived workplace bullying is to the individual. There are three types of these evaluations. Firstly, an irrelevant encounter is one which has no significance to the individual and is thus ignored (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). Secondly, a benign-positive encounter is one that is seen as beneficial to the individual (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). Thirdly, a stressful encounter is one that is seen to be threatening, harmful or challenging (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). If an encounter is perceived as stressful by an individual and brings about some sort of emotion, they are said to have a stake in the encounter (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). If an individual has a stake in the encounter, the transactional model proposes that they will move onto secondary appraisal. Secondary appraisal focuses on the coping options available for the individual (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). Coping is seen as a dynamic process as it is an encounter process between the individual and the environment and it is essential to appraise the situation as either being threatening, harmful or a challenge (Laubmeier, Zakowski, &

Bair, 2004). There is no fixed way of coping with stressful situations as it depends on the primary appraisal of the situation (Laubmeier et al., 2004). The individual's coping mechanism will be determined by their perception of the encounter. Personality in the current study is a moderator variable and can intervene between the experience of stress appraisal and symptoms that may arise by making it easier to cope with the stressor. When personality acts as a stress moderator, it operates by means of a secondary appraisal by interrupting any harmful psychological or physiological perceptions of, or responses to stressors. Lastly, reappraisal is the feedback process whereby the changes in the primary and secondary appraisal arise via the reactions and coping mechanisms of the individual and environmental counter reactions (Perrewe & Zellers, 1999).

Experiences of stress is then accompanied by certain subjective responses of the individual which in turn uses resources made available to the individual, usually psychological or behavioural to deal with the stressor. This is the third stage of the transactional model which is the coping stage (Cox & Mackay, 1981). The variable, personality (under investigation in this study) is not a direct part of the transactional model, however, in this study; the personality of an individual is the resource/response of an individual to the demands that they are faced with. Personality traits can affect the individual's ability to cope by influencing the appraisal of the demand or directly in terms of perceived capacity to deal with the demand situation, that is, the bullying within the context of this study (Lazarus, 1966). In relation to the current study, the way in which an individual is able to cope with perceptions of workplace bullying is dependent on the level of the personality trait that is portrayed within them. Thus for example, it may be suggested that individuals higher on neuroticism and pessimism may not be able to cope well with perceptions of workplace bullying as opposed to individuals lower on neuroticism and lower on pessimism (optimism). Additionally, individuals higher on assertiveness, hardiness and optimism may be able to cope better with perceptions of workplace bullying as opposed to individuals lower on assertiveness, hardiness and lower on optimism (pessimism).

This leads to the fourth stage of the transactional model, consequences, which are shaped by the extent to which demand is appraised as threatening by an individual and the perceived ability of an individual to deal with the stressor (Bernstein, 1992). This stage of the model was proposed by Chalmers (1981), who stated that only those consequences that are perceived by the individual are relevant to the stress that is experienced by that individual (Chalmers, 1981). Stress or threat occurs and becomes prevalent when the consequences of

failure to meet the demands are important to an individual (Chalmers, 1981). On the other hand, if the consequence of one's actions meets the demands that the individual is faced with, the stress is eliminated (Chalmers, 1981).

Consequences are moulded by a number of factors, namely, the degree of the actual demand, the degree to which an individual appraised the demand as threatening and the individual's perceived ability to cope with the demand or stressor (Bernstein, 1992). Therefore an individual will determine the extent to which they have been successful in coping with a demanding/stressful situation that was perceived as threatening (Bernstein, 1992). Thereafter, based on whether or not the individual perceived the consequences of the resources they used for coping as successful or not, will determine whether or not the perceived stressors will have an impact on the individual as a strain (Bernstein, 1992).

Additionally, consequences have been divided into actual and perceived consequences (Chalmers, 1981). Importance however was placed on perceived consequences (Chalmers, 1981). Therefore, if the perceived consequences of one's actions, namely, responses to stress, met the perceived demands that arise from a situation, then experiences of stress are relieved (Bernstein, 1992). On the other hand however, if the perceived consequences with regard to one's responses to stress are not sufficient or inadequate to meet the perceived demands of a situation, then stress is not relieved (Bernstein, 1992). In this case, there will be a continuation of the stressor on the individual and the continued stress will thus lead to more strain on an individual (Bernstein, 1992). In relation to the current study and this stage of the transactional model, the responses to stress are the personality traits of the individuals concerned. If these personality traits (high levels of neuroticism, high levels of pessimism, low levels of hardiness and assertiveness) do not help an individual meet the perceived demands, that is, perceived workplace bullying, then the stress is not relieved in that these individuals will continue being victims of perceived workplace bullying. On the other hand if the specific personality traits (low levels of neuroticism, high levels of assertiveness, high levels of hardiness and high levels of optimism) are adequate in coping with the perceived demand (perceived workplace bullying), then these individuals will cease to be victims of perceived workplace bullying as they are able to cope with the stressor.

The effects of the consequences in the fourth stage lead to the fifth and final stage of the transactional model which is feedback (Cox, 1978). Feedback can occur at any stage of the transactional model and can affect the outcomes at any stage of the model (Cox, 1978). Feedback can either be positive or negative (Chalmers, 1981). If feedback is positive, an

individual will feel as if the perceived capability he or she has used to deal with the stressor is appropriate, the demand is then perceived as less threatening or possibly even eliminated. However, if the feedback is negative, an individual will feel as if they have not dealt effectively with the demand which will result in an individual feeling more stressed by the exposure to the stressor as they see that their methods of coping are ineffectual and their cognitive appraisal of stress heightens (Chalmers, 1981).

After the above discussion of the transactional model, it is important to note that an important part of the model is the interaction or the relationship between the different levels and stages (Cox & Mackay, 1981) and this will be diagrammatically represented below (Figure 1, p. 11).

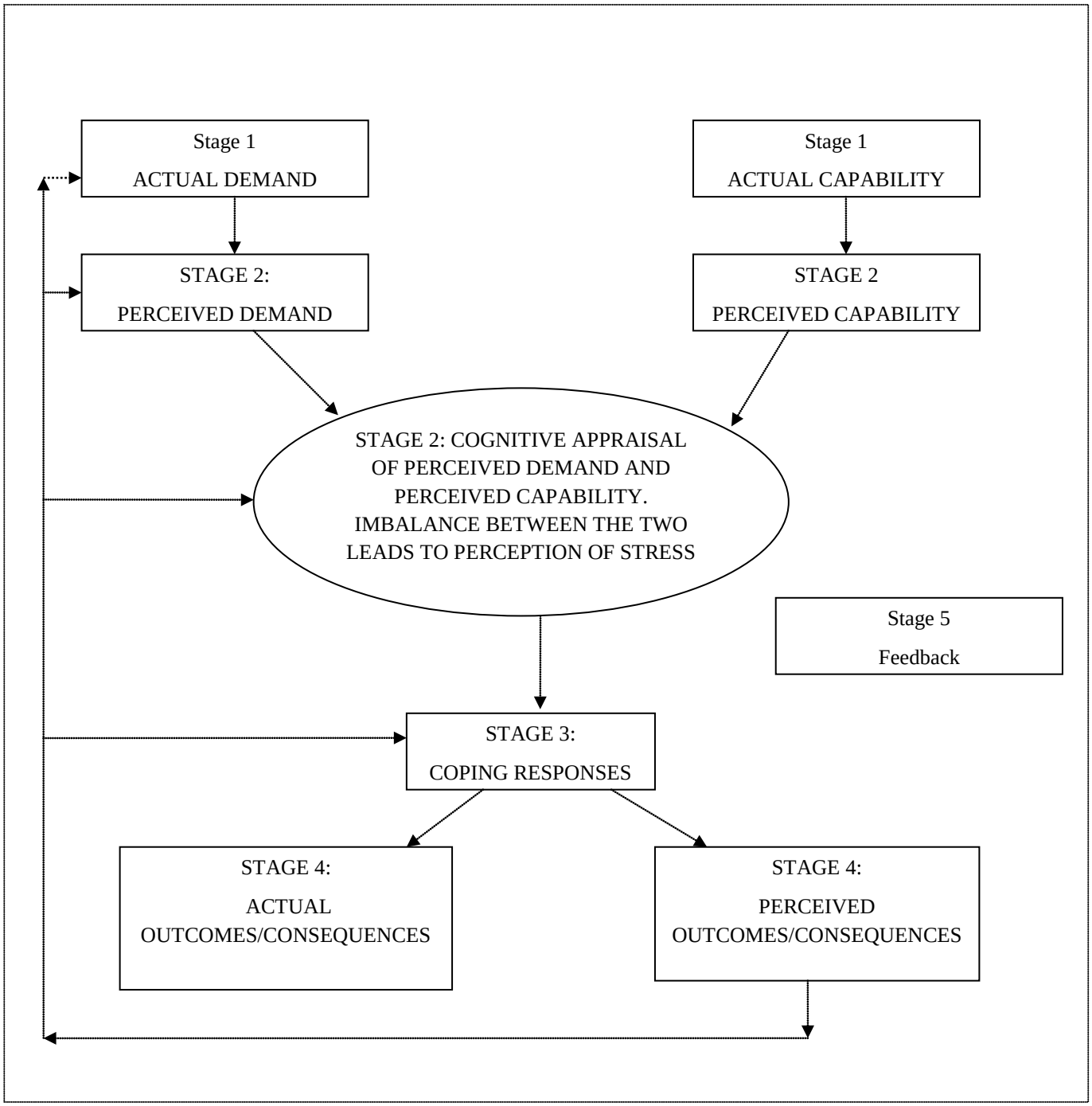

Figure 1*: The Transactional Model*

(Adapted from Cox & Mackay, 1981; Bernstein, 2013).

1.5 Personality as a coping resource and moderator

Personality is characterised as a dynamic organisation inside the individual that creates the individual's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015). It is an important variable in the current study as there is strong evidence for a relationship between workplace bullying and certain personality traits (Balducci, Fraccaroli, & Schaufeli, 2011). Individual characteristics or traits such as personality interact with the environment to influence adjustment to the environment (Calvete, Orue, & Guadix, 2016). Therefore individuals with the inability to adjust to their environment portray maladaptive traits which may lead to depression and anxiety and ultimately victimisation (Calvete et al., 2016). Personality factors thus have been proposed as moderators of the effects perceived by the environment on psychological and physiological health, wellbeing and adjustment and as such influence the appraisal of the environmental stressor, which in this case is workplace bullying. Personality is a means for an individual to appraise the stressor and utilise the responses of a given trait to cope with the perceived stressor (Calvete et al., 2016). In the current study, personality is proposed to act as a moderator of the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement (Figure 2, p. 13). The personality of the victim can change the way in which they perceive bullying which in turn will have implications for their levels of work engagement. Personality may thus act as a buffer or a means of coping for the victim experiencing perceived levels of bullying.

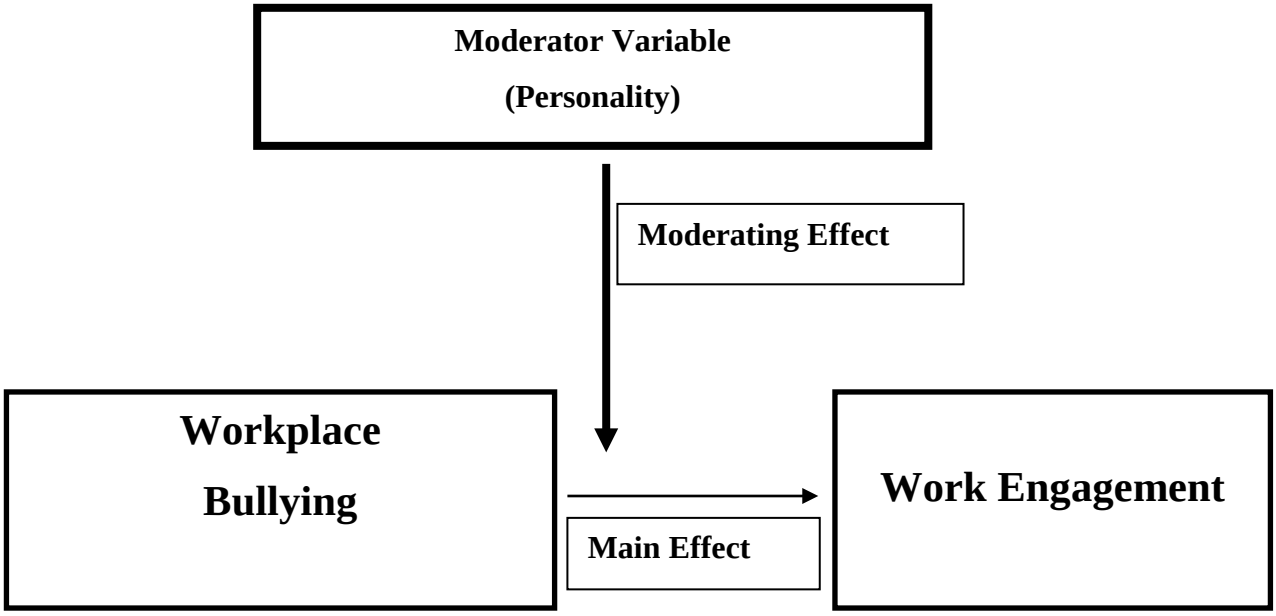

Figure 2*: Moderating effect of personality on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement*

It has been argued that victims of workplace bullying are selected on the basis of their personality traits due to the bully seeing certain weaknesses within the personality of the victim, e.g. tendency to avoid conflict and the inability to cope (Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000).

According to Nielsen and Knardahl (2015), workplace bullying is based on the disposition of certain individuals which gives rise to the "target-behaviour mechanism". According to this mechanism, employees with certain dispositions tend to violate the status quo, annoy their colleagues with their behaviour and may even go against social norms of being polite and friendly to those around them, and as a result may elicit negative and perceived aggressive behaviour from other individuals (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). Therefore, while some traits may lead to individuals being victimised, other personality traits can act as a buffer and will thus save them from negative behaviour. In relation to the current study, traits that may lead an individual to being victimised are pessimism, lower levels of hardiness and assertiveness and higher levels of neuroticism. On the other hand, traits that may act as a buffer are optimism, higher levels of assertiveness and hardiness and lower levels of neuroticism.

Individuals that are able to use their personality traits to their advantage as a buffer are more able than their counterparts to avoid negative physical, psychological and behavioural changes that arise from experiencing perceived workplace bullying (Nielsen et al., 2012).

Therefore, personality in the current study may act as one such buffer of, or a resource against perceived workplace bullying on individuals and thus affects their levels of work engagement.

As previously mentioned, victims of bullying display certain personality traits which make them more or less susceptible to bullying and the manner in which they perceive bullying (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). A number of personality variables have been identified in the literature as important when it comes to perceiving and coping with stress in general and bullying in particular. For example, individuals that display higher levels of assertiveness, hardiness, optimism and lower levels of neuroticism as personality traits are perceived to experience lower levels of workplace bullying and their work engagement is therefore expected not to be adversely affected. On the other hand, individuals higher on levels of pessimism, neuroticism and lower on assertiveness are perceived to view workplace bullying as harmful and negative and will therefore show decreased levels in work engagement. Therefore the current study will examine these different personality traits and their perceptions of workplace bullying, which will later assist in determining which personality traits are more susceptible to being bullied. The personality traits under investigation in the current study are: neuroticism, assertiveness, hardiness and optimism and pessimism and will be unpacked further hereafter.

1.5.1 Neuroticism

Neuroticism as a personality trait makes individuals vulnerable to a wide range of psychopathology and victimisation (Calvete et al., 2016). As such, individuals who have high levels of neuroticism may respond to perceived bullying behaviour or perceived victimisation with higher levels of distress which causes them to develop depressive or social anxiety symptoms (Calvete et al., 2016). Such symptoms may then render an individual unable to cope or deal with perceived bullying behaviour. As a personality trait, neuroticism is typically associated with anxiety, fearfulness and emotional reactivity (Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2012) as well as the tendency to avoid negative confrontation when faced with it (Lind, Glaso, Pallesen, & Einarsen, 2009).

Neuroticism consists of aspects surrounding negative affect such as anxiety, irritability, anger, hostility and vulnerability (Ormel et al., 2013). Therefore it may be theorised that neuroticism is a tendency to experience factors of negative affect especially when threatened (Ormel et al., 2013). Based on this theory, neurotic individuals may not only be more reactive to bullying but may also be the best targets for bullying because they are perceived as being

vulnerable in addition to their perceived negative self-image (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001) and will therefore retreat due to their inability to cope with perceived workplace bullying.

It is also an indicator of whether an individual can be relaxed and stable or get easily upset and the degree of emotional stability with which individuals are able to deal with stressful situations (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). Individuals high on neuroticism are perceived to be emotionally unstable and unable to deal effectively with stressful situations. Neurotic individuals tend to get upset very easily which may elicit aggressive behaviour from others, making these individuals more likely victims of bullying (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). These individuals may also perceive any negative behaviour as harmful and their emotional instability may make them targets of workplace bullying.

Individuals who have lower levels of neuroticism may have a higher self-esteem, higher levels of emotional stability and lower feelings of anxiety, and as such enables them to cope with negative behaviour in the workplace, which results in lower perceptions of workplace bullying (Vartia, 1996).

Additionally, neuroticism is reported to be associated with locus of control (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). Individuals with lower levels of neuroticism have a higher internal locus of control, which means that they can influence their events and outcomes (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). Such individuals are less anxious and vulnerable to perceived negative situations that occur in their environments because they know that they will be able to control it to avoid any effect that the situation may have on their well-being. A higher locus of control is associated with more emotional stability and as a result, individuals lower on neuroticism will experience lower levels of perceived workplace bullying as such negative events may not have an impact on them as they are equipped to face a perceived perpetrator, as opposed to individuals with higher levels of neuroticism.

1.5.2 Assertiveness

Assertive individuals are tough and dominant but still maintain a level of respect with other individuals in an organisation or a social setting (Jacobson, Hood, & Van Buren, 2013). Individuals high in assertiveness, are goal orientated, take control of their environment, value competition, success and progress, are expressive and place an emphasis on results rather than relationships (Jacobson et al., 2013). Assertiveness includes exercising one's own rights, respecting the same behaviour in other individuals and dealing with issues at an early stage (Kumar, Jain, & Kumar, 2012). Victims high on assertiveness will therefore be more able to

stand up for themselves against a bully because they are able to exercise their rights and are prepared to assert themselves against perpetrators (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2005). In order to cope with perceptions of bullying, individuals high on assertiveness take control of their environment and have an "eat or be eaten" mentality (Jacobson et al., 2013). Therefore, these individuals will be able to take charge of a negative situation and use this mentality as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, assertive individuals tend to confront the perceived bully or talk to the bully to find a solution regarding perceived negative behaviour in order to deal effectively with it (Djurkovic et al., 2005). Therefore individuals higher on assertiveness are able to cope and deal better with perceived negative acts as opposed to individuals lower on assertiveness which makes them less prone to be victims of bullying. Assertiveness therefore takes the form of an active coping strategy whereby an individual engages with and attempts to confront their stress (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016); which in the current study is perceptions of workplace bullying.

