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Moosa, M.

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FROM LEARNER TO TEACHER: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT BULLYING VICTIMISATION

Moeniera Moosa[1]

ABSTRACT

Research shows that first-year pre-service teachers enter initial teacher education programmes with certain beliefs in place about schooling. This paper explores first-year pre-service teachers' experiences of, beliefs and attitudes about bullying. Social Learning Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour are used to shed light on bullying as a learned behaviour and the impact this could have on how pre-service teacher will handle incidents at school. Three hundred and five first-year pre-service teachers participated in a mixed-methods research study. Multiple-choice and open-ended questionnaires were collated and analysed. The paper argues that pre-service teachers use their personal experiences, beliefs and attitudes about bullying victimisation to make decisions on how to assist learners. The findings of this research indicate that more than half of this cohort has witnessed bullying at school at some point. They did nothing about it because of fear, inadequate reporting systems at schools and lack of action been taken by teachers. Should they witness bullying in schools as teachers they might opt to take the same approach if they are not adequately prepared. Nonetheless, they are willing to use their experiences of bullying to become proactive teachers and stop the cycle of bullying.

Keywords: *Pre-service teachers; bullying; violence; victimology; bystanders; Social Learning Theory; Theory of Planned Behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

Violence in schools around the world, specifically bullying, is receiving more attention both internationally (Hymel & Swearer, 2015) and locally (Burton & Leoschut, 2013 Burton, 2008; De Wet, 2005; Lets'opha & Jacobs, 2017; Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007; Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014; Mncube & Harber, 2013; South African Council of Educators, 2011). It is not uncommon to witness and or experience violent crimes in South Africa. Hence it can be argued that violent crimes are rampant in South Africa and are a major psychosocial problem (Stevens, 2013). In addition, learners in South Africa are observing how society at large is dealing with matters of discontent through violence, destructions and aggression and this type of behaviour in some instances has spilt over into school classrooms. As such some schools and classroom have become spaces where criminal activities and violent acts are the norm. These kinds of behaviours presents a unique challenge for teachers, who often have to deal with their own personal concerns and experiences with regards to violence and victimization, specifically bullying and aggression.

Extensive and pioneering research on bullying has been done in the Scandinavian countries by Olweus (1978, 1993, 1999, 2001) and is applicable for this paper in that bullying and violence are subcategories of aggression with bullying and violence overlapping as seen with physical bullying. Large-scale surveys on the prevalence of bullying in schools have been conducted internationally in Sweden (Olweus, 1994), England and Japan (Kanetsuna, Smith

1. Dr. Senior Lecturer, Studies in Education, School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Email: moeniera.moosa@wits.ac.za

& Morita, 2006; Rios-Ellis, Bellamy & Shoji, 2000), the United States (Dake, Price & Telljohann & Funk, 2003; Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel & Haynie, 2007), Italy (Gini, 2004) and Australia (Rigby & Slee, 1991). These studies have indicated that no child or school context can claim to be immune from bullying as bullying does not choose specific school contexts, wealth or poverty, gender, race, age or religion.

Studies in South Africa have indicated that a fifth (Burton & Leoschut, 2013) to over half (Mncube & Harber, 2013) of learners have experienced or have been exposed to violence at school. Bullying is the most common form of violence in South African schools (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013) that school principals are concerned about (Zuze, Reddy, Juan, Hannan, Visser & Winnaar, 2016). The most prevalent form of bullying in South African schools are physical fights and been assaulted (Mncube & Harber, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013) which had led to severe injuries in some cases. An example is a 13-year-old boy died after being attacked by pupils at a school (Lindeque, 2017: np), while a different 13-year-old, Cape Town boy required facial surgery following a bullying incident (Leoschut, 2017: np). Of concern is that perpetrators have felt that their actions are justified (Lets'opha & Jacobs, 2017). Based on these findings it can be hypothesized that first-year pre-service teachers enter initial teacher education institutions with multiple degrees of exposure to bullying at school, in their communities and from social media (Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Burton, 2008). These experiences could affect their social adjustment and relationships with others which may lead to disorders such as depression, anxiety and conduct problems (Murray-Close, Ostrov & Crick, 2007; Yoon, Barton & Taiariol, 2004).

