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Cyberbullying in High School: A Study of Soweto High School Learners' Behaviours and Beliefs about the Phenomenon

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Educational Psychology.

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Declaration

I declare that this research study entitled "Cyberbullying in High School: A study of Soweto High School Learners' Behaviours and Beliefs about the Phenomenon" is my own work and the help I received was only for supervision and guidance purposes. It is submitted in partial requirements for the degree for the Master of Arts in Educational Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Beatrice Moyo

Date:

March 2017

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Abstract

This study explored high school learners' beliefs and behaviours with regards to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The Social Learning, Social Dominance, and the Social Presence Theories were used in an attempt to understand the learners' behaviours and beliefs in relation to cyberbullying. The study adopted a quantitative approach. A survey research design was used to collect data. Data was collected from 221 Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners (104 males and 116 females) aged between 14 years old and 21 years old. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were employed to explore how learners react to cyberbullying, what learners do when they witness cyberbullying, their perceptions about the phenomenon, and the reasons cybervictims choose not to report the incidents. A t-test was employed to determine if there were significant relationships between gender and learners' cyberbullying experience. Furthermore, a One way ANOVA was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the grades on how learners experience cyberbullying.

The results revealed that most learners found masquerading and outing as the most upsetting forms of cyberbullying. Most learners (23.5%) indicated reporting the cyberbullying to someone who can help the victim while a small fraction (4.5%) stated that they joined in the cyberbullying. For the most part, learners agreed that if someone was being hurt by cyberbullying, it was important to tell a responsible adult, however, most (73.3%) also contradicted themselves by indicating that things that happened online should stay online. This revelation was important in highlighting that due to the learners' beliefs, most incidents may go unreported. Furthermore, it was noted that most learners did not report cyberbullying incidents because they were of the opinion that adults would not be able to help them. Such findings can inform parents and school authorities to be pro-active when dealing with cyberbullying in order to gain the trust of the youth. The results of the study further suggested no gender differences to how learners experience cyberbullying as a whole except that females reacted by being more upset with regards to cyberbullying compared to males. No grade differences were noted on how learners perceived and experienced cyberbullying.

When designing intervention strategies against cyberbullying, policy makers should take cognisance that most learners do not report cyberbullying incidents to parents and teachers, prefer to keep online activities within the cyber environment, and some witnesses tend to join in the cyberbullying perpetration. Based on this, it can be seen that parents need to have open

communication with their children about online activities and use in order to build rapport and trust. Furthermore, they need to acquaint themselves with technological gadgets used by their children to effectively supervise their children's online activities and provide positive support when cyberbullying occurs. On the other hand, the schools need to provide workshops and training for the teachers and school administrators with regards to effective ways to deal with cyberbullying incidents. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education policy makers should include anti-cyberbullying programmes for schools aimed at shifting attitudes of learners towards willingness to intervene by reporting cyberbullying incidents. Thus, a collaborative effort from learners, parents, school authorities, and policy makers is needed to curb and prevent cyberbullying incidents in schools.

Key Words: belief, behaviour, cyberbullying, cybervictim, bystander, anonymity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Before the internet, bullies dominated the schoolyard. Now, bullies of the twenty-first century release their aggression online, as cyberspace becomes the high-tech playground for intimidation (Chaffin, 2008).

1.1. Problem Statement

With the rapid increase in the use of the internet and mobile technology among young people for personal, educational and information gathering purposes, technology has become indispensable to the users. This increase has led to a new phenomenon called cyberbullying which is becoming a growing problem among young people globally (Citron, 2009). Studies show that cyberbullying is indeed becoming an international problem (Boulton & Mirsky, 2006; Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). In Africa, young children are especially at risk of cyberbullying due to the limited knowledge, expertise and understanding regarding this phenomenon (Dlamini, Taute & Radebe, 2011). This means most school children in Africa are becoming ever more active in cyberspace yet they have little information to protect themselves from cyberbullying.

The problem regarding cyberbullying in schools is that there seems to be a lack of understanding of the learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying by adults (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). This causes a lot of victims not to report cyberbullying incidents to adults or school authorities (Belsey, 2004). Understanding the behaviour of the victims and bystanders will help those interested in curbing cyberbullying have a better understanding on how to design policies and ways of intervention based on the voices and experiences of the learners (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). It is hoped that if parents and school authorities are able to better understand cyberbullying based on the behaviours and beliefs of learners, they will be in a better position to identify cases of cyberbullying and respond effectively thereby reducing and curbing the increase in the incidents of this phenomenon.

1.2. Rationale

According to Tokunaga (2010), internet use among young people has increased at an alarming rate across the world and it has become part of their lives (Livingston, Kirwil, Ponte & Staksrud, 2013). The adolescents can be said to perceive their technological gadgets such as mobiles phones, tablets, smart phones and computers as their most valued possessions. Unfortunately, advances in the use of technology also increases the incidents of cyberbullying worldwide (Mason, 2008). Noticeably, cyberbullying is becoming a growing problem even among young South Africans (Gauteng Department of Education, 2012).