It is important to distinguish between assertiveness and aggression because aggression is often confused with assertiveness as it is thought of being the same concept. However, even though aggression is a type of assertiveness, it is unhealthy for the victim and for the organisation if assertiveness turns into aggression. Studies on workplace bullying, assertiveness and aggression have shown that cultures that are higher in assertiveness will have more aggression and as such make them prime targets for workplace bullying (Jacobson et al., 2013). However these individuals will be able to defend themselves and find a means with which to cope and in some cases, retaliate. On the other hand, low-assertive cultures manifest bullying in a way that is less visible and that individuals may engage in forms of hostile behaviour to hide the way they feel or any negative intentions (Jacobson et al., 2013). Bernstein and Trimm (2016) state that if an individual is strongly assertive, he/she may cross the boundary of what is perceived as assertion and cross over into what may be perceived as aggression. In some cases, being aggressive against a bully may lead the perpetrator to give up on harassing the victim, but in some instances, it may aggravate the bully even further which then leads to a confrontational, destructive interaction between the bully and the victim (Upton, 2009, as cited in Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Assertiveness can be seen as a productive coping strategy, however if it becomes excessive it will deteriorate into aggression, which may be counterproductive (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

As the cost of workplace bullying to an organisation is tremendous and the impact of such behaviours can be devastating which results in victims suffering from mental, physical and

psychological effects which are ultimately long term, assertiveness as a trait becomes important to resist being bullied. Individuals who are being bullied or who perceive the negative behaviour on them to constitute as bullying are often too scared to speak out. Townsend (2008) recommends that for any organisation to be effective and efficient, they need to encourage employees to learn how to be assertive because assertive individuals are equipped with a personality trait that renders them, more than others, able to cope with perceptions of workplace bullying or any sort of negative act displayed toward them. Additionally, victims high on assertiveness will be more likely to defend themselves when confronted by a bully and therefore, should be more inclined to perceive the situation as less harmful as opposed to a victim that is low in assertiveness.

1.5.3 Optimism

Optimism is defined by Scheier and Carver (1987), as the generalized expectation that good things will happen. According to Mishra (2013, p. 76), optimism is "a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future- one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable or to his or her advantage." The effects of optimism can be explained by a higher self-esteem and a greater appreciation of one's work and social environment which will generate a protective, positive affect that translates feeling threatened into feeling challenged (Desrumaux et al., 2015). Optimism also predicts self-determination and the need for satisfaction in order to cope which translates into improved well-being for individuals (Desrumaux et al., 2015). Optimism can either be viewed as trait-like or state-like. If it is viewed as trait-like, it is considered to be dispositional (Mishra, 2013). Dispositional optimism is referred to as a stable dimension of individuals in that there are differences with regard to favourable versus unfavourable outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985, as cited in Mishra, 2013). Therefore, dispositional optimism is a personality variable in that it is also regarded as relatively stable and shows enduring characteristics in an individual (Maddi, 1996, as cited in Mishra, 2013). On the other hand, as a state, optimism is an individual characteristic that is possessed at varying degrees at different times (Mishra, 2013). Therefore, state-like optimism is momentary and occurs at different times at different levels.

Individuals who are optimistic show more active methods of problem solving and coping with stressful situations than pessimists; who are avoidant of and may escape any situation that may come across as stressful or threatening (Carver, Lehman, & Antoni, 2003). Optimistic individuals are also more likely to yield a mix of emotions that are usually

positive and always expect situations to have a positive outcome (Mishra, 2013). Higher levels of optimism in individuals are related to better physical and mental health and they display the most effective coping strategies when dealing with stress (Mishra, 2013).

Optimism is associated with high levels of coping and managing symptoms of perceived negative behaviour (Andersson, 1996). Therefore, individuals with high levels of optimism that are faced with perceived workplace bullying will be able to acknowledge these symptoms because they are able to pick it up and thereafter deal and cope with it effectively.

As a personality trait, optimism has been found to be a significant moderator of stress levels (Burke et al., 2000, as cited in Mishra, 2013). A causal link has been established between optimism and physical well-being because of the use of more effective coping strategies and higher resilience that are adopted by optimists when dealing with stressful events (Mishra, 2013; Yew, Lim, Haw, & Gan, 2015). Targets with high levels of optimism will therefore be less likely to experience workplace bullying as a threat because of their propensity to effectively deal with events they perceive as stressors because of their displays of high self esteem and effective coping skills (Mishra, 2013; Yew et al., 2015). Additionally, optimists are individuals that are liked more by their peers and have fewer negative social interactions, hence social support assists individuals to adjust to and cope with perceived stressful events in the workplace (Brissette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002).

1.5.4 Pessimism

Pessimism is identified as a risk factor in individuals and is related to poorer psychological and physical health (Kubanzansky, Sparrow, Vokonas, & Kawachi, 2001). A pessimistic style has been seen to link to hopelessness in individuals and is marked by the idea that the problems that these individuals are faced with are permanent and that there is no solution to the problems faced by individuals (Kubanzansky et al., 2001).

It has been stated that pessimism is linked to avoidant and escaping strategies when being faced with stressful situations (Carver et al., 2003). Pessimistic individuals give up on themselves and their goals, and tend to withdraw from life completely by becoming depressed and anxious (Carver et al., 2003). Pessimists tend to be more wary of future events and they tend to withdraw from any task that requires them to put in effort toward reaching a goal (Wrosch, Jobin, & Scheier, 2016). They also tend to expect negative outcomes from every situation and have the tendency to develop negative feelings such as anxiety, anger and guilt (Mishra, 2013). Characteristics of pessimists also include sadness, hopelessness and

feeling sombre as well as a lack of self-determination and motivation (Desrumaux et al., 2015). These individuals will also show decreased levels of self-esteem and have been shown to experience negative stress and will use more passive forms of coping and withdrawal in relation to stressful events (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003).

The question may sometimes arise regarding whether pessimism is always a bad trait in individuals. To explain this, Cantor & Norem (1989) defined the concept defensive pessimism. Defensive pessimism pertains to a coping style in which individuals expect outcomes to be more negative than what the outcome actually will be (Cantor & Norem, 1989). Defensive pessimism may be useful as it will act as a buffer in individuals against failure or stressful situations should they occur (Cantor & Norem, 1989). Additionally, it may help an individual cope, because the worry over the stressful event may help them cope better as the anticipated worry prompts a coping mechanism and action to be taken against the perceived stressful event in these individuals (Cantor & Norem, 1989).The performance of defensive pessimists therefore tend to be better than that of real pessimists whose negative expectations are anchored in prior failure (Cantor & Norem, 1989).

After the aforementioned, it can be concluded that pessimists may experience higher levels of perceived bullying in the workplace because they are less likely to be able to effectively cope with situations they perceive as being stressful and harmful (Wrosch et al., 2016), in addition to being perceived as weak and therefore more likely targets.

1.5.5 Hardiness

Hardiness as a trait is made up of a combination of the "three C's"; commitment, control and challenge, which work together to change a stressful situation from a disaster into an opportunity (Maddi, 2006). Commitment is the means by which the hardy individual's curiosity about a sense and meaningfulness of life is captured (Kobasa, Maddi, & Courington, 1981). Individuals that show high levels of commitment have a positive outlook toward their jobs and they believe that they make a positive impact on undesirable events and consequences (Salari, 2014). According to Maddi (2007), the positive impacts to negative events are seen as a means for potential growth.

Control describes the belief that an individual has to influence the way in which events occur around them as opposed to having no sense of power (Kobasa et al., 1981). Individuals believe that it is their initiative that will help in finding resources and solutions for personal

and professional problems and as such converts stressful situations into learning lessons (Salari & Zeinalipour, 2014).

Lastly, challenge encapsulates the notion that it is normal for one's environment to change and to develop from those changes (Kobasa et al., 1981). These changes are said to enhance an individual and increase their health, which results in continuous personal and professional growth (Salari & Zeinalipour, 2014).

These three concepts equip the individual with the courage and motivation to use hardiness to transform stressful situations into performance advantages (Salim, Wadey, & Diss, 2015). According to Maddi (2002), commitment, control and challenge centre around three cognitions; social support, positive health practices and transformational coping. With regard to transformational coping, an individual high in hardiness will take progressive steps to deal with the stressful event as well as the strain that is caused by the stressful event because it broadens one's perspective to lower strain responses and learn from the experience instead of avoiding it (Maddi, 2002).

Being high on hardiness is associated to healthier immune and neuro-endocrine responses to stress (Johnsen, Hystad, Bartone, Laberg, & Eid, 2014). In relation to bullying, individuals high on hardiness will be likely to experience low levels of perceived bullying because they perceive that they can control any event by putting it into the circumstance, with as much effort and resources that they have available (Johnsen et al., 2014). On the other hand, individuals low on hardiness may experience higher levels of perceived bullying because they have no sense of power in a situation that they perceive as stressful or overwhelming, and would prefer if their environment changed as little as possible or does not change at all (Kobasa et al., 1981).

1.5.6 To conclude on personality traits

From the above explanations of the personality traits under investigation, it can be seen how certain personality traits, such as neuroticism and pessimism, depending on whether an individual has a high level or low level of these traits would make individuals more or less susceptible to perceptions and experiences of workplace bullying. Personality traits, such as assertiveness and optimism, again depending on whether an individual is in high possession or low possession of these traits could also be aids or tools used by the individual in coping with or at times, hinder their ability to cope with perceived workplace bullying.

1.6 Work engagement

As previously mentioned, workplace bullying has severe negative consequences on organisational outcomes as well as individual perceptions and levels of engagement with their work. Work stress arises from the prolonged exposure to psychosocial hazards in the work place (Law, Dollard, Tuckey, & Dormann, 2011), which as a result affects work engagement. Additionally, organisations suffer because of victimisation of individuals which result in sickness, absenteeism, reduced morale and diminished productivity (Law et al., 2011). This then speaks to the idea of decreased work engagement. Work engagement is an important factor to determine productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in organisations (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). Employees with high levels of work engagement identify with their work and have the energy to complete their work (Park & Ono, 2016). These individuals in organisations are always active, believe in themselves, ensure that they always produce positive feedback, have values that match that of the organisation and are always satisfied with their work even if they may feel tired (Schaufeli,et al., 2000). Additionally, employees that are engaged have an effective connection with their work and instead of looking at certain negative situations in the workplace as demanding or stressful, they look at it as a challenge (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).

However, on the other hand, individuals that have been exposed to workplace bullying are worn out and as such show a decrease in their work engagement (Park & Ono, 2016). In the case of these individuals, in the case of burnout or when faced with negative, stressful situations; their energy turns into exhaustion, involvement becomes cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness (Bakker et al., 2008).

Work engagement can therefore be defined as “a positive affective-motivational work-related state that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption” (Tims et al., 2011, p. 121). Vigour is the increased energy and mental capacity that an individual feels while working (Tims et al., 2011). Dedication implies enthusiasm, pride, inspiration and willingness to take on a challenge (Tims et al., 2011). Lastly, absorption implies that an individual is fully engrossed in the task that they are completing and display difficulty in disengaging from a task (Tims et al., 2011). Vigour and dedication are considered to be direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Therefore, individuals who show high vigour and dedication will be considered engaged in their work and take negative situations as challenges instead of hurdles. Interviews with a group of Dutch employees who scored high on the Utrecht Work Engagement scale show that engaged employees have a

high self-efficacy and dynamism which helps them exercise an influence over their lives which enables them to create their own positive feedback in terms of recognition, appreciation and success (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Psychological research has shown that when people are working together in an organisation, share their beliefs and affective experiences and will thus show similar motivational and behavioural patterns as people working in groups will have more chances to interact in positive situations and avoid the negative (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). However, individuals who don't have this level of interaction within an organisation may not be able to share in the positivity of such and this may lead to their disengagement.

Alternatively, those that are disengaged would demonstrate a lack of vigour, dedication and absorption. The consequences of workplace bullying on an individual is detrimental in that victims of perceived workplace bullying cannot protect themselves from negative behaviours and stress in the workplace, which results in a decrease in job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Park & Ono, 2016). As a result, this will lead to a decrease in work engagement. Studies have shown that bullying correlated positively and significantly with psychological complaints and poor physical health (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Rugulies et al., 2012), and these symptoms or conditions are strongly related to decreased work engagement. Given that individuals who experience workplace bullying tend to show heightened amounts of withdrawal due to mistreatment (Houshmand et al., 2012), it is likely that levels of employee work engagement or rather work disengagement, which are a form of withdrawal could fluctuate with amounts of bullying experienced by employees.

According to Briggs, Brough, and Barbour (2014), the well-being of an individual who is bullied is adversely affected and results in decreased work experience and work engagement. Therefore, the work engagement of an employee is dependent on their level of well-being relative to their work environment. Work engagement and stress are interdependent constructs; and as bullying is seen as a major stressor in the work environment, it is nearly impossible to expect an employee to engage in a working environment that has stressors to this extent above the workload that is experienced by the employee.

As previously mentioned, victims of workplace bullying have reported feelings of anxiety, helplessness and fear which lead to depression and lowered self-esteem (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004). This in turn affects the mental ability of an individual to perform at an optimal level in their jobs and can thus be highly disadvantageous to the organisation (Upton,

2010). The way in which workplace bullying affects the organisation negatively is by reducing employee productivity because they portray feelings of inadequacy, experience continued criticism, display increased absenteeism rates and a high staff turnover (Upton, 2010). This can thus be seen as a severe cost to the organisation as a whole.

The relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement has not been intensively explored to the researcher's knowledge and therefore the present study undertook to investigate personality in relation to workplace bullying and work engagement.

1.7 Research questions and hypotheses

Given the above discussion, certain personality traits are perceived to be more predisposed to bullying than others and bullying has a more severe effect on individuals with certain personalities than others. Workplace bullying also seems to have a severe negative effect on work engagement. Therefore, the present research aims to explore the relationships between; workplace bullying and personality, workplace bullying and work engagement, and the moderation effect of personality on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. Thus, the research questions that stem from the above relationships are:

1) Is there a relationship between certain personality traits and perceptions of workplace bullying?
2) Is there a relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement?
3) Does personality moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement?

Additionally, the corresponding hypotheses are:

1) Individuals higher on optimism, assertiveness and hardiness and/or lower on neuroticism will experience/perceive less bullying.
2) Individuals high on pessimism, and neuroticism and/or lower on assertiveness and hardiness will experience/perceive more bullying.
3) Individuals who experience high bullying will have lower work engagement.
4) Personality will moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Sample and procedure

The sampling strategies are non-probability, convenience sampling and snowball sampling as these strategies proved to be the most effective and efficient strategies for data collection.

A non-probability sample is used when the population that the intended sample is coming from is so large, that an exact sample cannot be pin-pointed and as a result a probability sample cannot be used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The type of non-probability sampling used for the purposes of this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is used when you can select a few members of the target population to complete the research survey, and then ask those individuals to select a few more members to complete the survey who will then ask a few more members and so on (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is more effective to gather data using snowball sampling when the response rate from a probability sampling strategy is not adequate. However, because the procedure of snowball sampling may be questionable with regard to its representativeness, this type of sampling strategy is used for exploratory purposes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), as is with the current study.

A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling which is made up of individuals that are easily accessible for purposes of the study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Below follows a description of the two samples that were used within the current study.

2.1.1 Sample one

This sample consisted of employees, over the age of 18 with access to a computer working in white collar employment. White collar employees were selected for purposes of the current study because of their levels of literacy, computer literacy and easy access to a computer. This sample consisted of individuals from one particular organisation in the Public Sector. Permission was requested by the researcher, by means of a formal access request letter, from the prospective organisation (Appendix 1). After access was granted into the respective organisation, the surveys were uploaded onto the "Lime Survey" website. The link was then emailed, by the researcher, to the staff of the respective company after permission was granted by the management and Human Resources Department of the organisation. The employees were briefed on the purpose of the study by a participant information sheet (Appendix 2) which outlined the purpose of the study and covered issues of anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation and informed consent. Participants were also made

aware that the organisation would not have been able to track the decision to participate or not and thus there were no possibilities of negative work consequences for non-participation. They were also explained by means of the participant information sheet that they would not have been advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for completing the study and there were no direct benefits involved. Participants were required to complete an online survey and completion of the survey would have taken no longer than 15 minutes. Data collection was scheduled for one month after the link had been made available to the employees of the organisation. Participants were required to provide demographic information (Appendix 3) as a part of the questionnaire because it provided the researcher with extra information regarding where bullying was more prevalent in terms of hierarchical levels within the organisation and whether individuals with different demographics experienced more or less bullying.

Thereafter, the questionnaire included instruments (described below) that would specifically assess the variables under study, namely, workplace bullying, work engagement and the personality variables under investigation.

2.1.2 Sample two

This sample consisted of the first year psychology students at the "Wits Plus"- Wits University's part time class. Participants in this sample were from various organisations, as it could not be controlled due to the nature of the sample. Permission was obtained from the first year coordinator to approach these students. The students were approached by the researcher during their class time and asked to complete the survey. Students were briefly explained the purpose of the study by the researcher and that they would be able to obtain a course credit for completing the study if they added in their student numbers at the beginning. After the students at Wits Plus were spoken to and have agreed to complete the surveys, the surveys were uploaded onto the "Lime Survey" website. The link was then uploaded onto the Wits student portal (SAKAI). The link site contained a participant information sheet at the beginning (Appendix 2.1), which stated that their student numbers would be asked for at the beginning of the demographic questionnaire should they wish to earn a 1% course credit, for participating in the survey. However, once the data was downloaded and their 1% had been recorded by the course coordinator, their student numbers were deleted from the dataset to ensure their complete anonymity.

The participant information sheet also made them aware of voluntary participation and informed consent. Participants were made aware that the lecturers would not have been able

to track the decision to participate or not and thus there was no possibility of negative consequences regarding their course for non-participation. Participants were told that they would be advantaged and receive a benefit by means of a 1% course credit, but only if the survey is fully completed. Other than this, there were no other benefits or risks associated with completing the survey. They were also made aware that they would not have been disadvantaged in any way and there were no risks involved by completing the survey. Participants were required to complete an online survey and completion of the survey would not have taken longer than 15 minutes. Data collection was scheduled for one month after the link was made available to the students.