Additional, studies have also been conducted internationally (Kõiv, 2015; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Gerberich, Nachreiner, Ryan, Church, McGovern, Geisser, Mongin, Watt, Feda, Sage & Pinder, 2014) as well as in South Africa (De Wet, 2005, 2006, 2010) on teachers experiences of being bullied. These studies have shown that there is an increase in educator targeted bullying (Kõiv, 2015), with teachers being more at risk to be bullied within the first seven years in the profession (Gerberich et al, 2014). In South Africa teachers mostly experience direct and indirect forms of verbal bullying (De Wet, 2006; De Wet, 2014; Kruger, 2011), which includes threats, humiliation, being shouted at and being humiliated by learners and those who hold managerial positions (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015). However, there is no research in South Africa on how pre-service teachers' experiences of bullying and aggression affects the decisions they would need to make as teachers with regard to bullying in their classrooms. Thus, what makes this study unique is that pre-service teachers' experiences of bullying are explored and how these experiences affect their level of self-efficacy to deal with bullying incidence as teachers are expounded on. This study aims to fill the gap in the research with regard to the role of teachers in learner's experiences of bullying (Graham, 2016), specifically what previous personal experiences they have had with bullying and how these experiences influences their decisions when faced with dealing with learner bullying.

The argument presented in the paper is that pre-service teachers enter university with various academic, personal, social and emotional experiences that influence their beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning (Flores & Day, 2006) as well as social justice incidents. The study thus takes into account how beliefs about violence, victimisation and bullying impact and influence the decisions pre-service teachers make with regards to social justice phenomena. Thus the aim of this study was to explore first-year pre-service teachers' experiences of violence, aggression and bullying whilst they were learners. In addition, how these beliefs will impact on the prevention and intervention strategies that pre-service teachers

will employ during encounters with violence, victimisation and bullying whilst on teaching practice. An understanding of pre-service teacher's experiences and views would contribute to the field of victimology specifically with regards to how the cycle of violence in schools can be perpetuated if those who are responsible for the well-being of learners have not processed and overcome their own experiences.

PERSPECTIVES

Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1977) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), are two theoretical frameworks used as lenses in this paper. Social Learning Theory states that humans learn largely through interaction or observation of others (Bandura 1977). According to this theory, learning by observing and imitating others can be regarded as an effective way of learning as well as a meaningful method of teaching (Davis, 1983). Children have the ability to imitate their parents, teachers, other adults who influence their lives as well as what they observe in society. It can thus be claimed that individuals' behaviours are guided by social learning with regard to societal norms, values and beliefs of for example crime and violence, which will equip them to adjust successfully into society. As such pre-service teachers do not enter university without various views and experiences of various aspects including bullying and aggression. Based on the premise of social learning theory bullying and aggression can be viewed as a learned behaviour that is greatly influenced by learning experiences (Louw & Edwards, 1995) either at home or at school. Pre-service teachers have observed how their peers, teachers, parents and other adults deal with bullying and aggression and this could influence how they view their role in these incidents. As such, it can be hypothesised that these observations can play a powerful role in the formulation of teachers' perceptions and decision-making processes about bullying and aggression. Nonetheless, observation of actions is not the only indicator for the reproduction of actions. Individual motives also play an important role. As such the Theory of Planned Behaviour will be the second framework used in this paper as this theory aims to explain human behaviour as a contributing factor as well.

Theory of Planned Behaviour focuses on "theoretical constructs concerned with individual motivational factors" (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008: 95), in an attempt to explain the links between human beliefs and behaviour. Hence, individual motivational factors will impact on the likelihood of performing specific behaviours (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). According to this theory, if people feel confident that they are able to enact certain behaviours they will do so. Therefore, teachers' level of self-efficacy, which can be influenced by their observations and beliefs about bullying and aggression, could influence their actions when dealing with bullying incidents. Therefore, pre-service teacher's personal experiences of bullying and aggression at school could affect their beliefs about what could be done about bullying incidents at school.

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

Key role players

There are normally three key role players in any bullying incident, namely the perpetrator, the victim and the bystander (Weingarten, 2003). While each of these role players have a different goal and focus, all three are affected by the occurrence of bullying and aggression (Coloroso, 2005). Both bullies and victims occupy key positions in bullying incidents but others who observe aggression, although indirectly affected, also play an important role (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). This raises the question of what role are teachers expected to play when it comes to dealing with bullying and aggression in schools. As such teachers can be regarded as the fourth key role player in the cycle of bullying.