Gouws (2014) and Herther (2009) argue that the current generation of learners are experts pertaining to technological gadgets and their uses. This allows them to anonymously torment their targets online and the severity of bullying increases because the cyberbullies hide behind the cover of anonymity. Their victims can be reached from any setting and they have nowhere to hide. However, most victims do not report the incidents either at school or home with the fear of having their internet use restricted or escalating the bullying incidents (Belsey, 2004).

It is hoped that through understanding the learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon of cyberbullying, the voices of the learners will be heard. Haselswerdt and Lenhart (2003) argue that when learners are listened to, understood from their frames of reference, have their opinions valued, they are more likely to bring a positive change. Research has shown that discussions about internet safety between learners, adults and the school authorities have decreased "unhealthy social choices" on the internet (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, p.151). Investigating learners' beliefs and behaviours about cyberbullying can provide researchers with a much richer understanding of how cyberbullying displays itself in young people. Therefore, it is imperative that those who want to prevent and curb cyberbullying in high schools listen to learners from these schools in order to understand the phenomenon from the learners' point of view.

However, very little if any research has been conducted to understand high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon regarding cyberbullying in South Africa. One main reason behind lack of research in this area owes to the learners' reluctance to report such incidents to the school authorities or parents (Elledge, Williford, Boulton, Depaolis, Little & Salmivalli, 2013). Research is important in designing effective interventions by local school authorities and government policy makers. Therefore, this study was conducted to add to the body of research on South African high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about

cyberbullying which in turn will aid in the design of the interventions that address the needs of learners especially from township areas such as Soweto.

1.3. Aims of the Study

The research study was guided by the following aims, namely:

1. To understand learners' behaviours about cyberbullying in terms of how they react to the incidents and what their responses are when they witness cyberbullying.
2. To explore learners' beliefs about cyberbullying with regards to their thoughts and opinions about the phenomenon and how it should be handled.
3. To investigate the learners' perceptions about the phenomenon of cyberbullying focusing on why cybervictims choose not to report the incidents.
4. To investigate if gender and grade have an influence in the incidents of cyberbullying.

1.4. Research Questions

The following questions were explored in the current research study, namely:

1. What are the learners' reactions to cyberbullying?
2. What do learners do when they witness cyberbullying?
3. What are the learners' beliefs about cyberbullying?
4. What are the reasons cybervictims choose not to report the incidents?
5. Does gender and grade predict differences with regards to how the learners perceive cyberbullying?

1.5. Structure of Report Overview

This report on cyberbullying in high school, a study of Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon is categorized into five Chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the study. This chapter explores the problem statement, rationale, aims of the study as well as the research questions. Chapter Two is a review of literature related to the study. This focuses on what has been researched on the study, identifying gaps and how these gaps were addressed. Chapter Three explains and discusses the methodology followed in the

study including research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four comprises of the presentation of the results of the data. Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings, the implications of the study, the limitations, provides recommendations for future study, draws a conclusion and the key points on the study.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter provided the introduction to the study by focusing on the problem statement, rationale, aims and the research questions of the study. An overview of the remaining chapters within this study was also highlighted. The next Chapter presents the review of relevant literature which will enable the reader to fully understand the concepts involved in the behaviours and beliefs of learners in relation to the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Cyberbullying can be seen as an extension of traditional bullying hence the literature review begins by defining and exploring bullying and then exploring its theoretical framework. Thereafter, cyberbullying is defined and an exploration of cyberbullying and learners' perceptions and behaviours of the phenomenon is undertaken. Finally, cyberbullying in the South African context is briefly explored.

2.2. Definition of bullying

According to Olweus (1994), bullying is defined as the repetitive, aggressive behaviour, where a more powerful child tries to dominate in a harmful way a less powerful child. This power imbalance may be embedded in either physical or psychological strength, or both. This means that bullying can happen overtly or covertly (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). In physical strength, the bullying is direct and may include kicking, pushing, hitting, punching, pinching, name calling, threats, insults, swearing, teasing in a harmful way (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009), and dirty and threatening gestures. In the psychological domain, the bullying incidents are more indirect and may include exclusion of the victim, starting and spreading rumours and gossip about the victim (Olweus & Limber, 2010). This type of bullying may be sometimes referred to as traditional bullying or face-to-face bullying and mostly occurs within the school premises, school buses or both (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

For an incident to be considered as an act of bullying, it must be premediated, has to occur repeatedly and the perpetrator must have some form of power over the victim (Sharrif, 2008). What this therefore implies is that, a once off act that is unintentional cannot be classified as bullying. The act must also negatively impact the victim for it to be considered as bullying (Olweus, 1993). The nature of bullying is intended to instil fear in the victim. It should be noted that bullying often happens without provocation leading the victim to feel vulnerable and powerless. Bullying can be initiated by a single individual or more, targeting their victim on a regular basis.