Participants were required to provide demographic information (Appendix 3) as a part of the questionnaire because it would provide the researcher with extra information regarding where bullying is most prevalent in terms of hierarchical levels within the organisation and whether individuals with different demographics experienced more or less bullying.

Thereafter, the questionnaire included instruments (described below) that specifically assessed the variables under study, namely, workplace bullying, work engagement and the personality variables under investigation.

These participants were additionally requested to ask fellow colleagues and any one working in organisations to complete the survey which led to the snowball sampling nature of the current study.

After the data was collected from the two samples, the final data was cleaned to obtain the final sample (as described below).

2.2 Sample Description

The above manner of data collection resulted in a total of 506 responses. However, of the 506 responses, only 300 surveys were fully completed. Furthermore however, of the 300 completed responses, after cleaning of the data, 100 responses showed to have some discrepancies which proved to be unfit for the purposes of the current study. Therefore 200 of the 300 responses, i.e. 66.67% were used for analysis in the current study. Given that the sample was obtained using a volunteer method, it was expected that the response rate would be low; however a sample of 200 proves to be large enough to provide evidence that is sufficiently convincing (Howell, 2016).

Demographic information of the sample is represented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: *Demographic information for the sample (age)*

Variable	Mean	Range
Age	33.43	20-64

Table 2: *Demographic information for the sample*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	**Male**	63	31,5
	Female	137	68,5
Race	**White**	34	17
	Black	96	48
	Coloured	28	14
	Indian	37	18,5
	Asian	0	0
	Other	5	2,5
Marital Status	**Single**	70	35
	Married	103	51,5
	Divorced	16	8
	Widowed	4	2
	Unknown	7	3,5
Job Title	**Auditing/Accounting**	4	2
	Administration	14	7
	Analysts	6	3
	Managers	28	14
	Chief	7	3,5
	Directors/Directors		
	Assistant/Deputy	15	7,5
	Directors		
	Assistant Managers	3	1,5
	Associates	3	1,5
	Consultants	11	5,5
	Economic Sector	3	1,5
	Advanced Team	2	1
	Assistants		

Banking Sector	15	7,5
IT Industry	8	4
Finance	2	1
Human Resources	12	6
Interns	3	1,5
Engineering Sector	2	1
Legal Sector	2	1
Marketing	2	1
Personal Assistants	8	4
Miscellaneous (Different Nature)	50	25

The age of the respondents ranged from 20 years to 64 years of age (*M* = 33.43). Sixty three of the respondents were male (31.5%) and one hundred and thirty seven of the respondents were female (68.5%). Thirty four of the respondents were White (17%), ninety-six of the respondents were Black (48%), twenty-eight of the respondents were Coloured (14%), thirty-seven of the respondents were Indian (18.5%), zero of the respondents were Asian (0%) and five of the respondents chose not to disclose their race (2.5%). With regard to marital status, seventy of the respondents were reported to be Single (35%), one hundred and three of the respondents to be married (51.5%), sixteen of the respondents reported to be divorced (8%), four of the respondents reported to be widowed (2%) and seven of the respondents chose not to disclose their marital status (3.5%). With regard to the job title of the respondents, four were auditors or accountants (2%), fourteen were working in administration (7%), six were analysts of some nature (3%), twenty-eight were managers of some nature (14%), seven were either chief directors or directors (3.5%), fifteen were either assistant or deputy directors (7.5%), three were assistant managers of some nature (1.5%), three were associates (1.5%), eleven were consultants in different industries (5.5%), three worked in the economics sector (1.5%), two were advanced team assistants (1%), fifteen worked in the banking sector (7.5%), eight worked in the IT industry (4%), two were from the finance industry (1%), twelve worked in human resources (6%), three were interns (1.5%), two worked in the engineering sector (1%), two worked in the legal sector (1%), two worked in marketing (1%), eight were personal assistants (4%), and lastly, fifty of the job titles were classified as having a different nature (25%). Thus from the above responses, most of the respondents were from

industries of a different nature (25%) and the second highest number of responses came from managers (14%).

2.3 Research design

Given that the current study used a purely volunteer sampling method, the design of this study is a non-experimental, quantitative, cross – sectional design using survey methodology. The current study is non-experimental in nature because it aims to determine the presence or the absence of the relationship between the variables under investigation without making any causal conclusions. Furthermore there has been no direct manipulation of the independent variable (workplace bullying) by means of control and experimental groups which lends to the idea of a non-experimental research design. A cross-sectional design is one in which the sample of participants are selected independently and are tested at one time point without the study expanding over a period of time (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The current study required the participants to fill out the online survey at one point in time which took roughly 15 minutes and there was no need for a follow up which therefore lends to the study's cross-sectional nature. Survey methodology is seen as being the most effective, useful and informative way of getting necessary information within a short span of time and without wasting the time of the participants involved (Stern, Bilgen, & Dillman, 2014). The participants involved in the study were busy professionals and thus survey methodology was deemed as the most effective and efficient way in obtaining the information required without imposing on them as they were to complete the survey at a time that was deemed as being most convenient to them within the timeframe stipulated by the researcher. Survey methodology is also useful in describing general trends and characteristics of a large population with the use of a standardised survey (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), which is essential in the current study. Thus, based on the above information, survey methodology was deemed the most effective and efficient way to collect data for the current study.

2.4 Instruments

- Biographical information form (Appendix 3)**:** Employees were first required to answer a demographic/biographical information form. The form made it known to employees that they were consenting to participate in the study, participation was voluntary and anonymous and all responses remained confidential. The form asked information regarding gender, age, race, as well as the participants' position in the organisation. Additionally, the student numbers for the WITS Plus students were asked for in the survey that was specifically uploaded for them.

- Workplace bullying (Appendix 4): The construct workplace bullying was assessed by answering the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesoy, 1994; Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). The items in the questionnaire are seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace and employees were meant to answer these questions based on negative acts experienced over a 6 month period. The NAQ is a 22 item questionnaire and responses are based on a 5 point Likert-Type scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Daily. After having responded to the 22 items, a 23rd item is added which relates to a definition of bullying at work. The participants indicated, according to this definition, whether or not they considered themselves victims of bullying. According to Einarsen et al. (1994), the construct validity and reliability are significant. Internal reliability of the scale is high ranging from .87 to .93.
- Work engagement (Appendix 5): Work engagement was assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The UWES is a 17 item scale however for purposes of this study the shortened version of the scale was used. The shortened version of the UWES has been compressed to 9 items using the most characteristic items from each subscale on the original UWES based on face validity. Responses are based on a 7 point Likert-Type scale ranging from 0=Never to 6=Everyday. Previous studies showed that the Cronbach's Alpha for the total scale ranged from .85 to .92 (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The scale showed significant construct validity as items were selected that most represented the relevant categories (Schaufeli et al., 2006).
- Personality: The different personality variables that are being assessed in this study were tested using the scales as follows for each of the personality constructs:
    - ❖ Neuroticism (Appendix 6): Neuroticism was assessed using a subscale of the abbreviated Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-A) (Francis, Brown, & Philipchalk, 1992). Neuroticism is tested on a 6 item subscale with a binary response format (Yes or No). Neuroticism recorded alpha coefficients between .70 and .77. Concurrent validity was found to be acceptable after comparison with the shortened revised Eysenck personality questionnaire (EPQR-S). Correlations were +.92 through +.94 (Francis et al., 1992).
    - ❖ Assertiveness (Appendix 7): Assertiveness was tested using the Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS). The RAS is a 30 item scale and participants were

asked to indicate how descriptive or characteristic each of the statements are of them by using the code: +3 = very characteristic, +2 = rather characteristic, +1 = somewhat characteristic, -1 = somewhat uncharacteristic, -2 = rather uncharacteristic and – 3 = very uncharacteristic. Due to the nature of the response code, responses were coded as 1= very characteristic to 6 = very uncharacteristic. The scores were then reversed in order to maintain consistency with the other scales in the study. Test retest reliability has been reported as v=0.77, P<.01 and validity coefficients are shown to range from .62 to .70 (Rathus, 1973).

- Optimism-Pessimism (Appendix 8): Optimism and Pessimism was assessed using the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R). The LOT-R consists of 10 items. Responses are based on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Example items on the LOT-R include "I am always optimistic about my future" and "I hardly ever expect things to go my way." The cronbach's alpha coefficients were .70 for optimism and .74 for pessimism (Glaesmer et al., 2012). The study also showed good convergent validity (Glaesmer et al., 2012). Of the ten questions in the LOT-R, questions one, four and ten pertain to optimism (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994). Questions three, seven and nine are scored as pessimism or pertain to pessimism (Scheier et al., 1994). The items for pessimism can be reversed scored in order to relate them to optimism or scored separately as pessimism (Scheier et al., 1994). For purposes of this study, these items have been scored separately as pessimism. Lastly, questions two, five, six and eight are filler questions and should not be scored (Scheier et al., 1994).
- Hardiness (Appendix 9): Hardiness was assessed using the Dispositional Resilience Scale-II (DRS – II). The DRS-II shows how dimensions of hardiness predict the perceptions of continuous exposure to stressors, in this case workplace bullying (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003). The DRS-II is an 18 item scale that focuses on the main aspects of hardiness. The scale consists of six subscales, i.e. Control (Cronbach Alpha = 0.79), Powerlessness (Cronbach Alpha = 0.93), Commitment (Cronbach Alpha = 0.79), Alienation (Cronbach Alpha = 0.88), Challenge (Cronbach Alpha = 0.77) and Rigidity (Cronbach Alpha = 0.66). Responses on the DRS-II are based on a 5-point Likert Type scale ranging from 1 = Definitely False to 5 = Definitely True.

The subscale Control looks at issues surrounding general self efficacy and beliefs in one's ability to influence a situation (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003). Powerlessness assesses a feeling of not having power over a stressful situation and a sense of fatality (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003). Commitment assesses levels of interest and engagement one has in their life activities (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003). Alienation looks at issues surrounding isolation from the world and meaninglessness in one's life. Lastly, challenge and rigidity assess aspects around abilities to view stress as a challenge and overcome it and a resistance to change and a lack of flexibility; respectively.

The positive dimensions (Control, Commitment, and Challenge) indicate that more resources are available for the individual for combating stress. Higher scores are associated with higher levels of hardiness (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003).

2.5 Analysis

The research is testing the relationships between the variables workplace bullying and personality and workplace bullying and work engagement. Information on reliability, descriptive statistics and normality was run and obtained on SPSS 23 in order to determine the relationships and strengths of the relationships between these variables. Thereafter, Pearson's product moment correlations were run to determine the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement; and perceptions of workplace bullying and each of the personality traits. Additionally a moderated multiple regression was conducted to determine whether or not personality moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The statistical analyses conducted in the present study will be discussed below.

2.5.1 Pearson's product moment correlation

A Pearson's product moment correlation was used to determine whether or not significant relationships exist between workplace bullying and work engagement, and also perceptions of workplace bullying and each of the personality traits. A correlation is identified as the relationship between variables where a coefficient is the measure of the relationship that may or may not exist (Howell, 2016). According to Field (2009), the easiest way to determine whether or not two variables are associated with each other, is to look at the level at which they covary. Covariance is seen as the degree to which two variables vary together (Howell, 2016). With regard to the current study, this will be shown where high scores on the personality traits such as neuroticism and pessimism covary positively and highly with high

perceptions of workplace bullying. Additionally, high scores on personality traits such as hardiness, assertiveness and optimism will covary negatively with high perceptions of workplace bullying.

In order for a Pearson's product moment correlation to be conducted, it has to meet a range of assumptions. The assumptions to be met are as follows as discussed in Field (2009).

- Random Independent sampling is required
- Both of the variables must be normally distributed
- Homogeneity of variances must be present
- A linear relationship must exist between the two variables
- Both of the variables under investigation must have an interval scale of measure
- The variables (x and y) must be independent of each other.

After conducting a Pearson's product moment correlation on the variables, a moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted.

2.5.2 Moderated multiple regression

A moderated multiple regression was conducted to determine whether personality moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. Moderated multiple regression is a statistical technique that was developed from standardised multiple regression by Saunders (1956 as cited in Bernstein, 1992). Standardised multiple regression assesses the relationship between an independent and dependent variable (Irwin & McClelland, 2001). However, a moderated multiple regression is different from standardised multiple regression in that it includes an interaction variable into the equation (Upton, 2010).

A moderated multiple regression allows for the simple relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable to depend on a third or another independent variable; i.e. a moderator (Irwin & McClelland, 2001). This moderated relationship which is commonly referred to as the interaction is developed by including the additional independent variable or moderator variable (Irwin & McClelland, 2001). A moderator variable affects the direction or the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Moderation thus implies that the causal relationship between the two variables changes as a function of the moderator variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The reason for choosing moderated multiple regression as a means of analysis in the current study is that firstly, it allows for the inclusion of an interaction term as opposed to using the 'Anova' method as a means of analysis (Upton, 2010). Secondly, moderated multiple

regression does not rely on sub-grouping (Bernstein, 1992). Even though sub-grouping will be able to detect any moderator effects, it is subject to a few problems (Stone et al., 1984 as cited in Upton, 2010; Cohen, 1978 as cited in Bernstein, 1992). Sub-grouping is dependent on the separation of the sample into sub-groups of the moderator variable, i.e. high and low moderator variables, and will then determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variable by comparing results obtained across each sub-group (Upton, 2010). Additionally, sub-grouping is determined through random sub-group separation which increases the probability of obtaining results containing errors (Stone et al., 1984 as cited in Upton, 2010). Furthermore, quantitative variables are converted into categorical variables which reduce their statistical power as the data is only compared from selected sub-groups (Upton, 2010).

A moderated multiple regression is able to resolve these problems as it has three advantages over sub-grouping (Zedeck, 1971 as cited in Bernstein, 1992). Firstly, moderated multiple regression gives better information regarding the main and interaction effects of the moderator variable. Secondly, a moderated multiple regression does not rely on sub-grouping and is made up of prediction equations for the total sample and lastly, it allows for the analysis of non-linear variables (Upton, 2010).

The aim of a moderated multiple regression is to test for significance, the percentage of explained variance in each of the dependent variables due to the independent variable, the hypothesised moderator variable and the interaction term (Cleary & Kessler, 1982 as cited in Bernstein, 1992; Lewis-Beck, 1989 as cited in Bernstein, 1992). Due to the inclusion of the interaction term, a moderated multiple regression allows for a better and more in-depth explanation of the dependent variable (Upton, 2010). The possible effects of extraneous variables that are not accounted for are taken into account which thus enables the assessment of an independent variable with great amounts of certainty (Cleary et al., 1982 as cited in Bernstein, 1992; Lewis-Beck, 1980 as cited in Bernstein, 1992).

The interaction effect in a moderated multiple regression is represented by a main effect and a moderator effect. A main effect occurs when the effect of an independent variable is constant despite the presence or absence of any other variables (Finney, Mitchell, Cronkite & Moos, 1984 as cited in Upton, 2010). A moderator effect is seen as a variable that affects a second variable, if the second variable's effect is dependent upon the level of the first variable (Upton, 2010). Therefore, the third variable or moderator variable moderates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables if the degree of the relationship

between the independent and dependent variable is affected by a level of the moderator variable (Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

To determine the existence of an interaction effect through the introduction of a product term, the variances that are associated with the main effects that are used to form the interaction should be separated because only then will it be possible to determine if there is a true interaction or not (Stone et al., 1984 as cited in Upton, 2010). Therefore, the effects of the independent variable and dependent variable are assessed and separated as they are entered into an interaction term in the moderated multiple regression equation (Suchet, 1984 as cited in Bernstein, 1992). The significance of the interaction term is then assessed using the F-test of significance which explains how well a regression line fits the data (Upton, 2010). A significant interaction will indicate that the regression of the dependent variable on the independent variable is dependent on the moderator variable (Bernstein, 1992).

For purposes of this study, moderated multiple regression was used to determine the moderation effect of personality on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement and as such separate regression equations will be computed.

Before conducting a moderated multiple regression analysis, the following assumptions have to be met.

- Interval scale of measure for the dependent variable
- Linearity between the independent variables and the dependent variable
- Normality of residuals
- Homogeneity of variances
- Account for multi-collinearity between variables
- Account for outliers

The above analysis was conducted and the results reported hereafter, which will be followed by a detailed discussion of the results obtained from the analyses.

2.6 Ethical considerations

All necessary precautions were taken to ensure that the study was ethically sound and compliant.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical).

Ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent and security of the data. For employees that have been accessed in the organisations, no identifying information was asked for such as ID or staff number which ensured that the responses were completely anonymous and all findings remained confidential. Wits Plus students were asked to add in their student numbers for a 1% course credit. However, once the data was downloaded and their student numbers extracted from the data to ensure that they received the course credit, student numbers were deleted from the results, which ensured anonymity and confidentiality of results. Lime survey had been set as to not save any IP address of any given participant. Only the supervisor and the researcher had access to the raw data which was stored and will be stored indefinitely on a spreadsheet in a password protected computer which ensures the security of the data collected. The participants were asked permission at the beginning of the data collection process for the data to be stored in anonymous form indefinitely.

Within the survey; all participants were given a covering letter explaining the purpose of the research. Participation in the study was voluntary and a participant could withdraw at any time once they have started the survey. However; once they have submitted the survey, informed consent was deemed to have been given. Informed consent was assumed by the completion of the questionnaires, i.e. if participants chose to complete and submit the online questionnaire, it was considered as informed consent to participate in the study.

Participants from the respective organisations were made aware that there were no direct benefits in participating in the study. Wits plus students on the other hand received the benefit of a 1% course credit toward their final course mark. Other than this, there were no other direct benefits associated with completing the study.

It should also be noted that there was no risk involved to the participants who participated in the research. Only summary results were presented to the organisation, thus further ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. No individual results or results of any form have been given to Wits plus students as they were from different organisations.

Once access was granted into the respective organisation, an email containing the survey link which gave them access to a secure encrypted site, where the survey was contained, was sent by the researcher to the Human Resources division who then distributed it to all the participants. Similarly, once the Wits plus students were addressed by the researcher, the survey link was uploaded onto the Wits student portal (SAKAI).

The organisation that was accessed only received a summarised, short report of the findings indicating general trends, which ensured that no single individual could possibly have been identified. No individual reports of results may have been given by the researcher to the participants.

The invitation to participate was sent by the researcher to the Human Resource Manager of the respective organisation who then distributed it to the employees on a mailing list. The invitation for Wits plus students to participate was made on SAKAI in the form of an announcement.