Role of teachers

Teachers are considered "key agents of change" (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003:19), to help learners think critically, solve problems, and enhance their understanding of content and master various skills. Bullying often forms part of the hidden curriculum (Beran, 2006) which pre-service teachers and in-service teachers are not always equipped to handle. Yet teachers are expected to play a pivotal role in recognising and responding to bullying incidents (Dake, Price, Telljohann & Funk, 2003; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005; Graham, 2016). Furthermore, teachers generally agree that action should be taken in cases of bullying (Burger, Strohmeier, Spröber, Bauman & Rigby, 2015:199), but are often unsure about what to do. As such teachers need to have a social justice agenda that is driven by a willingness and skill set to enforce norms and standards that will have an impact on curbing violent behaviours not only in their classroom but in the wider community as well.

Teachers can exert a great deal of influence on learners' social experiences, in the school context but also the wider community, through their interactions with learners, particularly on the way they handle incidents of violence and bullying. Teachers are also expected to use bullying incidents as "teachable moments" (Graham, 2016: 141), to engage learners on the topic of bullying not only as learners but also as citizens in various communities in South Africa. However, teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007) in their classrooms. Furthermore, learners' perceptions on how effectively teachers respond to bullying differ from that of teachers (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004; Rigby & Bauman, 2010). Moreover, learners are often reluctant to report bullying behaviours to teachers (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003; Rigby & Barnes, 2002), as they feel that no action will be taken against perpetrators (Yoon, Sulkowski & Bauman, 2016). It is imperative that teachers remain cognisant of the fact that social justice norms and standards are not just limited to school and or community contexts but that criminal acts such as violence and bullying have no boundaries and often migrate between school and community contexts. As such teachers are expected to model acceptable social behaviours to learners.

Teachers' personal experiences

Teachers' personal experiences and beliefs about social justice would influence their willingness to assist or intervene during incidents of bullying and aggression (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008) in their classrooms. Their own experiences of being victims, perpetrators or bystanders may enhance their ability to communicate effectively when combatting bullying at school and feel empathy for victims (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006), or take action (Yoon, Sulkowski & Bauman, 2014), or be the aggressors (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013), or simply be observers who ignore or feel helpless and afraid about bullying incidents (Burger et al, 2015; Craig & Pepler, 1995) or express an intolerance of victims' inability to address their own problems and to defend themselves (Craig, Bell & Leschied, 2011). As such what is overlooked in the literature are teachers' dispositional coping styles with regard to bullying (Kahn, Jones & Wieland, 2012) and how this will impact on their views and actions to drive a social justice agenda at schools. Furthermore, teachers' moral orientation with regard to justice and fairness will also influences how they respond to bullying incidences (Ellis & Shute 2007) at school.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

At WITS University, first-year pre-service teachers previously had two teaching practice sessions, one in May and the other in September. During the May session pre-service teachers remain on campus and participate in a campus-based programme which involved them attending input sessions on various topics on professional and personal development to prepare them for their practicum session in September. The professional development sessions included discussion on dealing with challenging behaviours, how schools function, classroom practice and being a professional. The personal development session focused on communication skills, representations of teaching, personal development, reflections and teaching as an emotional job. In addition to the input session pre-service teachers also completed various tasks linked to this session. Bullying in schools was one of the topics covered in the section on challenging behaviours. Pre-service teachers were requested to complete a multiple-choice questionnaire (included at the end) on their personal reflections of bullying in this session. In September, all first-year pre-service teachers were placed at a school for their teaching practice. At the end of this session pre-service teachers were requested to answer the following open-ended questions linked to bullying and aggression:

- Bullying was one of the topics covered on the campus-based programme. Explain any experiences of bullying whilst on teaching practice. If none, state why you think so.

- What have you learnt about bullying through your experiences as a learner at school?

- Identify at least two aspects of your experiences of bullying at school that will influence your role as both an education student and a future teacher. How would you handle it as a teacher if the same situation occurred? How would you avoid it as a teacher if the same situation occurred?