Contact details of both the researcher and supervisor involved in this study was provided on the cover sheet should the selected companies or participants wish to have asked any further questions regarding the research or the study procedure.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1 Individuals who reported actual occurrences of bullying

In the Negative Acts Questionnaire, question twenty three was added to ask respondents whether or not they were being bullied. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: *Respondents reports of being bullied*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	134	67%
Yes, but only rarely	29	14.5%
Yes, now and then	26	13%
Yes, several times per week	7	3.5%
Yes, almost daily	4	2%

3.2 Statistical analysis of variables

As previously mentioned, the statistical analysis techniques used in the current study were Pearson's product-moment correlation (Pearson's correlation coefficient) to determine the strength of the relationships between the variables in the current study and a moderated multiple regression to determine the effect of each of the interaction effects of workplace bullying and each of the personality variables on the dependent variable, work engagement. The results for each of the statistical analyses will be discussed in separate sections.

3.2.1 Pearson's correlation coefficient

Pearson's correlation coefficients were conducted on the variables under investigation in the current study. However, in order to conduct an analysis using a Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, the five key assumptions had to be met, namely, interval scales of measure, random independent sampling, normal distribution of data, homogeneity of variances and linearity (Howell, 2016). The above assumptions have been tested and discussed below.

1) Interval scales of measure**:** All the variables in the current study were analysed using interval scales of measure that already exist from previous studies (Appendices 4-9).

These scales of measure showed good internal consistency reliability and validity. As such this assumption was met.

2) Random independent sampling: With regard to the current study, the data was collected using snowball sampling as well as access into Wits Plus. Thus, all white collar employees had an equal chance of participating in the current study according to this technique; therefore, the respondents were completely random. The respondents had no impact on each other's responses and were completely independent of each other. Therefore the assumption of random independent sampling was met.
3) Normal distribution of data **:**
   - Firstly, according to the principle of the central limit theorem which states that any sample size greater than thirty can be assumed to be normally distributed (current sample size is 200), therefore according to this principle, normality is not an issue for purposes of the present study and therefore a parametric Pearson's correlation coefficient could be conducted (Howell, 2016).
   - Histogram plots were also used to determine normality. Given the distributions in the histograms, both the independent variable, bullying perceptions and the dependent variable, work engagement are normally distributed.
   - Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients were obtained for both the independent variable (perceptions of bullying) and dependent variable (work engagement). In order for data to be normally distributed, both the skewness and kurtosis coefficients should be between -1 and +1. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients for perceptions of bullying were .925 and -.012 respectively. For work engagement the skewness and kurtosis coefficients were -.392 and -.387 respectively. The coefficients presented in Table 4 below show that the variables data are normally distributed.

Table 4: *Skewness and kurtosis coefficients*

	Skewness	**Kurtosis**
Perceptions of bullying	.925	-.012
Work engagement	-.392	-.382

Therefore, based on the above results obtained, it can safely be said that the data is normally distributed.

4) Homogeneity of variance**:** Levene's test was conducted to determine whether or not there was homogeneity of variances. In order for the assumption of homogeneity of variances to be met, the p-value for the F statistic has to be non-significant. After the results were obtained, it was shown that the results Levene's test were $F(64,135)=1.309$, $p=.097$; therefore $p>.05$ and homogeneity of variance can be assumed.
5) Linearity: A scatterplot was created on SPSS 23 in order to determine linearity. According to the scatterplot and the line of best fit through all the points, a linear relationship was found to exist between work engagement and perceptions of bullying.

Therefore based on the evidence provided above, the assumptions for the parametric Pearson's correlation coefficient were sufficiently met and analyses could commence. The analyses and results are shown and reported in Table 5 and explained below.

Table 5: *Pearson correlation coefficients of variables*

	NAQ	WE	N	A	O	P	H
Perceptions of Bullying (NAQ)	1	-.414**	.412**	.132	-.154*	.269**	-.182**
Work Engagement (WE)	-.414**	1	-.289**	-.168*	.376**	-.174**	.392**
Neuroticism (N)	.412**	-.289**	1	.378**	-.428**	.300**	-.461**
Assertiveness (A)	.132	-.168*	.378**	1	-.222**	.219**	-.228**
Optimism (O)	-.154*	.376**	-.428**	-.222**	1	-.257**	.588**
Pessimism (P)	.269**	-.174**	.300**	.219**	-.257**	1	-.223**
Hardiness (H)	-.182**	.392**	-.461**	-.228**	.588**	-.223**	1

3.3 Results for perceptions of bullying (independent variable) and personality traits

Perceptions of bullying showed significant relationships with neuroticism, optimism, pessimism and hardiness. Alternatively, a non-significant relationship existed between perceptions of bullying and assertiveness.

Perceptions of bullying and neuroticism had a significant, moderate positive relationship (r= .412). This is consistent with the hypothesis that is being tested that individuals higher on neuroticism experience higher levels of bullying. Additionally it is consistent with literature that the more neurotic an individual is, the more he/she will perceive negative behaviours as being bullying (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015).

An interesting result present in the above table is the result obtained for assertiveness. Even though the relationship is not significant, there is an association between assertiveness and perceptions of bullying. The relationship is weak and positive (r= .132), which contradicts with the hypothesis and theory in the current study. This finding suggests that the higher one's perceptions of workplace bullying, the higher one's levels of assertiveness, which is a contradiction and contrasts the hypothesis that states that the higher the perceptions of bullying, the lower one's levels of assertiveness. The reason that the result is this way may be because an individual in this case may be aware of the threat of bullying and they are able to more effectively cope with it and assertiveness within them has been strengthened, which is why the relationship is weak.

Optimism on the other hand, has a weak, negative relationship with perceptions of workplace bullying (r= -.154). The negative relationship is consistent with the hypothesis that individuals higher in optimism will have lower perceptions of workplace bullying. The weak relationship however may show that even though the perceptions of workplace bullying are seemingly lower, in this case, with this sample, the perceptions of workplace bullying may not always be low and at times, these individuals may perceive workplace bullying differently.

Perceptions of workplace bullying and pessimism had a significant weak positive relationship (r= .269). The positive result is consistent with the hypothesis that states that individuals higher on pessimism will perceive more workplace bullying. However the weak result may be an indication that individuals who were once severely pessimistic, when confronted with workplace bullying are slowly learning that reacting in this way toward perceptions of workplace bullying does not make a difference to the perceptions of bullying and as a result may slowly start to see things differently and handle the situation differently.

The relationship between perceptions of bullying and hardiness is also a significant, weak negative relationship (r= -.182). This result is consistent with the hypothesis that was put forward, as well as with the literature. It was hypothesised that individuals who are higher on hardiness will experience or perceive less bullying. The correlation however is weak. Therefore the reason behind the weak, negative correlation may be that even though the individuals in the sample have experience high levels of perceptions of workplace bullying, the components of hardiness, commitment, control and challenge equipped them to cope with, and made them resilient toward behaviours that are perceived as workplace bullying, which lends to the weak correlation between these two variables.

The findings for these results will be further discussed below in the discussion section.

3.4 Results for perceptions of bullying (independent variable) and work engagement (dependent variable)

It is evident from the results in Table 5 that the correlations are mostly consistent with the hypothesis stated. A significant relationship was found between perceptions of bullying and work engagement. The relationship is negative and moderate, r= -.414. This negative relationship shows that as an individual's perception of bullying in the workplace increases, their work engagement will decrease which is consistent with the hypothesis and literature (Briggs et al., 2014; Houshmand et al., 2012).

However for purposes of the study and the research question, the relationship between actual bullying as per the 23rd question in the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ23) and work engagement was determined. The correlation analysis showed a significant, weak, negative relationship, r= -.337 between the variables (Table 6 below). This is however consistent with the hypothesis that individuals who experience higher bullying will show lower work engagement. However the relationship is weak and this may be due to the position the individuals are in within the organisation whereby they are not allowed to let their engagement with their work be affected or individuals are equipped with coping mechanisms or a support system which acts as a buffer of the bullying behaviour. This will be discussed later on in the discussion section.

Table 6: *Correlation between actual bullying behaviour (NAQ) and work engagement (WE)*

	NAQ	WE
NAQ	1	-.337**
WE	-.337**	1

3.5 Moderated multiple regression

A moderated multiple regression was conducted to determine the effect that each of the personality variables have on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The dependent variable was regressed onto an interaction between the independent variable and each of the personality traits (moderator variables). The results will be discussed hereafter. Similar to the Pearson's product moment correlation, before completing a moderated multiple regression certain assumptions need to be tested and met. The assumptions will be discussed below.

1) Interval scale of measure for the dependent variable: the dependent variable (work engagement) was analysed using a scale of measure that already exists, the Utrecht work engagement scale. This scale showed good internal consistency reliability and validity and as such, this assumption was met.
2) One independent variable that is continuous (interval scale) and a moderator variable that is dichotomous: the independent variable (perceptions of bullying) was analysed using an interval scale of measure that already exists, the Negative Acts Questionnaire. The scale shows good internal consistency reliability and validity. Personality is the moderator in the current study and is assessed by certain personality traits. One of the traits, neuroticism, is assessed on a dichotomous scale (Yes/No). Therefore, this assumption is met.
3) Linearity: Scatterplots were created to show linearity between the dependent variable (work engagement) and the independent variable (perceptions of bullying) and between the dependent variable and all the personality traits. The lines of best fit through the points on the scatterplots show that there is linearity in the data, therefore the assumption of linearity is met.
4) Normality of residuals: To test this assumption, a histogram was created on SPSS 23 and used to determine normality of residuals. The histogram shows that the data is normally distributed with the use of the bell curve. Therefore this assumption has been met.

5) Multi-collinearity: Multi-collinearity refers to the extent of the size and extent to which the independent variables are correlated. If the correlations between the variables are too high (>0.8), then the variables are considered to be multicollinear. In order to assess this, the condition index is looked at, after running a regression and selecting collinearity diagnostics. The condition index is not meant to be greater than 30. In the current analysis, the condition index is 34.741 which posed a slight problem with regard to multicollinearity. Then it is important to look at the tolerance and VIF collinearity statistics. With regard to the tolerance statistics, anything <.10 poses an issue and with the VIF collinearity statistics, anything >10 poses an issue. In the current analysis, there is no problem with regard to tolerance or VIF, therefore multicollinearity is not an issue with regard to these tests.

With regard to the correlations between variables in testing multicollinearity, table 5 above (p. 39) shows that there are no correlations that are > .8. Therefore the assumption of multicollinearity has been passed and there is no problem. However, when the interactions between workplace bullying and each of the personality variables is added into the correlation analysis, high correlations (> .8) (Table 7, column 1, below, p. 45) exists between variables, and a problem for multicollinearity then exists. In order to counteract the issue with regard to multicollinearity, centred variables needed to be created with the independent variable and each of the personality variables (moderators). In order to centre the variables, the means of each of the independent variables need to be subtracted and the residuals multiplied together to create a centred product term which is used for the analysis. This was done on SPSS by aggregating each of the independent and moderator variables and subtracting the means. Once the variables have been centred and the centred interaction terms have been created, a correlation was run once again. The results showed low correlations between the interaction terms and the variables (Table 8, column 1, below, p. 46) and were therefore not a problem for multicollinearity anymore.

Table 7: *Existence of multicollinearity*

	NAQ	WE	N	A	O	P	H
Perceptions of Bullying (NAQ)	1	-.414**	.412**	.132	-.154*	.269**	-.182**
Work Engagement (WE)	-.414**	1	-.289**	-.168*	.376**	-.174**	.392**
Neuroticism (N)	.412**	-.289**	1	.378**	-.428**	.300**	-.461**
Assertiveness (A)	.132	-.168*	.378**	1	-.222**	.219**	-.228**
Optimism (O)	-.154*	.376**	-.428**	-.222**	1	-.257**	.588**
Pessimism (P)	.269**	-.174**	.300**	.219**	-.257**	1	-.223**
Hardiness (H)	-.182**	.392**	-.461**	-.228**	.588**	-.223**	1
Bullying X Neuroticism	.931**	-.406**	.684**	.227**	-.258**	.298**	.303**
Bullying X Assertiveness	.940**	-.414**	.486**	.428**	-.202**	.297**	.329**
Bullying X Optimism	.783**	-.147**	.138	.005	.453**	.132	.336**
Bullying X Pessimism	.751**	-.287**	.385*	.176*	-.195**	.784**	.394**
Bullying X Hardiness	.934**	-.288**	.260**	.066**	-.039**	.214**	.155**

Table 8: *Elimination of multicollinearity*

	NAQ	WE	N	A	O	P	H
Perceptions of Bullying (NAQ)	1	-.414**	.412**	.132	-.154*	.269**	-.182**
Work Engagement (WE)	-.414**	1	-.289**	-.168*	.376**	-.174**	.392**
Neuroticism (N)	.412**	-.289**	1	.378**	-.428**	.300**	-.461**
Assertiveness (A)	.132	-.168*	.378**	1	-.222**	.219**	-.228**
Optimism (O)	-.154*	.376**	-.428**	-.222**	1	-.257**	.588**
Pessimism (P)	.269**	-.174**	.300**	.219**	-.257**	1	-.223**
Hardiness (H)	-.182**	.392**	-.461**	-.228**	.588**	-.223**	1
Bullying X Neuroticism	.220**	.146**	.078	-.055	.082	-.076	.117
Bullying X Assertiveness	-.041	.067	-.052	-.084	.057	-.113	.118
Bullying X Optimism	-.003	-.026	.089	.065	.110	.190	.065
Bullying X Pessimism	.206**	.241**	-.078	-.120	.179*	.024	.143*
Bullying X Hardiness	.009**	-.062	.035	.081	-.039	.157*	.010

Hereafter, a moderated multiple regression analysis can thus be conducted using the centred variables.

6) Homogeneity of Variance: Homogeneity of variance was assessed using a scatterplot. The shape of the scatterplot has to be somewhat rectangular in order for there to be homogeneity of variance. With regard to the current analysis, the shape of the scatterplot is somewhat rectangular; therefore there is homogeneity of variances.

7) Outliers: The final assumption being tested relates to outliers. Due to the nature of the study, a Mahalanobis Distance was conducted to determine multivariate outliers. After conducting the Mahalanobis distance test, it was found that only one value proved to be a significant outlier. This individual shows extreme cases with regard to each of the sections on the questionnaire and therefore proved not to be problematic to the current study.

Therefore, after having tested the assumptions of the multiple regression, it was safe to assume that a moderated multiple regression could be conducted for the current study.

After the assumptions have been met, moderated multiple regression analyses were run to determine the effect that each of the personality variables had on work engagement, the effect that perceptions of bullying had on work engagement and the interaction between perceptions of bullying and each of the personality variables and their effect of work engagement. These effects will be discussed below.

3.5.1 Moderated multiple regression for work engagement regressed onto workplace bullying and neuroticism

When work engagement is regressed onto the interaction between workplace bullying and neuroticism, the interactions and the model were found to be significant.

The main effect of workplace bullying on work engagement was found to be statistically significant with Beta= -.194, p=.000. The moderator, neuroticism also had a significant effect, Beta = -.141, p= .045. A negative beta coefficient means that for every one unit increase in the moderator variable, the dependent variable will have a one unit decrease. Lastly, the interaction effect between bullying and neuroticism was statistically significant with Beta = .146, p= .026. The main effect of bullying was statistically significant, where Beta = -.388, p= .000. Furthermore, the entire model showed a statistically significant result, $F(3,196)=17.2$; $p<0,000$ and 20.8% of the variance in work engagement can be explained by the model, i.e. the interaction between workplace bullying and neuroticism. A model summary and the coefficients of the results obtained from the analysis are shown below in Table 9 and Table 10 respectively.

Table 9: *Model Summary*

			Std. Error	Change Statistics				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.457	.208	.196	9.060	.208	17.200	3	196	.000

Table10: *Coefficients*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	34.961	.698		50.108	.000
	Bullying	-.194	.036	-.388	-5.440	.000
	Neuroticism	-.763	.377	-.141	-2.022	.045
	BullyingXNeuroticism	.040	.018	.146	2.240	.026

3.5.2 Moderated multiple regression for work engagement on workplace bullying and assertiveness

Work engagement was then regressed onto workplace bullying and assertiveness. The entire model was statistically significant, $F(3,196) = 15.198$, $p < .000$. When looking at the coefficients, bullying is statistically significant, Beta = -.396, $p < .000$. Bullying showed a significant main effect on work engagement where Beta = -.198, p=.000. However, both assertiveness as a main effect and the interaction between assertiveness and bullying are not statistically significant, Beta = -.110, p= .092 and Beta = .067, p= .300 respectively. These results show that assertiveness does not have an effect on workplace bullying. This was similar to the results found earlier on that there is an inverse relationship between workplace bullying and assertiveness and this will be discussed later on below. A model summary and the coefficients of the results obtained from the analysis are shown below in Table 11 and Table 12 respectively.

Table 11: *Model summary*

			Std. Error	Change Statistics				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.434	.189	.176	9.172	.189	15.198	3	196	.000

Table12: *Coefficients*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	35.493	.654		54.278	.000
	Bullying	-.198	.032	-.396	-6.105	.000
	Assertiveness	-.065	.038	-.110	-1.692	.092
	BullyingXAssertiveness	.002	.002	.067	1.039	.300

3.5.3 Moderated multiple regression for work engagement on workplace bullying and optimism

Work engagement was then regressed onto the workplace bullying, optimism and the interaction between workplace bullying and optimism. The entire model showed a statistically significant result, where $F(3,196) = 24.348$ $p < .000$. The entire model explained 27.1% of the variance in work engagement. Looking at the coefficients, workplace bullying and optimism had significant effect on work engagement, where Beta = -.183, p=.000 and Beta = 1.307, p = .000 respectively. However, the interaction between workplace bullying and optimism had a statistically non-significant effect, p= .673. Therefore it may be said that the interaction between workplace bullying and optimism has no effect on work engagement. When interpreting the unstandardised coefficients, it can be seen that for the interaction between perceptions of bullying and optimism, there is a very small, insignificant change in work engagement with a one unit increase in the interaction between perceptions of bullying and optimism which would explain why the interaction is not significant. A model summary

and the coefficients of the results obtained from the analysis are shown below in Table 13 and Table 14 respectively.

Table13: *Model summary*

			Std. Error	Change Statistics				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.521	.271	.260	8.691	.271	24.348	3	196	.000

Table 14: *Coefficients*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	35.535	.624		56.992	.000
	Bullying	-.182	.031	-.364	-5.903	.000
	Optimism	1.307	.252	.322	5.194	.000
	BullyingXOptimism	-.006	.014	-.026	-.423	.673

3.5.4 Moderated multiple regression for work engagement on workplace bullying and pessimism

Work engagement was then regressed onto the workplace bullying, pessimism and the interaction between workplace bullying and pessimism. The entire model showed a statistically significant result, where $F(3,196) = 19.601$ $p < .000$. The entire model explained 23.1% of the variance in work engagement. Looking at the coefficients, workplace bullying had significant effect on work engagement, Beta = -.224 and p= .000. The main effect of pessimism on work engagement showed a non-significant result, p= .358. However, the interaction between workplace bullying and pessimism had a statistically significant effect, $p < .000$. Therefore it may be said that the interaction between workplace bullying and pessimism has an effect on work engagement. When interpreting the unstandardised coefficients, it can be seen that for the interaction between perceptions of bullying and pessimism, there is a very small, .044 unit increase in work engagement with every one unit

increase in the interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and pessimism. A model summary and the coefficients of the results obtained from the analysis are shown below in Table 15 and Table 16 respectively.

Table 15: *Model summary*

			Std. Error	Change Statistics				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.480	.231	.219	8.931	.231	19.601	3	196	.000

Table 16: *Coefficients*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	34.902	.657		53.143	.000
	Bullying	-.224	.033	-.447	-6.727	.000
	Pessimism	-.213	.231	-.060	-.922	.358
	BullyingXPessimism	.044	.012	.241	3.756	.000

3.5.5 Moderated multiple regression for work engagement on workplace bullying and hardiness

Work engagement was then regressed onto workplace bullying and hardiness. The entire model was statistically significant, F(3,196) = 25.267, p<. 000 and explained 27.9% of the variance in work engagement. The coefficients showed that both the main effect of bullying and the main effect of hardiness were statistically significant, Beta = -.353, p= .000 and Beta = .329 and p= .000 respectively. However the interaction between bullying and hardiness was not statistically significant, Beta = -.062, p= .306. When looking at the beta coefficient it can be seen that any difference in the interaction between workplace bullying and hardiness, will hardly have an impact on work engagement, which may be the reason that the interaction is not significant. A model summary and the coefficients of the results obtained from the analysis are shown below in Table 17 and Table 18 respectively.

Table 17: *Model summary*

			Std. Error		Change Statistics			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.528	.279	.268	8.647	.279	25.267	3	196	.000

Table 18: *Coefficients*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	35.456	.623		56.882	.000
	Bullying	-.177	.031	-.353	-5.726	.000
	Hardiness	.606	.114	.329	5.326	.000
	BullyingXHardiness	-.006	.006	-.062	-1.027	.306

3.6 Summary of Results

1) With regard to the biographical data, the sample was predominantly female, white, between the ages of 20 and 30 and married. The surveys were mostly answered by managers, which showed the second highest percentage, the highest being those that have careers that are not easily categorised.
2) The results for Pearson's product moment correlation are as follows :

- There is a significant, moderate negative relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement
- There is a significant, moderate relationship between workplace bullying and neuroticism.
- There is a non-significant, weak, positive relationship between workplace bullying and assertiveness.
- There is a significant, weak negative relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and optimism.
- There is a significant, weak positive relation between perceptions of workplace bullying and pessimism.

- There is a significant, weak negative relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and hardiness.

3) The results for the moderated multiple regression are as follows.

- When work engagement was regressed onto workplace bullying and neuroticism, the model, workplace bullying, neuroticism and the interaction between workplace bullying and neuroticism was significant.
- Work engagement was then regressed onto assertiveness and workplace bullying. The model was significant, however the variable assertiveness and the interaction between assertiveness and workplace bullying was not significant.
- Thereafter work engagement was regressed onto workplace bullying and optimism. The entire model was significant. The interaction between workplace bullying and optimism had a statistically non-significant effect. There is no effect between of the interaction between workplace bullying and optimism on work engagement.
- When work engagement was regressed onto workplace bullying and pessimism, the interaction between workplace bullying and pessimism had a statistically significant effect. Therefore the interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and pessimism has an effect on work engagement.
- Lastly when work engagement was regressed onto workplace bullying and hardiness, the interaction between workplace bullying and hardiness had a statistically non-significant effect. Therefore the presence of hardiness in the interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and hardiness had no effect on work engagement. The above results will be discussed in more detail in a discussion section to follow hereafter.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the current study was to firstly determine whether or not there was a relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The second aim of the study was to determine if there was a relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and the personality traits neuroticism, hardiness, optimism, pessimism and assertiveness. Lastly, the study aimed to determine whether or not personality moderated the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The results of the current study indicated that the hypotheses were largely supported. However, personality did not always moderate the examined relationships. In addition the directions of some of the relationships were counterintuitive. The discussion below is based on the results obtained from the analyses conducted and described in chapter 3. In order to understand the results obtained, the discussion of the variables below centred around two theories, namely, the lifecycle theory of bullying and the conservation of resources theory. These theories will be explained briefly below.

4.2 Life cycle theory of bullying

The life cycle theory of bullying plays an important role in determining individual resilience toward bullying depending on the stage of the lifecycle they exist in. This theory represents bullying as a completed cycle, however, one must bear in mind that there are variations to the cycle and it can be broken (White, 2013). The life cycle of bullying may be shortened when a victim either leaves the company or when interventions are put into place to assist the victim with perceived workplace bullying (White, 2013). One cycle of bullying may end with one victim, however it may start with another and the cycle will therefore continue from victim to victim (White, 2013). However, the lifecycle may recur on a previous victim if the conditions in the organisation become favourable for the victim (White, 2013). In the early stages of the lifecycle of bullying, the victim may find the actions of the bully as subtle and difficult to describe and comprehend and as a result they do not realise that they are being bullied (White, 2013). The levels of bullying then increase on the victim because of a lack of empathy due to their actions (White, 2013). Some victims may be equipped to stand up to the bully as they have the ability to cope with the behaviour, whereas other victims are more submissive and reserved and may not be able to cope as effectively and as a result these victims are pursued by the bully for long periods of time (White, 2013). When bullying escalates, victims that were better equipped to deal with the behaviour were able to detect

bullying when it escalated as opposed to victims who were not adequately equipped. These victims tend to either leave the organisation or seek help from management whereas those who are able to detect the behaviour will cope with it, and the bully will then move on (White, 2013). Therefore the life cycle of bullying consists of an initiation phase (which indicates the beginning of the perceived bullying behaviour on an individual), a phase in which it escalates and the end phase whereby the victims leave or seek help, or the bully moves on. With regard to the current study and the cross-sectional nature of the study, it may have excluded a determination of where in the life cycle of bullying the study was conducted.

4.3 Conservation of resources theory

The conservation of resources theory allow one to examine the stress process by determining and assessing what happens with one's resources when faced with stressful circumstances (Wells, Hobfoll, & Lavin, 1999). The main assumption of the conservation of resources theory is that individuals strive to obtain, retain, build and protect their resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Additionally, anything that causes a potential loss and actual loss of resources for an individual is threatening and causes stress to an individual (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990). Based on the model, stress is defined as "the threat of a net loss of resources, the net loss of resources or a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Thus both the perceived loss and lack of gain in resources is sufficient for causing stress within an individual (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources, according to the model, are then defined as objects, energies, personal characteristics or conditions that an individual values or that serve as a means of attaining these objects, energies, personal characteristics or conditions (Hobfoll, 1989). Environmental circumstances often threaten an individual's personal resources and may cause depletion of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). In relation to the current study, perceived workplace bullying acts as a stressful environmental circumstance that may threaten an individual's personal resources which in the current study is personality. It is also assumed that a loss of resources is more powerful than a gain in resources as it is more difficult to prevent resource loss than it is obtain resource gain (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993, as cited in Wells et al., 1999). In relation to the current study, the loss of certain personality traits, i.e. lower levels of assertiveness, hardiness and optimism and higher levels of pessimism and neuroticism can be seen as a resource loss due to the inhibiting nature of the personality trait on an individual's ability and capability to cope effectively.

Furthermore, the conservation of resources theory has two main corollaries or outcomes (Wells et al., 1999; Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2004). The first corollary states that those individuals who lack resources are not only more vulnerable to resource loss but initial loss leads to further loss (Wells et al., 1999; Westman et al., 2004). This means that increased vulnerability may result from the necessary use of resources to offset a loss which may weaken an already compromised resource for the next round of stress (Wells et al., 1999). Therefore, individuals who have undergone depletion in resources may be at a disadvantage (Wells et al., 1999). Therefore in relation to the current study, individuals that lack the adequate personality trait, as a resource, who have experienced levels of perceived bullying, as a stressor, may become more vulnerable and may be less likely to meet the daily demands and as a result, may face a decline in levels of work engagement.

The second corollary states that those individuals who possess resources are not only more capable of gain, but that gain, leads to more gain (Wells et al., 1999). This means that, individuals who have greater social support and/or personal resources are more stable during a stressful event and may even gain resources when they are confronted with a crisis or a stressor as opposed to individuals who lack resources (Wells et al., 1999). Therefore, in relation to the current study, individuals who possess certain personality traits, when faced with perceived workplace bullying, may not face a depletion in resources, but rather, their resources will increase and they will be more resilient and able to cope better with perceived bullying behaviour in their respective organisations.

Apart from the two important corollaries discussed above, Westman et al (2004), discussed a third corollary. This corollary mirrors the second one in saying that those individuals who possess resources are more capable of gain, and that the initial resource gain begets further gain (Westman et al., 2004). However, because resource loss is much more potent than resource gain, loss cycles will be more impactful and accelerated than gain cycles (Westman et al., 2004).

The conservation of resources theory is an important theory in the current study as the personality that an individual is equipped with can either make them vulnerable to stressors which will lead to resource depletion or equip them with resources which will lead to a gain in more resources. Therefore, in relation to the current study, individuals with high levels of neuroticism, high levels of assertiveness, high levels of optimism and high levels of hardiness may gain new resources and become more resilient when faced with stressors as opposed to individuals with high levels of neuroticism and high levels of pessimism, may show a

depletion in resources and may also show further resource depletion when faced with perceived workplace bullying. Thus, this theory will aid in understanding the results of the current study and how an individual with certain personality traits show either increases or decreases in resilience when faced with stressors such as workplace bullying.

The results from the analyses conducted in the study will now be discussed below.

4.4 Workplace bullying and work engagement

With regard to workplace bullying and work engagement, the findings of the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and the moderated multiple regression indicated that workplace bullying is inversely related to work engagement and that workplace bullying has a main effect on work engagement. This result is consistent with literature that states that exposure to workplace bullying decreases an individual's attitude toward their job and will ultimately decrease work engagement (Park & Ono, 2016). Although a strong negative correlation was expected and a moderate correlation was reported. However this result is still consistent with the literature and the hypothesis which stated that as levels of bullying increase, work engagement decrease and it answers the research question regarding whether or not there is a relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement.

One of the reasons for the moderate correlation between workplace bullying and work engagement could be the presence of job resources that are available for employees to overcome negative behaviour. The underlying idea for this is the job-demands resources model. Victims to workplace bullying often report negative characteristics with regard to extreme workload, job insecurity, role conflict and cognitive and emotional demands (Tims et al., 2011; Van Den Broeck, Baillien & De Witte, 2011). Workplace bullying is also therefore attributed to a work environment that is extremely stressful for individuals and is seen as a significant stressor to the individual (Park & Ono, 2016; Van Den Broeck et al., 2011). In relation to the resources that an individual has, it can refer to any entity of an individual, e.g. personal characteristics (Park & Ono, 2016), which in the current study is the personality traits of the individuals. As personality was the moderator variable in the current study, certain personality traits may have acted as a resource for individuals to buffer the effect of workplace bullying. Personality traits such as high levels of assertiveness, high levels of optimism and high levels of hardiness may act as resources that individuals are equipped with to deal with perceived levels of workplace bullying, due to their nature and characteristics that have been described in the literature review above. On the other hand, the personality traits such as high levels of both neuroticism and pessimism respectively may not act as

resources for an individual against perceived levels of workplace bullying. With regard to the levels of the personality variables the positioning of the mean between the minimum and maximum levels of the scores were taken into account whereby high scores indicated high levels of a particular variable and low scores indicate low levels of a particular variable. Taking the aforementioned into account, the participants of the study displayed high levels of neuroticism, optimism and hardiness and low to moderate levels of pessimism and assertiveness. This therefore acts as a backbone in explaining the role of personality on the result regarding the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. Additionally, a worker with a greater amount of resources may be less vulnerable to stressors such as workplace bullying (Park & Ono, 2016). Thus, from this it may be deduced that the influence of certain personality traits, in particular optimism, in the current study may have acted as a resource for individuals against the stressor that is workplace bullying.

As previously mentioned, for purposes of the current hypothesis relating to work engagement and workplace bullying, individuals were asked whether or not they were experiencing actual bullying and majority of the individuals stated that they were not actually being bullied in their respective workplaces (Table 3, p. 44). Therefore, this may serve as a contributing factor to the moderate correlation between workplace bullying and work engagement, because the levels of work engagement as a result of high levels of workplace bullying may arguably only decrease for the minority of the individuals who are experiencing actual workplace bullying. Therefore, in relation to this, as previously mentioned by Briggs et al (2014), the well-being of an individual who is bullied is adversely affected and results in decreased work experience and work engagement. Thus, in relation to this literature, there was not a large correlation between actual workplace bullying and work engagement, because majority of these individuals, as stated, reported no workplace bullying.

In addition to the above, the sample of the current study was significantly made up of individuals in higher positions such as managers, directors, associates and assistant directors. This may be the reason for the moderate correlation between workplace bullying and work engagement. Individuals higher up in the organisational hierarchy may also be less susceptible to being bullied due to their position in the organisation and may rarely find themselves in the shoes of a victim to perceived workplace bullying (Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010). Research also shows that individuals higher up in the organisational hierarchy are generally the perpetrators of workplace bullying and may

therefore, again, be less susceptible to and less likely to be victims of workplace bullying (Beale & Hoel, 2011; Lewis, 2006).

Another reason the correlation between workplace bullying and work engagement is moderate may be the climate that the individuals work in. In relation to this, a good climate for conflict management is important because employees feel that conflict is well managed in the organisation and that the burdens in the organisation are distributed fairly (Einarsen, Skogstad, Rorvik, Lande, & Nielsen, 2016), and as a result, there is no significant effect on work engagement. Additionally, when employees perceive a strong climate for conflict management, any exposure to workplace bullying will no longer be associated with reduced levels of work engagement (Einarsen et al., 2016). In aligning this concept with the job-demands resource model, a climate for conflict management is seen to be an important organisational resource and thus maintains high levels of work engagement (Einarsen et al., 2016).

Additionally, another reason for the result obtained between workplace bullying and work engagement may be the frequency of respondents that have experienced actual bullying behaviours. The results show that majority of the respondents have not been bullied or claim not to have been bullied. As a result, those that have been bullied contribute to the findings on the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. In relation to this, individuals who have been bullied may have sought help from the management or human resources department of the organisation. The policies and procedures that are put into place by human resources could have helped individuals that have been bullied and as such, work engagement is not significantly affected. In terms of the job demands resources model, there could have been more resources that the targets were receiving in terms of social support which could have intervened and therefore served to reduce the findings.

4.5 Personality traits, perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement

The present study examined the relationship between each of the personality variables in the current study (neuroticism, assertiveness, optimism, pessimism and hardiness) and workplace bullying.

Thereafter, the interaction effects of each of the personality variables with perceptions of workplace bullying on work engagement was examined. A moderated multiple regression was conducted to determine whether or not the personality traits would moderate the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement. It used

interactions between perceptions of workplace bullying and each of the personality traits and the effect of the interaction on work engagement. The corresponding hypothesis was that personality will moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. Before regarding the effect of the interactions between workplace bullying and each of the personality traits as moderators, the result of the main effect, perceptions of workplace bullying in relation to the moderated multiple regression will be discussed. The main effect of workplace bullying had a significant effect on work engagement in the entire regression model taking into account each of the personality variables. This result is consistent with the literature stated above that an increase in perceptions of workplace bullying will lead to a decrease in work engagement because workplace bullying is a negative stressor on an individual. The result obtained was consistent with previous research that demonstrated that perceptions of workplace bullying decreases work engagement. For example, in a study conducted by Park and Ono (2016) on 221 employees in different Korean organisations, exposure to perceived workplace bullying decreased work engagement because levels of employees job attitudes decreased and their health and psychological wellbeing was affected. With regard to the personality variables, the main and moderator effects as hypothesised were often observed but not in all instances and were at times counter-intuitive. The findings are discussed below.

4.5.1 Neuroticism

It was hypothesised that individuals higher on neuroticism will have higher perceptions of or perceives more workplace bullying and individuals lower on neuroticism will perceive less workplace bullying. The relationship in this hypothesis is positive. The findings from the analysis are thus consistent with the above mentioned hypothesis.

With regard to neuroticism and perceptions of workplace bullying from a neuroscientific viewpoint, neuroticism is associated with perceptions of and a lack of control over negative stimuli (Ormel et al., 2013). These cognitive processes associate neuroticism with negative biases regarding attention and interpretation, increased reactivity and ineffective coping strategies, in addition to decreased cardiovascular activity which will then lead an individual to feeling depressed and heightens levels of emotional instability (Ormel et al., 2013). Therefore, based on this information, an individual high on neuroticism may perceive higher levels of workplace bullying and any slight, minor negative behaviour, may be perceived as bullying which may make them feel emotionally unstable because they are unlikely to be able to cope and deal with such behaviours.

As previously mentioned neuroticism is an indicator of whether an individual can be relaxed and stable or gets easily upset and the degree of emotional stability with which individuals are able to deal with stressful situations (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). It has also been stated that individuals high on neuroticism are perceived as being emotionally unstable and unable to deal effectively with stressful situations (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). On the other hand individuals who are low on neuroticism are perceived as emotionally stable and are better equipped to deal with, and are less reactive to, a stressful situation (Nielsen & Knardahl 2015; Vartia, 1996). Neurotic individuals tend to get upset and anxious very easily which may elicit aggressive behaviour from others, making these individuals more likely targets of bullying (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015). Additionally individuals who are high on neuroticism may be likely to react to victimization from bullying with high levels of distress which may lend to the development of depressive and social anxiety symptoms (Calvete et al., 2016). Therefore from this research, it is evident that higher levels of neuroticism may lead to higher levels of workplace bullying perceptions. On the other hand however, individuals who have lower levels of neuroticism have a higher self-esteem, higher levels of emotional stability and lower feelings of anxiety, and as such enable them to cope with negative behaviour in the workplace, which results in lower perceptions of workplace bullying (Vartia, 1996).

Further findings from the second analysis suggest that the main effect of neuroticism on work engagement was significant and negative. This is consistent with previous literature that states that an increase in neuroticism in the workplace may show a decrease in work engagement because individuals who are high on neuroticism are likely to show reduced professional efficacy, cynicism and exhaustion when it comes to their work after they are faced with stressors (Langelaan, Bakker, Van Dooren, & Schaufeli, 2006; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001).