Research Question

The overall research question this study addressed was: How has pre-service teacher's experiences at school influenced how they perceive their role as teachers with regard to bullying and aggression? This was enhanced by engagement with the following sub-questions:

- What are pre-service teachers' personal experiences of bullying?

- How have these experiences influenced their views of bullying and aggression?

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method design was used for data collection. This research method proved useful in showing the development of the pre-service teachers' understanding of their role in mediating bullying, the importance of reflection on their beliefs and the need to devise practices that addressed bullying in schools. Furthermore, this design allowed for breadth and depth in understanding pre-service teachers' experiences of bullying and aggression (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). The mixed-methods approach provided a longitudinal method of inquiry which allowed for a multiple-angle argument (Creswell, 2008) on bullying experiences and beliefs to emerge.

In the first quantitative phase of this study the multiple-choice questionnaire that was completed during the month of May was used to determine pre-service teachers' personal accounts of bullying and aggression as learners at school. The quantitative data assisted in testing pre-service teacher's experiences of bullying through observational learning and imitation as well as individual motivational factors.

The information from the open-ended questionnaires, collected in September were used in the second qualitative phase of this study. In this exploratory follow-up, pre-service teachers' personal experiences of bullying, as well as their experiences of bullying whilst on teaching practice were explored.

Sampling

A purposive and convenient sample technique was used in that all participants were registered as first-year pre-service teachers at a higher education institution (Palys, 2008). As schools are regarded as the most common place that bullying takes place, first-year pre-service teachers could possibly be knowledgeable about or have experienced some forms of social injustices, such as bullying and aggression as learners at schools (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). First-year pre-service teachers were deliberately selected as they could provide the information on bullying experiences by virtue of recent experience (Bernard, 2002). Overall, 305 first years consented to participate this study. Two-hundred-and-thirty participants were female and 75 were male. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 45 years. Sixty-two of the participants specialised in foundation phase teaching, 73 in the intermediate phase and 170 in the secondary phase. They were a heterogeneous group from diverse racial, cultural, social, gender, age and schooling backgrounds. This assisted in enhancing the variability of the data.

Analysis of data

In total, data from 305 multiple-choice questionnaires were collated to present a numeric account and establish frequency of pre-service teachers' exposure to bullying at school. In the second phase, data was collected from 56 participants. The reason for the decline in participant numbers is that during the last week on their teaching practice #FeesMustFall commenced and students were not on campus. Normal university activities were assumed a few weeks later under difficult and traumatic circumstances especially for first-year pre-service teachers who opted not to submit this information.

The qualitative data was analysed by means of an inductive open-coding method. All similar ideas were grouped into categories and sub-categories. These are substantiated by quotes from participants. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data, evidence from the multiple-choice questionnaires, as well as the open-ended questionnaires were compared and incorporated by ensuring that numeric data was substantiated by narrative accounts to enable an accurately described and present a true picture (Shenton, 2004) thus enhancing credibility.

Due attention was given to ethical considerations of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

This section focuses firstly, on the overall findings of the multiple-choice questionnaire (participants' personal experiences of bullying and aggression at schools). Secondly, on participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire (how these experiences have affected

their views about bullying and aggression) and lastly how their experiences influenced how they viewed their role as teachers with regard to bullying and aggression.

Personal accounts of role played in acts of bullying and aggression

Three hundred and five pre-service teachers completed the questionnaire about their personal experiences of bullying. They could select more than one choice for each question by indicating if they regarded themselves as a bully, a victim or a bystander. There was no restriction on how many options they could select.

The majority of participants (66%) regarded themselves as bystanders to bullying incidents because they *"did not report it nor did anything about it"*, (Participant No. 8) but instead would *"just sit and watch and listen"* (Participant No. 25), since they felt *"afraid of being bullied"* (Participant No. 104), themselves. Eighteen percent of the participants viewed themselves as victims because they were *"bullied most of the time"* (Participant No. 24) and *"constantly physically attacked by fellow learners"* (Participant No. 34), which forced them to *"move schools to stop"* (Participant No. 207) the bullying. Twelve percent of participants said they assumed a combination of roles (bystander, victim, bully). This view was articulated by one participant who stated that:

> "…in primary school I consider[ed] myself a victim because I was pushed and people said mean things to me but in high school I was a bystander because I did not want to get involved in any type of bullying due to [my] primary school [experiences]*"* (Participant No. 210).