The interaction effect between perceptions of workplace bullying and neuroticism on work engagement was significant. Although the interaction effect accounted for a small percentage of the variance in work engagement, this still suggests that neuroticism moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. Results indicate that an increase in neuroticism is likely to lead to an increase in perceptions of workplace bullying. Individuals higher in neuroticism may be more susceptible to being bullied by their colleagues due to the nature of the personality trait. As a result, in the event of perceived workplace bullying, individuals high in neuroticism experiencing high levels of perceived work place bullying are likely to show a significant decrease in work engagement. Therefore

high levels of neuroticism may likely be an ineffective and derailing personality trait for individuals, which may inhibit them from being able to deal and cope with perceptions of workplace bullying. It can thus be said that neuroticism will exert a negative effect on work engagement in individuals in the event of perceived workplace bullying being experienced (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, & Maggiari, 2012). On the other hand, individuals low in neuroticism may perceive low levels of workplace bullying because they are equipped to deal with it as they are not as emotionally unstable or anxious. Negative stressors such as workplace bullying will not have an effect on them and as a result work engagement will not be affected (Rossier et al., 2012). Additionally, bullying had a significant negative main effect on work engagement which implies that the higher the bullying scores, the lower the work engagement scores. As high scores on the work engagement scale indicate high work engagement, and low scores on the scale indicate low work engagement, the negative relationship between high bullying scores and low work engagement scores was expected. Furthermore, neuroticism had a significant negative main effect on work engagement as well, which implies that the higher the scores on neuroticism, the lower the scores on work engagement.

Therefore, from the above research, it may be confirmed that the results obtained are consistent with literature and the hypothesis previously mentioned.

4.5.2 Assertiveness

It was hypothesised that individuals higher on assertiveness will experience less perceived workplace bullying, which means that a negative relationship exists, or is expected to exist between perceptions of workplace bullying and assertiveness. The findings however, contradicted the above hypothesis as the findings suggested a weak positive relationship between the variables, which thus suggests that as perceptions of workplace bullying increases, so does an individual's levels of assertiveness.

One reason for the result may be because an individual may be aware of the threat of bullying and they are able to more effectively cope with it as assertiveness within them has been or is being strengthened. Assertiveness becomes strengthened in an individual because they may have obtained resilience. Resilience is a dynamic process and it develops when an individual is exposed to adverse situations as opposed to avoiding adverse situations (Rutter, 1985). In order for an individual to become resilient, they need to be able to successfully protect themselves against the negative consequences of a stressful or adverse situation and are often likely able to (Wade, 2007). As previously mentioned, the findings of the study show that as

an individual's perceptions of workplace bullying increases, so do their levels of assertiveness, albeit by a small percentage. The means additionally indicated that individuals in the current study lean toward being high on assertiveness. Therefore this result may firstly lend to the theory above on the categorisation of victims high on assertiveness, who will therefore be more able to stand up for themselves against a bully because they are able to exercise their rights and are prepared to assert themselves against perpetrators (Djurkovic et al., 2005). Secondly, resilience in these individuals stems from the conservation of resources theory, and more specifically to the second corollary which as previously discussed states that those individuals who possess resources are not only more capable of gain, but that gain, leads to more gain (Wells et al., 1999). In relation to this, individuals that are high on assertiveness (as in the current study), when faced with a stressor (perceived workplace bullying), may not show a depletion in assertiveness, but rather their levels of assertiveness may increase and as a result they may become more resilient and are able to cope better and deal with levels of perceived workplace bullying better. Therefore, in the current study, the weak positive relationship between perceived workplace bullying and assertiveness may be as a result of a further gain in assertiveness as a resource to cope with the demand of perceived workplace bullying as is implied from the conservation of resources theory.

Additionally, assertiveness in the individuals strengthened in relation to them experiencing high levels of perceived workplace bullying in the past and they are now able to cope with the significant change or adverse situations that they are faced with. Therefore in relation to the findings of the study, as perceptions of workplace bullying increase, so will an individual's level of assertiveness increase due to their increased levels of resilience.

Assertiveness is also seen as an active coping strategy as it relates to stressors, as one engages with active strategies in order to reduce or eliminate the perceived threat (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Typically an individual who uses an active coping strategy such as assertiveness will be relying on their own capabilities to stand up to the bully (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). With regard to the result found in the current analysis, individuals are aware of what constitutes as bullying and they then choose to be more assertive to weaken the negative effect of perceived workplace bullying on them. Assertiveness is seen as an effective strategy that enables individuals to take control of the perceived negative situation and makes an individual more resilient if it is utilised correctly (Murray-Harvey et al., 2012, as cited in Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). As previously mentioned, this study takes on a cross-sectional design in its approach and it was not certain where in the bullying lifecycle the researcher

conducted the study. Bearing that in mind, the individuals in the current study show moderate levels of assertiveness and may be able to adequately cope and defend themselves. Additionally, the levels of perceived workplace bullying lean more toward individuals not experiencing the situations as described in the questionnaire 'often' or 'daily', which means that they are 'never' experiencing these situations (as stipulated in one of the responses on the scale). The lifecycle of bullying thus comes into play as it is unknown at which stage in the lifecycle they have been questioned. The time at which the researcher conducted the questionnaires could have been a point where these individuals are not experiencing these behaviours any more as they have been in the past. Therefore bearing this in mind and the stages of the lifecycle of bullying in relation to the result found, from the initiation phase of the bullying lifecycle, these individuals were able to determine that negative behaviour toward them may have been perceived workplace bullying and were able to effectively cope with it and defend themselves against a perceived perpetrator during the escalation phase which led to the lifecycle ending sooner than expected (White, 2013). During the escalation phase of the lifecycle, these individuals showed that they are more able, than their non-assertive counterparts, to cope with workplace bullying, and is therefore shown in the weak positive result (White, 2013). To re-iterate, the result shows, that as perceptions of workplace bullying increases, the levels of assertiveness in an individual increase albeit by a small percentage. Therefore, as previously mentioned, these individuals are better equipped and had the study been conducted in the escalation phase of the lifecycle, the results show the resiliency of these individuals when faced with adverse, negative situations (White, 2013). Individuals who show high levels of assertiveness as a personality trait are inclined toward expressing the way they feel about situations, taking control of their environment, exercising their own rights and dealing with issues at an early stage (Jacobson et al., 2013; Kumar et al., 2012). Therefore individuals who are assertive and experience workplace bullying may confront the perceived behaviour in a positive manner and as a result are less likely to experience mental or physical setbacks and disturbances that result from workplace bullying.

The findings of the main effect of assertiveness on work engagement also displayed a non-significant negative main effect. However, the main effect of workplace bullying on work engagement displayed a significant negative main effect. That being said, as scores on workplace bullying increase, scores on work engagement will decrease. Due to the significant main effect of workplace bullying and the non-significant main effect of assertiveness on work engagement, the interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and

assertiveness also showed a non-significant effect on work engagement. This is an unexpected result, but because assertive individuals are adequately equipped to take control of a situation and will allow for the development of resilience within an individual if it is used effectively and successfully (Murray-Harvey et al. 2012 as cited in Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). In relation to the result found, this could potentially imply that even though assertiveness interacts with perceptions of workplace bullying, these individuals have control of their situation and they want to prove that they are able to overcome a negative situation and therefore, this interaction will not have an effect on work engagement because they are trying to "prove a point". Assertiveness instilled in an individual is helpful to adequately assist with and take control over the demands of the workplace. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the finding speaks to corollary two of the conservation of resources theory, stating that individuals equipped with resources such as assertiveness when faced with a stressor such as workplace bullying will be more stable and gain resources during a stressful event as opposed to individuals who lack resources (Wells et al., 1999), which in the current study would be individuals who are low in assertiveness.

Therefore, from the findings above, it can be concluded that assertiveness is not a moderator of the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement and as such, will not have an effect on or change the effect of the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement.

4.5.3 Optimism

It was hypothesised that individuals higher on optimism will experience low levels of perceived workplace bullying. This hypothesis requires the result to have a negative correlation/relationship between perceived workplace bullying and optimism. The questions in the Life Orientation Test were separated for optimism and pessimism accordingly. In relation to optimism, the result is consistent with the hypothesis. However there is a weak relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and optimism in the study. This implies that as perceptions of workplace bullying increase, levels of optimism decrease at low levels and as perceptions of workplace bullying decrease, levels of optimism increase at low levels. In relation to this, the lifecycle of bullying and the conservation of resources theory as discussed above apply. In relation to the lifecycle of bullying, as previously mentioned, the study may have been conducted at a point in the cycle after these individuals have been constantly exposed to workplace bullying and their resources have been depleted which may be the reason for the low correlation in the findings. It is unknown to the researcher at which

point in the lifecycle of bullying the study was conducted, as it is possible that it was conducted at the conclusion of the bullying lifecycle, because these individuals were being bullied and had gone through the initiation phase, the escalation phase and are at the termination phase or have passed the termination phase of the lifecycle (White, 2013); which may have led to a depletion in optimism. Therefore, at the slightest onset of perceptions of workplace bullying, these individuals find that they may not have the capacity or the ability to cope as a result of their resource depletion and therefore there is a slight decrease in optimism. Alternatively, individuals who experience low levels or no perceived workplace bullying will show an increase in their resource (optimism) and this is consistent with corollary one of the conservation of resources theory. As previously mentioned, corollary one states that those individuals who have social support or greater levels of a resource are more stable during a stressful event and this may lead to more resource gain (Wells et al., 1999). This being said, that even though there is perceived workplace bullying, it is at a low level and these individuals are thus better equipped to cope with it due to support from people around them as well as the resource that has already been imbedded in them which will continue to increase. They are thus building up their resources which will help them in the event of a new lifecycle of perceived bullying if need be or helping them deal with the current levels of perceived workplace bullying in the study.

The conservation of resources theory further states that people strive to maintain and protect their personal resources and tend to experience stress when they lose these valued resources (Hobfoll et al.,1990). Additionally, the conservation of resources theory states that resource loss is an important factor in the stress process (Hobfoll, 2001). Resources are also used up in order to prevent resource loss, which results in an individual becoming increasingly vulnerable to stress and therefore the result is impactful (Hobfoll, 2001). Therefore with regard to the findings obtained in relation to optimism, the low finding suggests that these individuals may have been subjected to increased levels of workplace bullying and were made to use the resource that was available to them in order to avoid the stress. As previously mentioned, the levels of perceived workplace bullying that was reported by these individuals in the current study were low, however one should bear the lifecycle of bullying in mind, as perceived bullying may have previously been prevalent, but the study may have been conducted at a point that the lifecycle has completed. However, due to increased and persistent levels of bullying on those individuals that have claimed to have actually been bullied, they have used up their resources and as such, their levels of optimism have depleted.

The means of this variable show that majority of the participants in the current study are optimistic and the findings as previously mentioned, are thus consistent with the hypothesis. However, the weak correlation in the result speaks to an interaction of both corollary one and corollary two of the conservation of resources theory because even though these individuals possess the resources (optimism) to deal with the stressor, their resource is decreasing or depleting when faced with a stressor (perceived workplace bullying). In keeping with corollary one in the explanation of depletion of resources, the individuals in the current study may have been faced with perceived workplace bullying before and they had to have used up their resources in order to cope with the negative behaviour. Therefore, in relation to this, the weak correlation may also lend itself to individuals that are using up the resources that they currently have to deal with the low levels of workplace bullying, in order to prevent a further significant decrease later on. Additionally, increased vulnerability may result from the necessary use of resources to offset a loss which may weaken an already compromised resource for the next round of stress (Wells et al., 1999). Therefore, individuals who have undergone depletion in losses may be at a disadvantage (Wells et al., 1999). As such, these individuals may have undergone a depletion in resources which inhibits their ability to cope with perceived workplace bullying at the point at which the study was conducted.

Optimism is greatly associated with high levels of coping and reporting symptoms of perceived negative behaviour (Andersson, 1996). Therefore according to this, individuals that are faced with perceived workplace bullying may be able to report these symptoms because they are able to pick it up and thereafter deal and cope with it effectively. However, in the current study, even though the individuals were able to detect the symptoms of perceived workplace bullying, they may not have been as effective and they may not have been able to detect the symptoms on time or deal with them effectively which could have an impact on their levels of optimism.

Additionally, optimism is influenced by the environment that an individual is in (Mishra, 2013), which will have an effect on the way in which individuals perceive stressful events such as workplace bullying. Thus in the current study, the individuals may be in work environments that are not conducive when it comes to dealing with stressful events which is the reason that there is a weak relationship between perceived workplace bullying and optimism. Additionally, the conservation of resources theory will come into effect again, because there may be a threat of loss of resources, or resources in their environment may actually be lost (Hobfoll et al., 1990).

From the findings of the multiple regression analysis, the main effect of optimism on work engagement was significant which shows that optimism has a positive effect on work engagement. It may be assumed that more optimistic individuals may be happy with the organisations that they are in and the work they are doing and will enjoy higher work engagement. Optimism is seen as a personal resource of individuals (Bakker et al., 2008; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), and will therefore assist individuals in increasing their work engagement in situations that may sometimes be perceived as being unfavourable. The main effect of optimism on work engagement showed a strong positive, non-significant finding. If the individuals in the current study are experiencing perceptions of bullying, it may not have an effect because they may be well equipped to cope with such negative acts and as such, their work engagement will not decrease (which may be as a result of either the high levels of optimism shown in the sample, the low levels of perceived workplace bullying that has been reported, or a combination of both). This is consistent with the present hypothesis mentioned above and the results of the study.

The result of interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and optimism was a strong negative non-significant effect. This indicates that in the event of workplace bullying, optimism may not or will not moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement, meaning that when faced with perceived workplace bullying, work engagement may still be affected for optimistic individuals. The reason the interaction between perceived workplace bullying and optimism does not have an effect on work engagement may be because of the weak relationship that was found to exist between perceived workplace bullying and optimism. The findings of the interaction again lend to the idea of resilience within optimistic individuals. Additionally, the underlying reason may lie again with the conservation of resources theory and the lifecycle of bullying. An optimistic individual's resources may have been depleted due to constantly trying to cope with a stressful and adverse environment and the point at which the study was conducted may have been when their resources have already depleted. Optimism by itself is helpful in buffering the effect of workplace bullying on an individual due to the nature of the trait as previously mentioned. However, when coming into contact with continuous experiences of workplace bullying, and the depletion of the trait in the individual, the interaction may not have an impact on the work engagement and increased levels of perceived workplace bullying may still lead to a decrease in work engagement in the presence of optimism. Therefore in the

event of workplace bullying in relation to the current study, optimism does not moderate the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement.

4.5.4 Pessimism

It was hypothesised that individuals with high levels of pessimism will experience high levels of perceived workplace bullying. The result from the correlation analysis shows a weak but positive significant relationship between pessimism and perceptions of workplace bullying which implies that as levels of perceived workplace bullying increase, so do the levels of pessimism and vice versa. The mean showed moderate levels of pessimism in the total sample of individuals in the current study. This shows that the individuals in the current study do not display high levels of pessimism; they show moderate levels of pessimism. These moderate levels of pessimism are in relation to the moderate levels of perceived workplace bullying that have been experienced in the sample. Therefore, the individuals who displayed levels of pessimism showed levels of perceived workplace bullying. This will then translate into the result obtained that as the levels of perceived workplace bullying increase, so do the levels of pessimism in individuals.

Pessimists will experience higher levels of bullying in the workplace because they are likely less able to effectively cope with situations they perceive as being stressful and harmful (Wrosch et al., 2016). Additionally, previous research shows that avoidant coping strategies, when coping with stress leads to complete withdrawal and the inability to cope (Carver et al., 2003). Therefore individuals who are higher on pessimism will experience higher levels of perceived workplace bullying, because it may make them easier targets as they do not do anything about the behaviour, they tend to retreat and avoid it at all costs. These individuals also tend to use more passive forms of coping and withdrawal in managing perceived stressful events as they occur (Makikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). Additionally, instead of dealing with their problems upfront, pessimists tend to focus on stressful feelings and distance themselves from what may be a way in which to cope with the situation (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986).

Thus, from the above literature, it can be seen how pessimism will be positively related to perceptions of workplace bullying because these individuals will, instead of dealing with the stressful situation, they will retreat because it is seen as a challenge for them and they do not have the abilities and capabilities to deal with a stressful situation.

This then speaks to the first corollary of the conservation of resources theory that states that those individuals who lack resources are not only more vulnerable to resource loss but initial loss leads to further loss (Wells et al., 1999; Westman et al., 2004). Pessimism may be seen as a lack of resources because individuals who display higher levels of pessimism may not be able to cope effectively with stressful situations. Therefore, these individuals are initially lacking a resource to cope with a perceived stressor and due to this, when they are faced with stressors later on, the lack of resources to cope will lead to a further loss of resources, which is why they are unable to cope. As a result, an increase in perceived workplace bullying levels, in the results of the current study, will lead to an increase in levels of pessimism.

Additionally, it may be argued whether or not the individuals in the current study were pessimistic before or after they have experienced workplace bullying. The lifecycle of bullying comes into play here, because as previously mentioned, it depends on when in the lifecycle they were tested. If they were assessed at the point where bullying had ended, their levels of pessimism may have been lower, in keeping with the findings of the current study because they were entirely pessimistic at the beginning and it decreased during the course of the lifecycle. In relation to this, if the individuals were assessed at the point that bullying had already ended, it may be said that these individuals have become more resilient and as such the relationship between perceived workplace bullying and pessimism is lower.

In the current study, the individuals who may have shown levels of pessimism worked in organisations that required constant work due to the nature of the industry and as such work engagement did not decrease. Due to the nature of the jobs in the sample, most of the questionnaires were answered by managers and individuals higher up in the hierarchy, thus even though they may show levels of pessimism, their position does not allow for a decrease in work engagement because it will have an impact on their subordinates as well. Even though individuals are slightly pessimistic, they do not allow it to impact on their work even if they experience low levels of bullying.

Employee assistance programs may also have come into play, whereby individuals who may have been pessimistic before the study was conducted could have went through an employee assistance, stress management program to firstly deal with the stress that they are facing and secondly, decrease their levels of pessimism. Stress management training interventions are adopted in many organisations to try and reduce stress in an individual (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). A stress management intervention is initiated by an organisation in order to reduce work related stressors or assisting an individual to minimise the negative outcomes of

being exposed to these stressors (Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, & Phillips, 1990, as cited in Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Therefore, based on this theory, if pessimistic individuals in the current study, who were unable to deal and cope with levels of perceived workplace bullying, underwent stress management interventions, their levels of pessimism may have decreased or disappeared completely which may explain the reason for the low levels of pessimism in individuals and ultimately the weak correlation between perceived levels of workplace bullying and levels of pessimism.

The main effect of pessimism on work engagement showed a non-significant, negative finding. This is inconsistent with the findings for the correlation between pessimism and work engagement, however a potential reason may be that due to the very low correlation between the variables, or the low levels of pessimism in an individual which may make the main effect insignificant and almost non-existent. This result is also inconsistent with literature that states that pessimism is negatively related to work engagement (Hakanen & Lindbohm, 2008). However, in the current study, the individuals who may have shown levels of pessimism worked in an organisation that required constant work due to the nature of the industry and as such, work engagement was not affected and did not decrease. Due to the nature of the jobs in the study, most of the questionnaires were answered by managers and individuals higher up in the hierarchy. Thus, even though they may have shown levels of pessimism, their position does not allow for a decrease in work engagement because it will have an impact on their subordinates as well. However, those that do possess levels of pessimism, if bullied, may be pushed over the edge. This is consistent with the conservation of resources theory, whereby individuals who lack a given resource, when faced with a stressor or a perceived stressor will show a further decrease and decline in resources (Wells et al., 1999; Westman et al., 2004) and as a result may not be able to cope effectively with the stressor.

The interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and pessimism however was significant. Therefore when perceptions of workplace bullying increased in pessimistic individuals, their levels of work engagement will decrease. It can therefore be said that pessimism moderates the effect between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement. This is consistent with literature because as pessimistic individuals are faced with stressful situations and perceive significant negative events such as workplace bullying as stressful, their levels of work engagement will decrease due to their anxious and negative outlook on situations and their environment and also a depletion of their resources which will

also push them over the edge. Finne, Knardahl and Lau (2011) stated that perceptions of workplace bullying are positively related to mental distress. These levels of mental distress are due to pessimistic individuals' expectancy of negative outcomes, anxiety, anger and despair (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001) when faced with perceived negative situations. As a result of this, they become detached from their work and as such work engagement will decrease.

Therefore the result obtained from the analysis and the literature above are consistent and it can be seen how pessimism will have an effect when interacting with perceptions of workplace bullying, on work engagement.

4.5.5 Hardiness

It was hypothesised that individuals higher on hardiness will experience lower levels of perceived workplace bullying, which thus indicates a negative correlation between hardiness and perceptions of workplace bullying. The result obtained is consistent with the given hypothesis. However, the weak result may imply that even though an individual's levels of hardiness may decrease at the onset of perceived workplace bullying, the decrease will be small and weak. This may be due to the mean hardiness values obtained from the individuals in the study. The individuals reported high levels of hardiness on average, which may lend to the reason that there is only a weak decrease in levels of hardiness when individuals are face with an increase in levels of perceived workplace bullying.

The dimensions of hardiness; commitment, challenge and control (Maddi, 2006), on which the individuals in the study were tested/assessed may make it possible for individuals to cope with perceptions of bullying as they arise. Therefore, as perceptions of workplace bullying increase, hardiness may decrease only by a small amount because individuals are equipped to deal with it.

Hardiness is seen as an important stress-resiliency response and individuals high on hardiness believe that they can control or influence negative events by investing an effort into it and the personal resources that they have (Johnsen et al., 2014). These individuals are able to interpret events that they have previously come across or new negative events that they are faced with in positive and constructive ways and these negative events are seen as valuable learning opportunities (Johnsen et al., 2014). It was concluded in research that individuals that are high on hardiness, have healthier responses to stress (Sandvik, 2013, as cited in Johnsen et al., 2014). Therefore, with regard to this research and the results that were

obtained the weak correlation between perceived workplace bullying and hardiness may be because they are psychologically able to deal with stress, more effectively and they do not let negative events deter them from coping and dealing with it effectively. This also takes into account the high levels of hardiness present in the individuals in the current study.

Another reason for the findings of this correlation being low despite it being negative will manifest itself in the conservation of resources theory, as most of the other variables. As previously mentioned, the conservation of resources theory follows a basic motivational idea that an individual will strive to protect and obtain their personal and social resources when they are faced with stressful situations (Hobfoll et al., 1990). Another aspect of this theory is that an individual will engage in behaviours which assist them in avoiding resource losses because loss can have a profound negative effect on an individual (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). Therefore, this theory provides a reason for the correlation because even though hardy individuals always take a "heads-on" approach to their environment and are mostly always positive, their resources (i.e. their personality) may have depleted slightly due to continuous exposure to a negative environment or stressors. However, they are now more resilient and are better able to cope with a perceived negative situation. Due to the low perceptions of workplace bullying and the high average levels of hardiness in these individuals based on the results from the questionnaire, increasing levels of perceptions of workplace bullying, will thus only lead to a small decrease in levels of hardiness. Additionally, this weak result leans more toward the second corollary (with a minor adaptation) of the conservation of resources theory which pertains to resource gain. The individuals in the current study, as previously mentioned, are high on hardiness, therefore, instead of losing resources significantly, there will only be a very small, minor loss in resources which will still ensure that they are able to cope effectively and efficiently.

The lifecycle of bullying comes into play as well as with all of the other personality variables. It is not confirmed by the researcher at what point in the lifecycle of bullying the individuals were tested at. It may have been at the end of the lifecycle where individuals have perceived high levels of workplace bullying throughout the cycle, but when the bullying cycle was over, they became more resilient. The organisation could have also put employee assistance programs into place to assist these individuals with overcoming the impact of the perceived workplace bullying on their personality, ensuring that they become more resilient and able to detect and cope with perceived bullying behaviour in the future.

According to Azeem (2010), hardiness is a resistance resource that is used to mediate the negative consequences that are related to high levels of stress, that is, workplace bullying. The concept of hardiness states that when an individual experiences a stressful event, their levels of hardiness increase and they are effectively able to cope with it and they then remain relatively healthy even after experiencing stress because there is a negative relationship between hardiness and psychological illness (Azeem, 2010).

Therefore from the above research, in explaining the result obtained, higher levels of perceived bullying is associated with higher levels of hardiness because as perceived workplace bullying increases, hardiness as a personality trait will take effect in an individual to help them cope and deal with the negative behaviour. On the other hand, lower perceptions of workplace bullying may result in higher levels of hardiness, because if an individual does not perceive a negative act toward them as workplace bullying, they will not need to be resilient or activate any methods of coping because they are not under any stress (Woodward, 2004).

Thus, the above literature is an explanation of the result that was obtained that there is a weak negative relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and hardiness because hardiness is a stress-resilient coping resource and individuals equipped with hardiness as a personality trait may be better able to help themselves when faced with a perceived negative situation.

The findings from the moderated multiple regression showed that the main effect of hardiness had a significant effect on work engagement. The main effect had a positive impact on hardiness. This may imply that individuals who are high in hardiness will have higher levels of work engagement because they are psychologically resilient and are able to handle difficult situations and keep up with demands without faltering. This result is consistent with a study conducted by Bue, Taverniers, Mylle and Euwema (2013) on International security and Assistance force members and the results suggested that hardiness is associated with vigour and dedication and is positively associated with work engagement. Hardiness appears to have a positive association with organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction and as a result work engagement (Garrosa, Moreno-Jimenez, Rodrigues-Munoz, & Rodriguez-Cawajal, 2011). Therefore, based on this, hardiness has a significant, positive main effect has an effect on work engagement.

The interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and hardiness on the other hand had a non-significant main effect on work engagement. This result is consistent with

literature by Allred and Smith (1989) that when under high levels of stress (e.g. high levels of perceptions of workplace bullying) high hardy individuals will show greater positivity and give off more positive feelings as opposed to individuals low in hardiness. This is also consistent with the correlations obtained that showed a positive relationship between hardiness and perceptions of workplace bullying. Additionally, a combination of the three C's of hardiness (commitment, control and challenge) will act as internal resources during highly stressful times and will encourage growth within these individuals that arise from challenging experiences (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Maddi, 2004). Lastly Kobasa et al (1981) suggested that an individual with a hardy personality style encouraged transformational coping which involves emotion, cognition and action and alters stressful events into less stressful ones, which in the current study are perceptions of workplace bullying. Therefore, from the above literature it can be seen that the interaction between hardiness and perceptions of workplace bullying will not have any effect on work engagement because of the characterisation of hardiness as a personality trait and it will therefore not moderate the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement. Additionally with regard to the current study, and the findings from the sample in the current study, in the event of workplace bullying, hardiness will not moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement as there is no interaction effect that is shown. This may be due to the weak correlation that has been found or it may be due to the low levels of perceived workplace bullying that has been indicated among the individuals. Additionally, the moderate positive correlation between hardiness and work engagement shows that as high levels of hardiness are positively associated with high levels of work engagement. Therefore, when individuals with high levels of hardiness, are faced with levels of perceived workplace bullying, it may not have an effect on their work engagement due to their resiliency and ability to cope by employing the three C's of hardiness. Therefore, when hardiness interacts with perceptions of workplace bullying, there is no moderating effect of hardiness on the relationship between bullying and work engagement. This may be due to the negative correlation between hardiness and perceptions of workplace bullying, because as perceptions of workplace bullying increase, hardiness decreases and at some point these individuals may not be able to cope anymore, or their resiliency may be low and as a result work engagement will still be affected on the onset of perceived workplace bullying. Therefore, hardiness did not moderate the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement.

Therefore, after taking into account the above discussion, out of the five personality traits, only neuroticism, optimism and pessimism moderated the interaction between perceptions of workplace bullying and work engagement. When each of these personality traits interacted with perceptions of workplace bullying, there was a significant main effect on work engagement which resulted in either and increase or decrease in levels of work engagement.

Hereafter, sections on the limitations of the current study, organisation considerations for workplace bullying and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Organisational considerations for workplace bullying

It is important for organisations to help their employees deal with the negative consequences of bullying and it is suggested in research that the organisation needs to first attempt to understand and acknowledge that bullying is happening within the work environment (Pietersen, 2005). When behaviours surrounding workplace bullying have been picked up and acknowledged, organisations are encouraged to solve the problem by introducing employee assistance programmes (EAPs), or implementing work policies that encourage employees to let their management know that they are being bullied. Additionally, Dunn, (2000 as cited in Pietersen, 2005) suggest that the proper screening of individuals during the selection phase of recruitment will assist in order to identify individuals who have an aggressive tendency, and also to train managers in the necessary interpersonal skills to help deal with workplace bullying. Pietersen (2005) also suggested that during the process of induction all new employees should be made aware of the personal values and behaviour that is expected of them as well as the culture that the organisation aims to uphold in order to limit bullying behaviour in the workplace.

Additionally, it was suggested that human resources, conflict management, and dispute resolution systems and strategies as well as legislation specific to the prohibition of bullying be introduced into the organisation (Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2006 as cited in Upton 2010). Moreover, Beehr et al (1978, as cited in Upton, 2010) suggests the introduction of legislature which will be specific to ensuring positive quality of life during work hours as well as necessary support from organisational parties (for example, colleagues, superiors, etc).

Stacey (1993, as cited in Pietersen, 2005) created a decision-making and problem solving model that may assist managers in facilitating the implementation of solutions in the organisation with regard to bullying behaviour (Figure 3, p. 78). Therefore, the decision-making power of encouraging and implementing practices in order to deal with workplace bullying in an organisation lies with the managers, and as such it is proposed that the steps mentioned in Stacey's (1993; as cited in Pietersen, 2005) model will possibly lead to less occurrences of workplace bullying. According to the model, workplace bullying can be managed in four steps: step 1, problem awareness; step 2, identifying the scope of the problem; step 3, identifying actions to solve the problem; and step 4, implementing the solutions. These four steps will be briefly explained below.

Step one states that management recognises and acknowledges that workplace bullying is present in the organisation. Step two involves the management of an organisation determining how prevalent the problem (bullying) is in the organisation. Pietersen (2005) suggests that this be done by establishing how aware employees are of workplace bullying, how strongly they feel about this negative behaviour and the impact that employees perceive this behaviour to have on the performance of the organisation. Pietersen (2005, p. 3) suggests a diagnostic framework that may determine the frequency of "different forms of workplace aggression" that occurs within the organisation. Step three involves selecting the appropriate policies and procedures, which will assist management in reducing the occurrence and recurrence of bullying incidents in the organisation. Lastly, step four encompasses the actual implementation and regular monitoring of the policies and procedures suggested in step three which should assist in minimising workplace bullying. A diagrammatic representation of the model is shown below.

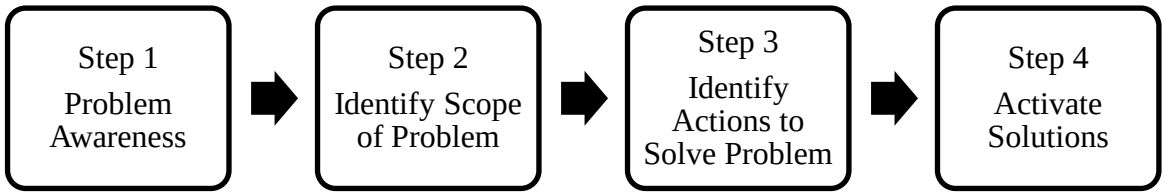

Figure 3: *Decision making and problem solving model*
(Stacey, 1993 as cited in Pietersen, 2005).

Therefore the above model suggests that workplace bullying can be managed if management and employees are educated about the occurrence and consequences of workplace bullying.

Chapter 6: Limitations

As with any other research and study that has been conducted, the current study has limitations. The limitations that were found will be discussed below.

6.1 Limitations of a cross-sectional design

In the current study, a cross-sectional design was applied in order to assess the relationship between workplace bullying, personality and work engagement among South African employees. As previously mentioned, (see Methodology, p. 28), a non-experimental cross-sectional design is one in which the sample of participants are selected independently and are tested at one time point without the study expanding over a period of time (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Additionally, cross-sectional research implies that a measurement of a particular variable or variables have been obtained at one point in time (Howell, 2016). Observations of this nature may be valuable in and of themselves, however the conclusiveness of the findings that stem from this type of research design and measurements stemming from a single instance may be limiting due to the fact that the passing of time may have an impact on the degree of a variable that is present at any point of time in the study (Howell, 2016). Therefore if any external or biological factors are present, absent or changing at any given time at which a variable is observed, the degree of the variable may increase or decrease which may impact on the accuracy of the variable and present an inaccurate representation and inaccurate reflection of the variable at any given point in time (Howell, 2016). In extending this, in relation to the current study and the study of the personality variables, it was found that certain variables may have increased making individuals more resilient at any given point in time which also relates to the lifecycle of bullying. Changes in the personality of individuals may have already occurred at the time the study was conducted due to factors such as workplace bullying. Therefore, a cross-sectional design may not always be the most accurate research design to use.

Additionally, it may be simple to assume that a cross-sectional design will assist in establishing cause and effect relationships between the variables; however, it is difficult to determine the underlying cause and effect relationship in a cross-sectional study due to its nature (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006).

6.2 Limitations of the questionnaire technique

As with cross-sectional research designs, trying to obtain and record moderating relationships that change over time using a questionnaire technique that represents one point in time may

result in less accurate results (Lieberman, 1986, as cited in Bernstein, 1992). For instance perceptions of bullying in particular cannot be accurately obtained through this method of observation given that single instance measurements do not provide an accurate means of understanding the context of the research fully. Additionally the type of information that is obtained from a questionnaire cannot be reliably obtained by using a questionnaire only (Hubbard, 1939 as cited in Upton, 2010). For example, attempting to understand the nature of the bullying and the specific type of bullying, how long it is/has been occurring, and the specific consequences are difficult to obtain through questionnaire techniques alone. This may serve as a problem for researchers who are attempting to understand the significance of certain effects of the variable under examination, as this will lead to spurious data and possibly fewer significant results that may be obtained through a larger sample size and additional data collection techniques (Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

Additionally, using a self-administered questionnaire technique may result in the researcher overlooking the possible influence of the moderator variable (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Therefore, the observation of a respondent or participant at a particular point in time is likely to occur in the presence of an extraneous variable which may be moderating the relationship between the main effect variables and as a result may be affecting the significance of any subsequent findings (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). As a result, researchers advise the use of questionnaires in conjunction with personal interviews in order to attain valuable and more accurate accounts from respondents. (Sudman, Greeley & Pinto, 1965 as cited in Upton, 2010; Pietersen, 2007 as cited in Upton, 2010).

6.3 Limitations of the sample

The sample in the current study was predominantly female and outweighed the male participants of the study by far. Additionally, in relation to the sample and the occupations of the sample, majority of the sample were in management positions. Given this, it may be implied that majority of the sample were female managers. To the researcher's knowledge there is no specific literature or research that has been conducted on the specificity of gender and the different personality variables or perceptions of workplace bullying to determine whether or not female managers portray such personality traits or are victims of perceptions of workplace bullying and if it is male individuals that are perpetrators of bullying.

Additionally, the current research study was only conducted on white collar employees, which thus excludes others, such as blue collar employees.

6.4 Limitations on generalisability and organisational context

With regard to generalisability and organisational context, it cannot be safe to say that the results that were obtained in the current study can be generalised throughout South African organisations. The reason for this is due to the manner in which the sample was obtained. A snowball sampling technique was used and whilst the minority of the individuals were from one particular organisation, the rest of the sample was from the WITS-Plus students and a snowball sample. As a result, this will not be able to determine any generalisability to all organisations in South Africa, as all the WITS-Plus students as well as those from the snowball sample belong to different organisations. In addition to this, with regard to the organisation that the study was conducted in, the response rate was very small and as such cannot be representative of the employees in South African organisations.

6.5 Limitations regarding spuriousness

Another limitation of the present study relates to spuriousness. According to Moreno-Jimenez et al., (2008 as cited in Upton, 2010), individuals may experience the act of bullying or perceived bullying at different levels that may or may not lead to negative outcomes on the individual. As a result of this, individual factors are necessary components when predicted perceived workplace bullying or workplace bullying as well as the type of personality that is preferred or employed when dealing with workplace bullying. These individual factors may lead to spuriousness in the findings. A means of overcoming spuriousness is through the use of multi-variate analysis. The use of such an analysis suggests that one should think about the joint distributions in the data (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). That is, instances where confounding variables are included in the design that can enhance both cross-sectional studies by checking for spuriousness (Upton, 2010). One particular variable of note with regard to spuriousness are the personality variables that, as discussed above, may explain certain deviations in the results and hence lead to unexpected findings. Thus, on examination of the confounding variables, if any are in the study, they can be statistically removed or separated from the other variables of the study (Dooley, 1985 as cited in Bernstein, 1992).