Another participant stated that he *"was a victim at some stage of* [his] *schooling, but when* [he] *got smarter* [he] *started being a bully"* (Participant No.105) himself. Only three percent of participants viewed themselves as bullies. One participant felt that he was a bully because he "*would use* [his] *power as class representative and tease others knowing that they won't say anything back"* (Participant No. 29). Furthermore, he was *"always* [the] *teacher's favourite, so* [he] *knew* [he] *could do what* [he] *wanted to and get away with it"* (Participant No. 29). Participants who regarded themselves as bullies stated that they did so simply because they had the power and means to do so and also because they had been bullied.

From the above data, two thirds of the participants were bystanders and as such this group of prospective teachers could possibly be desensitised or feel disempowered with regard to experiences of bullying. Despite two thirds of them witnessing bullying at school more that 80 percent of them did not let this deter them from attending school. Furthermore, verbal bullying was the form of bullying most observed by participants which might lead them to adopt an attitude of 'sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never harm me' when it comes to learners in their classrooms. Verbal bullying is also the most unnoticed form of bullying (Coloroso, 2005), since teachers tend to focus more on physically bullying experiences because it is more overt. Fewer participants did not want to go to school because of bullying (16%) while others, despite exposure, were happy to go to school (83%). Thus, the exposure to bullying and aggression in schools could be viewed as a normal everyday occurrence to these prospective teachers which could influence how they viewed and deal with bullying in their classroom once they become teachers. This group of pre-service teachers might opt to do nothing when confronted with bullying as most of them were bystanders at school who lacked the skills, knowledge or will power to act against bullying. As such the cycle of bullying could continue with this cohort been in a position of authority which will have a negative social impact on the school climate and broader society.

As victimisation is associated with poor physical, social and psychological well-being (Slee, 1994: 100) this cohort of pre-service teachers would need to firstly deal with their personal experiences before they would be able to assist learners in their care. Pre-service teachers, especially those who regard themselves as bystanders and victims would need to be aware that people who use aggression are not concerned with the merits of an issue; they are only interested in winning (Olivier & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2000: 235). This would be challenging for this cohort as victims and bystanders of aggression often believe that they cannot control their environment (Sander & Phye, 2004: 18). This is of concern as the majority of participants were bystanders who through observational learning could enact these behaviours at a later stage as there is a link between human beliefs and behaviours as indicated by the Theory of Planned behaviour.

The process of moving from being a victim to a bystander, and then a bully, is a common occurrence in the bullying cycles (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2004) since often children learn how to bully by being bullied and therefore become a bully. As such participants from this study, who were bystanders and victims, could become offenders as teachers and continue the cycle of violence by becoming victim-offenders. It is worth noting that this group of participant's individual motivational factors to become bullies or bystanders were influences by their observational experiences which equipped them to imitate others. As such it might not be easy for them to dismantle these motives simply because they are going to be teachers. On the contrary, being in a position of authority as a teacher might increase their motivation to assert power and influence over others and become the perpetrators in the cycle of bullying.

The effect personal experiences of bullying and aggression has on pre-service teachers' views

Personal experiences with bullying will make them proactive teachers

From the qualitative data overall 79 percent (n = 56) of the participants felt that their experiences of bullying and aggression since learners at schools would assist them to become "*better teachers*" (Participant No. 98) even though they were "*never sure what exactly to do"* (Participant No. 265) when they witnessed bullying. They believed that *"much needs to be done in schools regarding bullying so that its rate may decrease"* (Participant No. 288).

Nonetheless, because of their personal experience of bullying they felt the need *"to report every bullying incident while on teaching practice"* (Participant No. 120). Thirty-six percent believed that *"teachers and learners can work together"* (Participant Nos 71 & 56) to prevent bullying. One reason for this decision is that they believed that: *"…teachers do not always know how to solve the problem between students, and then might end up punishing a student who is innocent"* (Participant No. 203). On the contrary, some participants felt that some: *"…teacher*[s] *did not take the matter any further"* (Participant No. 101) despite learners seeking help from them. These views are in line with the research done by Burger et al (2015:199) who state that teachers generally agree that action should be taken in cases of bullying. Despite teachers agreeing that action needs to be taken against bullying, teachers have also been found to underestimate the prevalence of bullying in their classrooms (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007) which results in learners being reluctant to report bullying incidents. In this way the cycle of bullying would continue because of teachers' lack of a social justice agenda.

Schools are not safe places

Overall, 64 percent (n = 56) of the participants felt that their personal experience of bullying and aggression led them to believe that: *"…there is no avoiding bullying, it is like a plague in schools, and even though learners do well to hide it, bullying is a growing pandemic bent on forever destroying the individual that is targeted"* (Participant No. 264). These views are in line with research done in schools in South Africa on bullying (Burton & Leoschut, 2013 Burton, 2008; Lets'opha & Jacobs, 2017; Mncube & Harber, 2012; Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014) which confirmed that bullying in schools is rife. Fifty-five percent felt teachers have the responsibility to make *"classrooms a safe environment for learning"* (Participant No. 95). Thirty-nine percent of participants viewed bullying as: *"…a serious matter and steps should be taken immediately"* (Participant No. 300) against perpetrators. Participants regarded schools as unsafe places where bullying is inevitable but often *"not taken seriously"* (Participant No. 267) since *"people rarely talk about it"* (Participant No. 267). They felt that: *"bullies need to be dealt with very strategically because* [they] *battle to identify why their actions are wrong and unfair"* (Participant No. 102). As such these participants personal experience have made them more sympathetic (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006) to victims and less tolerant to perpetrators.

Thirty-four percent of participants acknowledged that bullying can have: *"…enormous psychological and physiological effects"* (Participant Nos 68, 96 & 201) on victims and bystanders based on their personal experiences. One participant stated that: *"I have learnt what it felt like to be bullied and to witness another child being bullied. Both sides make you feel absolutely terrible and destroyed emotionally and sometimes physically"* (Participant No. 45).

Fourteen percent indicated that through their experiences that schools were not safe places as children are often *"pick*[ed] *on"* (Participant No. 2, 77 & 160) and become afraid to go to school. Their experiences have also caused them to *"trust people less"* (Participant No. 88) since bullying affects individuals'*"self-esteem"* and *"shatters their confidence"* (Participant No. 174). These experiences will make this cohort of pre-service teachers feel equally as helpless and afraid as victims (Craig & Pepler, 1995) in their classrooms. Despite these experiences having a negative effect on these pre-service teachers it could also cause them to be in a better position to communicate effectively with learners in an attempt to combat bullying at schools (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009). Thirteen percent of participants felt that: *"bullying was not fully … dealt with at school"* (Participant No. 111) and they were keen to break the cycle of bullying. These finding are aligned to Yoon, Sulkowski and Bauman's (2014) view that personal experiences of bullying could also urge pre-service to take action when in a position of authority.

Seven percent of participants believed that: *"everyone is bullied during school no matter what"* (Participant No. 136). These pre-service teachers view teacher's actions as crucial in incidents of bullying and aggression since the effects of being a victim or a bystander can be harmful, long-lasting and destructive which makes learners: *"feel guilty even though [they] did not do anything wrong"* (Participant No. 149). Furthermore, participants believed that bullies need to be dealt with decisively because they need help as well. These participants' motivational factors for taking a stance against bullying and assisting and empowering learners is governed by their personal and observational experiences in that they are aware of the negative effects that bullying has on all role players. In addition, their personal characteristics (Kahn, Jones & Wieland, 2012; Holt & Keyes, 2004) influence their responses with regard to

resolving bullying. Furthermore, they have observed their teachers being unable or inadequate in addressing bullying at schools and as such have opted to take a more assertive stance.

The danger with observing teachers, who are regarded as powerful role models (Bandura, 1977), not being able or willing to do anything with regard to bullying incidence could make pre- service teachers believe that they cannot do anything either despite their motivational will to act on reports and observations. When pre-service teachers find themselves in school contexts where bullying is condoned in that no action is taken against incidences they simply become bystanders to social injustices once more just like when they were learners. In this way the cycle of victimisation will continue for these pre-service teachers and their learners.

How will pre-service teachers manage bullying and aggression in their classrooms?