Chapter 7: Recommendations for future research and conclusion

7.1 Recommendations for future research

With regard to the limitation surrounding the cross-sectional design nature of the study, it is advisable or recommended that a longitudinal design be used in future research of this nature. Even though a longitudinal design has its disadvantages, the advantages far outweigh those of a cross-sectional design. For instance, a longitudinal research design allows the researcher to observe the participant or individual in their natural environment over a period of time whilst they are experiencing the stressor and the effects of the stressor (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006). This allows the researcher to examine any changes in behaviour of the participant at more than one stressful occasion (Upton, 2010). In addition, the observations are not affected by the necessary time facets that are possibly required in establishing cause-and-effect relationships (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006). Moreover, when examining the interaction (moderating) effects of the moderator variables, the effects of these variables on the independent and dependent variables may only appear at certain times during the observation and not necessarily at the time of the cross-sectional observation (Miles et al., 2001 as cited in Upton, 2010). Therefore, a longitudinal design will allow for the greater observation of these moderating effects.

Additionally, employing a longitudinal study will result in causality being established between perceptions of workplace bullying and the personality variables under investigation in the study. Causality in this association will contribute immensely to the study of bullying in the workplace, by providing a more comprehensive understanding into the relationship that exists between personality, perceptions and subsequent experiences of these perceptions (Howell, 2008). The use of a longitudinal design will further contribute towards the establishment of stronger implications for causality through proving the recurrence of an association between personality and perceptions of bullying over a period of time (Howell, 2008). Furthermore, longitudinal studies may also assist in establishing a greater understanding of the personalities that are present in individuals and their resulting intention towards tenure within the organisation based on person-environment fit (Ostroff et al., 1997 as cited in Upton, 2010). This would need an analysis of resignation based decisions made by individuals who are cannot fit and adapt to their work environment, and whether those individuals who choose not to leave the organization will shape their personalities over time to fit the climate of the organisation, or rather shape their immediate work environment over a period of time to match their personalities (Ostroff et al., 1997 as cited in Upton, 2010). In

addition to the above, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques may also provide more accurate data from respondents on the subject of workplace bullying, which will in turn establish within the researcher, a broader appreciation of the bullying experience holistically (Pietersen, 2005 as cited in Upton, 2010).

It is also essential to determine the nature of the organisational culture within which these organisations are operating as it may assist in explaining the occurrence or non-occurrence of workplace bullying and subsequently the type of individuals that are employed in the organisation which may contribute to the positive or negative personality style within the organisation (Rooke, Seymour, Fellows, 2003 as cited in Upton, 2010; Xenikou, 2005 as cited in Upton, 2010). In the current study, there was a low occurrence of actual workplace bullying and it may therefore be advantageous to examine the organisational culture of the organisations that the individuals came from in order to understand what they are doing that is "right" apart from the overall tradition and culture of the organisation (Upton, 2010).

Recent research on workplace bullying has illustrated its importance in industry (Upton, 2010). Organisations are encouraged to introduce employee assistance programmes or implement policies to assist in helping employees deal with the stresses of negative acts and for those who perceive themselves to be bullied (Pritchard et al., 1973 as cited in Upton, 2010; Beehr et al., 1978 as cited in Upton, 2010; Ostroff et al., 1997 as cited in Upton, 2010; Richards et al., 2003 as cited in Upton, 2010; Dao et al., 2006 as cited in Upton, 2010; Lingard et al., 2007 as cited in Upton, 2010). Therefore, future research should consider exploring the existence, implementation and usefulness of employee assistance programmes.

In the current study, with regard to the current sample, race was not seen as a significant influence over a victim's perceptions of workplace bullying. However, given the historical background of South Africa pertaining to race, it may have a powerful influence over perceptions of negative acts in the workplace (Upton, 2010). Being part of a particular previously disadvantaged racial group may impact on an individual's overall perceptions of negative acts in the workplace in such a way that individuals that have been historically persecuted may be more inclined to perceive discrimination or bullying (Nel et al., 2008 as cited in Upton 2010). It is advised that future research aims to contextualise workplace bullying specifically within a South Africa context, specifically giving attention to minority groups to establish the impact of race on perceptions of bullying in the workplace.

7.2 Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the relationship between workplace bullying, work engagement and personality where personality traits were aimed at moderating the relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. The current study has used a vast amount of research in order to explain workplace bullying in more detail as well as the moderating effect of personality on work engagement when faced with negative effects such as workplace bullying. Certain results pertaining to the study were unexpected at the onset of the results being obtained, however after further looking into the discussion and a plethora of other research, the results were put into context and it should be clarified that personality does not always moderate the relationship with workplace bullying and work engagement and this relationship should depend on the level of the personality variable in an individual. Therefore, the current study offered individual level associations between workplace bullying and work engagement.

Some of the findings were inconsistent with the hypothesis of the current study; however recommendations for future research have addressed some of the ways in which the study could yield more significant results in the future.

From an organisational perspective, it is their responsibility to ensure that their employees are functioning at optimum levels of productivity and this rests in the hands of Human resource practitioners and industrial psychologists within an organisation. Failing in such responsibilities is a dire implication for the organisation; therefore it is important for practitioners and industrial psychologists to grasp an understanding of the type of employees present in the organisation and to make sure that they exist in a positive productive work environment that is conducive to the manifestation of positive and productive employees.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisation Covering Letter

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Tasneem Omar, a Masters in Organisational Psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, the area of research is designed to investigate the relationship between Workplace Bullying, Personality and Work Engagement in South African context. Participation will consist of completing an online survey that would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Please note that participation is voluntary. Employees should be made aware that there are no direct benefits related to participating in the study. Additionally, no employee will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire. Anonymity will be assured as there will be no identifying characteristics that will lead to the exposure of the individual participants' identity. While questions are asked about employees' personal circumstances, no identifying information, such as their name or I.D. number, is asked for, and as such they will remain anonymous. Participants are requested to complete questionnaires through a secure and encrypted website. As such, this will ensure that no-one, other than the researcher and supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires, and will ensure their confidentiality. Responses will not be used for any purposes, other than research. Informed consent is assumed by the completion of the questionnaires, i.e. if participants choose to complete and submit the online questionnaire, this will be considered as informed consent to participate in the study. However, participants will be able to withdraw from the study until such time as they submit the questionnaires. Questionnaire responses will be collected a month from when the link has been sent to employees. Be assured that data would solely be used for academic purposes and would in no

way be accessed by the management in the organisation as the organisation will only receive a summary of the overall results. The results will be presented as group trends, which make it impossible to identify any particular respondent. Feedback to participants in the form of a brief summary of group trends is available on request once the study is complete; which also ensures no single participant can be identified. Additionally, the data will be stored indefinitely in an anonymous spreadsheet.

Allowing the employees to be invited to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on workplace bullying with regard to how different personalities experience bullying as well as how workplace bullying relates to work engagement. This may provide information which will assist the organisation to introduce management techniques to deal with bullying issues in the workplace.

The research study is an independent study which will be conducted under the supervision of an Industrial Psychologist at Wits University. Participants should feel free to contact the researcher or supervisor should any questions arise.

Kind Regards

Tasneem Omar

Masters Student

Department of Psychology

University of the Witwatersrand

Email: Tasneem.omar@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Colleen Bernstein

Colleen.bernstein@wits.ac.za

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Tasneem Omar, and I am currently a Masters in Organisational Psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, the area of research is designed to investigate the relationship between Workplace Bullying, Personality and Work Engagement in the South African context.

Participation will consist of completing an online survey that would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Please note that participation is voluntary. There will be no direct benefits related to participating in this study. Additionally, you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire.

Anonymity will be assured as there will be no identifying characteristics that will lead to the exposure of your identity. While questions are asked about your personal circumstances, no identifying information, such as your name or I.D. number, is asked for, and as such you will remain anonymous. You are requested to complete questionnaires through a secure and encrypted website. As such, this will ensure that no-one, other than the researcher and supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires, and will ensure your confidentiality. Responses will not be used for any purposes, other than research. Informed consent is assumed by the completion of the questionnaires, i.e. if participants choose to complete and submit the online questionnaire, this will be considered as informed consent to participate in the study. However, you will be able to withdraw from the study until such time as you submit the questionnaires. Questionnaire responses will be collected a month from when the link has been sent to employees.

Be assured that data would solely be used for academic purposes and would in no way be accessed by the management in the organisation as the organisation will only receive a

summary of the overall results. The results will be presented as group trends, which make it impossible to identify any particular respondent. Feedback to you, in the form of a brief summary of group trends, is available on request once the study is complete; which also ensures that you cannot be identified. Additionally, the data will be stored indefinitely in an anonymous spreadsheet.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on workplace bullying with regard to how different personalities experience bullying as well as how workplace bullying relates to work engagement in a South African context. This may provide information which will assist the organisation to introduce management techniques to deal with bullying issues in the workplace.

The research study is an independent study which will be conducted under the supervision of an Industrial Psychologist at Wits University. Please contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions.

Kind Regards

Tasneem Omar

Masters Student

Department of Psychology

University of the Witwatersrand

Email: Tasneem.omar@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Colleen Bernstein

Colleen.bernstein@wits.ac.za

Appendix 2.1: Participant information sheet (WITS Plus students)

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Tasneem Omar, and I am currently a Masters in Organisational Psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand. In the fulfilment of this degree the area of research is designed to investigate the relationship between Workplace Bullying, Personality and Work Engagement in the South African context.

Participation will consist of completing an online survey that would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Please note that participation is voluntary and you will be not be disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire. However, students registered for First Year Psychology will receive a 1% toward their final mark as part of the course credit. Other than this, there will be no direct benefits or risks associated in completing the survey.

Should you wish to earn the 1% for participating in the survey, you will be required to provide your student number in the space provided. However, once the data has been downloaded and your 1% has been recorded by your course coordinator, your student number will be deleted from the dataset to ensure your complete anonymity.

You are requested to complete questionnaires through a secure and encrypted website. As such, this will ensure that no-one, other than the researcher and supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires, and will ensure your confidentiality. Responses will not be used for any purposes, other than research. Informed consent is assumed by the completion of the questionnaires, i.e. if participants choose to complete and submit the online questionnaire, this will be considered as informed consent to participate in the study. However, you will be able to withdraw from the study until such time as you submit the questionnaires.

Be assured that data would solely be used for academic purposes and this research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on workplace bullying with regard to how different personalities experience bullying as well as how workplace bullying relates to work engagement in a South African context.

The research study is an independent study which will be conducted under the supervision of an Industrial Psychologist at Wits University. Your participation in the study will be highly appreciated. Please contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions.

Kind Regards

Tasneem Omar

Masters Student

Department of Psychology

University of the Witwatersrand

Email: Tasneem.omar@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Colleen Bernstein

Colleen.bernstein@wits.ac.za

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Cover Letter, Biographical Questionnaire

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Strictly Confidential

This questionnaire forms part of an independent research project being conducted by the Department of Psychology of the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand.

This study aims to assess how you feel regarding various aspects of your work. As this is an independent research project your confidentiality is ensured. No persons will have access to your responses or opinions, so please answer each item as accurately as possible. You are not required to state your name anywhere on this questionnaire so your responses will remain anonymous. On completion of this questionnaire kindly send your response to the link provided. No one other than the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data.

Before filling in the questionnaire, please provide the following information:

Biographical Information Form

By completing this questionnaire I consent to participating in a study workplace bullying, work engagement and personality, by Tasneem Omar (Supervisor: Dr. Colleen Bernstein). I understand that: Participation is voluntary, no information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Please mark the box that describes your demographics:

Student Number: _____ (Only inserted into the questionnaire uploaded for the WITS Plus students)

What is your gender?

Male	Female

What is your age in years?

What is your race?

African	Indian	Coloured	White	Other

What is your job title?

_____

What is your job grade?

_____

Appendix 4: Negative Acts Questionnaire

(Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen & Hellesoy, 1994)

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace. Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?

Please circle the number that best corresponds with your experience over the last six months where 1=Never and 5 = Daily:

1) Someone withholding information which affects your performance	1	2	3	4	5
2) Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	1	2	3	4	5
3) Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	1	2	3	4	5
4) Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	1	2	3	4	5
5) Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	1	2	3	4	5
6) Being ignored, excluded or being 'reprimanded'	1	2	3	4	5
7) Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.	1	2	3	4	5
8) Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	1	2	3	4	5
9) Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way.	1	2	3	4	5
10) Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	1	2	3	4	5
11) Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
12) Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	1	2	3	4	5
13) Persistent criticism of your work and effort	1	2	3	4	5
14) Having your opinions and views ignored	1	2	3	4	5
15) Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with 16) Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	1	2	3	4	5

17) Having allegations made against you	1	2	3	4	5
18) Excessive monitoring of your work	1	2	3	4	5
19) Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	1	2	3	4	5
20) Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	1	2	3	4	5
21) Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	1	2	3	4	5
22) Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	1	2	3	4	5

23) Have you been bullied at work? We define bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a once-off incident as bullying.

Using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work over the last six months?

No	
Yes, but only rarely	
Yes, now and then	
Yes, several times per week	
Yes, almost daily	

Appendix 5: Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Shortened Version)

(Schaufeli et al., 2006)

The following 9 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. Responses are as follows: 1 =Never (Never); 2= Almost Never (A few times a year or less); 3= Rarely (Once a month or less); 4= Often (Once a week); 5 = Very Often (A few times a week) and 6 = Always (Everyday)

1) At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) I am enthusiastic about my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) My job inspires me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6) I feel happy when I work intensely.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7) I am proud of the work that I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8) I am immersed in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9) I get carried away when I am working.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 6: Abbreviated Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-A) (Neuroticism)

The following items in the subscale follow a dichotomous response format (Yes or No). Cross the response that most appeals to you.

1) Does your mood often go up and down?	Yes	No
2) Do you often feel 'fed-up'?	Yes	No
3) Would you call yourself a nervous person?	Yes	No
4) Are you a worrier?	Yes	No
5) Do you suffer from 'nerves'?	Yes	No
6) Do you often feel lonely?	Yes	No

Appendix 7: Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS)

(Assertiveness)

Directions: Indicate how characteristic or descriptive each of the following statements is of you by using the code given below:

+ 3 very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

+ 2 rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive

+ 1 somewhat characteristic of me, slightly descriptive

- 1 somewhat uncharacteristic of me, slightly descriptive

- 2 rather uncharacteristic of me, quite descriptive

- 3 very uncharacteristic of me, extremely descriptive

1) Most people seem to be more aggressive and assertive than I am.*
2) I have hesitated to make or accept dates because of shyness.*
3) When the food served at a restaurant is not done to my satisfaction, I complain about it to the waiter or waitress.
4) I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been injured.*
5) If a salesman has gone to considerable trouble to show me merchandise which is not quite suitable, I have a difficult time in saying "No". *
6) When I am asked to do something, I insist upon knowing why.
7) There are times when I look for a good vigorous argument.
8) I strive to get ahead as well as most people in my position.
9) To be honest, people often take advantage of me.*
10) I enjoy starting new conversations with new acquaintances and strangers.
11) I often do not know what to say to attractive persons of the opposite sex.*
12) I will hesitate to make phone calls to business establishments and institutions.*
13) I would rather apply for a job or for admission to a college by writing letters than by going though with personal interviews.*
14) I find it embarrassing to return merchandise.*
15) If a close and respected relative were annoying me, I would smother my feelings rather than express my annoyance.*
16) I have avoided asking questions in fear of sounding stupid.*

17) During an argument I am sometimes afraid that I will get so upset that I will shake all over.*
18) If a famed and respected lecturer makes a statement which I think is incorrect, I will have the audience hear my point of view as well.
19) I avoid arguing over prices with clerks and salesmen.*
20) When I have done something important or worthwhile, I manage to let others know about it.
21) I am open and frank about my feelings.
22) If someone has been spreading false and bad stories about me, I see him/her as soon as possible to "have a talk" about it.
23) I often have a hard time saying "No". *
24) I tend to bottle up my emotions rather than make a scene. *
25) I complain about poor service in a restaurant and elsewhere.
26) When I am given a compliment, I sometimes just don't know what to say. *
27) If a couple near me in a theatre or at a lecture were conversing rather loudly, I would ask them to be quiet or to take their conversation elsewhere.
28) Anyone attempting to push ahead of me in a line is in for a good battle.
29) I am quick to express an opinion.
30) There are times when I just can't say anything. *

Appendix 8: Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R)
(Optimism and Pessimism)

Please answer the following questions about yourself by indicating the extent of your agreement using the following scale: 0 = Strongly Disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Neutral; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree

1) In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	0	1	2	3	4
2) It's easy for me to relax.	0	1	2	3	4
3) If something can go wrong for me, it will.	0	1	2	3	4
4) I'm always optimistic about my future.	0	1	2	3	4
5) I enjoy my friends alot.	0	1	2	3	4
6) It's important for me to keep busy.	0	1	2	3	4
7) I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	0	1	2	3	4
8) I don't get upset too easily	0	1	2	3	4
9) I rarely count on good things happening to me	0	1	2	3	4
10) Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix 9: DRS – II (Short Form)
(Sinclair & Oliver, 2003).

(Hardiness)

Please select the answer that most applies to you based on the following response scale:

- 1 = Definitely False
- 2 = Mostly False
- 3 = Don't Know
- 4 = Mostly True
- 5 = Definitely True

1) My successes are because of my effort and ability	1	2	3	4	5
2) No matter how hard I try, my efforts usually accomplish nothing	1	2	3	4	5
3) I enjoy most things in life	1	2	3	4	5
4) Sometimes, life is meaningless to me	1	2	3	4	5
5) I take a head-on approach to facing problems in my life	1	2	3	4	5
6) It bothers me when my daily routine gets interrupted	1	2	3	4	5
7) I feel confident I can handle just about any challenge	1	2	3	4	5
8) I often feel helpless	1	2	3	4	5
9) Most of my life gets spent doing things that are worthwhile	1	2	3	4	5
10) I often feel alienated from the people around me	1	2	3	4	5
11) I see really stressful events as opportunities to grow personally	1	2	3	4	5
12) I don't like to make changes in my everyday schedule	1	2	3	4	5
13) My successes are related to the choices I make	1	2	3	4	5
14) Trying hard doesn't pay since most things still don't turn out right	1	2	3	4	5
15) Most days, life is really interesting	1	2	3	4	5
16) I usually feel all alone in the world	1	2	3	4	5
17) I often wake up eager to take up my life wherever it left off	1	2	3	4	5
18) I carefully plan just about everything I do	1	2	3	4	5

DRS-II Scoring Key:

SUBSCALE	ITEMS
Control	1, 7, 13
Powerlessness	2, 8, 14
Commitment	3, 9, 15
Alienation	4, 10, 16
Challenge	5, 11, 17
Rigidity	6, 12, 18

The positive dimensions (Control, Commitment, and Challenge) indicate that more resources are available for the individual for combating stress. Higher scores are associated with higher levels of hardiness. Alternatively, the negative dimensions (Powerlessness, Alienation, and Rigidity) indicate higher vulnerability to stress (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003). Higher scores on this dimension are therefore associated with lower levels of hardiness (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003)