No tolerance policy for bullying

Despite the majority of participants being bystanders they felt the need to do something about bullying as prospective teachers. This could be because of the perception that they would have a sense of authority and power to do so as teachers. Overall, personal encounters made these pre-service teachers (n=56): *"less tolerant towards bullies and bystanders"* (Participant No. 236) in that they believed that a no tolerance policy to bullying was essential in school contexts. Forty-one percent of participants felt that bullies should be punished and one way of doing this is to: *"elect those who always fight to be the leaders in the school. This will help those learners to behave all the times"* (Participant No. 125). What is evident is that this specific way of dealing with bullying is based on what they have observed their teachers doing, which is not always an effective and appropriate manner to deal with bullying and aggression. Hence this cohort of pre-service teacher would perpetuate the cycle of bullying by placing perpetrators in positions of power and authority where they would possible have complete authority over prospective victims.

For 36 percent, a no tolerance policy would include *"laying down the rules of a bully-free zone in the school"* from *"the first day of school"* with a *"no tolerance policy"* where *"bullying is a serious offence with serious consequences"* (Participant No. 298). No tolerance policies are not always effective in changing behaviours but instead can simply suppress unwanted behaviours. A further 21 percent of participants also felt that teachers should "immediately address the problem with the bully and the victim once notified about it or have identified it". From the data these participants would be more assertive with regard to bullying in that they indicated the need to respond immediately to reported incidence of bullying.

Work to create safe school environment

Sixty percent of participants felt that they had the responsibility to: *"make school a good and welcoming environment and build a good relationship between learners"* (Participant No. 32) and thus dealing with bullying can *"influence*" their *"role as a teacher"* (Participant No. 68). They also felt that *"often teachers do not do enough"* and this is *"the reason why many students dislike their teachers"* (Participant No. 88). This view is substantiated by Yoon, Sulkowski and Bauman (2014), who found in their research that learners are reluctant to report incidence of bullying as teachers often take no action against the perpetrators. Other participants (38%), felt that they needed to *"increase awareness"* by empowering and *"educating all learners about what bullying is and … the consequences of bullying"*. In doing so they *would "instil respect, understand*[ing] *and compassion for others"* at school.

Whilst 30 percent of participants believed that by *"constantly giving talks on bullying and how it is wrong"* (Participant No. 287) is a way to educate and empower learners. Participants believed that teachers did not do enough to support learners who have been bullied. Thirty percent of them would be the kind of teacher *"learners can come"* (Participant No. 14) to if they are being bullied. These participants viewed it as their *"responsibility to look after …learners"* (Participant No. 148) and not leave bullying incidents unattended.

Eleven percent indicated that it is crucial for them *"to monitor and be aware of unnatural character displays from pupils so that bullying can be detected"* (Participant No. 49). Hence when a learner becomes *"more reserved and quiet"* (Participant No. 232) the teacher needs to find out why. Thus, knowing your learners and taking note of them is important. A further 11 percent of participants felt that contacting parents was necessary in incidents of bullying as parent would be able to assist.

What can be surmised from these findings are that despite these pre-service teachers roles in the cycle of bullying at school more than half of them felt that it was their responsibility to do something about bullying as teachers. This indicates that these pre-service teachers believed that teachers hold the power, authority and responsibility to uphold a social justice agenda in school contexts.

Dealing with bullying will negatively impact on them as teachers

Twenty-one percent of participants indicated that they would have reported any bullying incidents *"no matter how well* [they] *know the individual involved"* (Participant No. 1). They would also feel *"relieved once it was handed to someone with authority"* like the *"principal"* (Participant No. 216). Some felt that dealing with bullying and aggression at schools would place them in a *"difficult situation"* (Participant No. 287). They were also aware that learners' inappropriate behaviour can *"test [their] anger levels and pressure [them] to do things that could cost [them their] job once [they] are employed"* (Participant No. 55). Moreover, having to deal with cases of bullying and aggression can *"make [one] think twice [about] the career you have chosen"* and makes teaching *"a burden"* (Participant No. 119). During their first teaching practice session pre-service teachers were *"surprised at the level of aggression"* (Participant No. 4) and this forced them *"to play the role of a pacifier to make sure that learner learn during lessons"* (Participant No. 58).

What is evident from the choices and decisions of pre-service teachers is that their personal experiences are used as motivating factors when dealing with bullying and aggression. As stated by Ajzen's (1985) Theory of Planned Behaviour, pre-service teachers will enact behaviours of how to deal with bullying that they are comfortable and confident with. One such action is to report bullying incidents to a higher authority at schools like the principal or to contact parents and not deal with it themselves because of their lack of self-efficacy. What is also evident is that learners hitting each other has become normalised in some school contexts as the majority of participants have observed bullying and aggression at school.

Pre-service teachers suggested that rules and anti-bullying campaigns would make a difference, as this is what most schools are currently doing. Yet research by Carney and Merrell (2001) indicates anti-bullying campaigns are only effective if all stakeholders participate, especially all staff members. From their experiences, pre-service teachers felt that it was imperative to empower learners with knowledge but in the absence of teachers not acting on reports learners will continue to feel vulnerable, as these participants have experienced themselves. Participants see their role as teachers to be an important one in that they need to take the initiative to create safe spaces for learners and be hands on with regards to any

behavioural changes in the learners. As such their personal motives will impact on their decisions to create safe spaces at schools. The challenge is that motivation will not be sufficient if pre-service teachers are not adequately equipped to deal with various aspects of bullying and aggression at school. Pre-service teachers need to feel confident that they know what to do when confronted with incidents of bullying in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study makes a contribution to the research on victimology within a school context as the findings indicate that pre-service teachers' experiences of bullying will impact on their decisions when dealing with bullying in their classroom. These experiences motivate pre-service teachers to take action when being confronted with bullying incidents in their respective classrooms. Interestingly, despite the majority (79%) of this cohort believing that their experiences of bullying at school would make them more proactive teachers despite the indication that most of them did nothing about bullying experiences as learners at school. Their experiences had also led them to believe that bullying in schools is something that is part of the schooling system and that the best way to deal with bullying in their classrooms was to report incidents to someone with more authority within the school. They saw themselves playing a key role with regards to incidents of bullying in that they needed to be supportive of victims. They held a strong view that schools should have no tolerance policies towards bullying and that bullying incidence should be addressed immediately and that there should be consequences for a bully's behaviour. Despite their willingness to want to take action against bullying incidents they indicated that they felt overwhelmed by the issue of bullying in schools. Furthermore, having to deal with such issues would, they felt, impact negatively on them in general but also on their decisions to go and teach when they qualified as teachers.

In addition, this study highlights the need for pre-service teachers' views and beliefs about bullying to be reflected upon, specifically how such beliefs come to be held. There tends to be an assumption that teachers will do something about bullying, but the reality is that it might not be the case if teachers are still dealing with their own personal fears of victimisation as evidenced with these participants.

Therefore, initial teacher education programmes need to drive a much stronger social justice agenda if the cycle of violence is to be broken at schools. If not, teachers are likely to revert to practices that they are familiar, based on personal experiences, and this may reinforce established patterns of crime and victimisation. A limitation to the study was that not all three-hundred-and-five participants submitted their experiences of bullying on teaching practice but this was beyond the control of the researcher. Further research needs to be done on additional groups of pre-service teachers at various other teacher education institutions to determine their experiences and views regarding bullying at schools to create and provide additional information on this topic.

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ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERSONAL REFLECTION OF BULLYING

Mark an X in the relevant block/s

I regard myself as a:	Bully	Victim	Bystander			
The types of bullying I witnessed included:	Physical	Verbal	Relational	Cyberbullying	Prejudicial	Sexual
I felt that my teacher was a bully:	Yes	No				
I did not want to attend school because of being bullied:	Yes	No				
I was never bullied at school because:	I was able to defend myself	I was the bully	I was protected by the bully	Bullying is something that didn't happen at my school	I outsmarted the bully	
I was bullied at school because:	I was liked by my teachers	I was the smartest learner in the class	Of my physical appearance	Of my sexual orientation	I was in the wrong place at the wrong time	I was shy and submissive
I bullied other students because:	They were liked by the teachers	They were smarter than I was	Of their physical appearance	Of their sexual orientation	I could	I was bullied
The types of bullying that mostly occurred at my school was:	Physical	Verbal	Relational	Cyberbullying	Prejudicial	Sexual