The main role players in the incidents of bullying include a perpetrator who is the bully and the victim who is the target (Olweus & Limber, 2010). However, sometimes the bully can also

be a victim (Powell & Ladd, 2010). This means that a learner can be either a bully or a victim, or can be both a perpetrator and a victim. In most instances of traditional bullying, there is a group of bystanders who are individuals present during bullying. These bystanders can sometimes be called witnesses. There may be neutral bystanders who do nothing during bullying, or they may be reinforcers who encourage the bully, or they may be defenders who assist or console the victim.

2.3. The bully

Research shows that most bullies often have hot tempered and domineering personalities (Carney & Merell, 2001). They come from homes where there is high tolerance for aggression and violent behaviour. Bullies also tend to have little parental guidance. Studies reveal that most parents of bullies have inconsistent show of affection, are cold and indifferent and prefer power-maintained forms of discipline such as corporal punishment (Carney & Merell, 2001; Pellegrini, 1998; Rigby, 1994; Smorkowski & Kopasz, 2003) This reinforces the observation made by Olweus (1993) that bullying depends on temperament and family characteristics.

It has been noticed that bullies use aggression as a weapon to gain control (De Wet, 2001) and dominate others (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001; Lindenberg, 2001) as a way to assert their power over others. They lack empathy for others and are sometimes considered to have low self-esteem (De Wet, 2001). An earlier study (Roland, 1993) claimed that bullies have low levels of intellectual functioning and poor social skills hence they rely on violence and aggression to achieve their goals. However, this claim was disputed by Smith (2004) who was of the opinion that bullies rely on their capabilities to understand and manipulate the mind of others, implying that they do not have low levels of functioning. Furthermore, earlier observations (Besag, 1989) that bullies suffer from low self-esteem were refuted by Carney and Merell (2001) who stipulated that the scores of bullies on self-esteem measures when compared to others show little difference.

2.4. The victim

Individuals who are targets of bullying are regarded as victims of bullying. They are characterized by low self-esteem, insecurity, physical weakness, lack of social skills, and are often reserved in nature (Powell & Ladd, 2010). In addition, Powell and Ladd (2010) are of the

view that individuals who are physically different from others also tend to be victims of bullying. The victims' circle of friends is usually small or they might not have friends at all (Powell & Ladd, 2010). Anxiety, submissive nature and overly sensitivity are other characteristics that are attributed to victims of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Lack of independence and self-assertion may also contribute to becoming a target of bullying (Powell & Ladd, 2010). Therefore, these characteristics make one vulnerable to bullying.

2.5. The bully-victim

The bully-victim is an individual who is both a perpetrator and a target of bullying. Bully-victims often do not initiate the bullying but only engage in it as a form of retaliation. Research (Powell & Ladd, 2010) indicated that bully-victims are usually individuals who lack social skills displayed by interrupting others' conversations, show lack of patience and exhibit behaviours similar to people who have an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. These characteristics cause other people to respond negatively to them, including bullying. The bully-victims are then most likely to respond by bullying in turn, and they are sometimes referred to as provocative victims (Powell & Ladd, 2010). Interestingly, some researchers (Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007) described the bully-victims as the most vulnerable in comparison to the bullies and the victims because they usually display anti-social behaviours. Also, they often get into trouble with breaking school rules when they bring weapons or fight with others as way of protecting themselves from bullying. Bully-victims do not strive for power or dominating others but bully as a way of defending themselves. Based on a study by Li (2006), it was discovered that from a sample of 264 students, over 50% of the victims were involved in the phenomenon as cyberbullies. This reveals the high numbers of students involved in the vicious cycle of bully-victim occurrences.

2.6. The bystander

The bystander or a witness is a person who is neither the bully nor the victim but is present when the bullying occurs. The bystanders play an important role in reducing or reporting of cyberbullying incidents. However, sometimes the bystander may perpetuate the bullying by encouraging the perpetrator (Li, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008) as highlighted by Li (2010) who found that 1 in 7 students who witnessed online bullying chose to join. Often, the bystanders

opt to ignore the bullying incidents they witness in fear of drawing the attention of the perpetrator to themselves, thereby becoming the targets of the bullying (Li, 2006; Price & Dalgleish, 2010). According to Li (2010), based on a study with 269 participants, about 70% of cyberbully witnesses indicated watching but not participating in the incidents.

In addition, other bystanders chose to do nothing about the bullying to avoid being called snitches (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). In other cases, the bystanders unintentionally become accomplices of bullying when they find the incidents humorous, read and forward cyberbully messages and pictures (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Another research study revealed that in certain instances, learners tend to encourage the bully instead of assisting the victim even when they know that bullying is wrong (Salmivalli, 1999).

2.7. Theoretical framework

For the purposes of this study, Social Learning Theory will be used in an attempt to understand why learners engage in bullying behaviours. The Social Learning Theory was presented primarily by Albert Bandura in the 1970s (Sloven, 2003). Bandura (1977) postulated that most behaviour displayed by people is learned by observing others through imitating which he coined modeling. Therefore, this means that from imitating or copying others, a person is able to form an idea on how to behave in the now or the information is coded and stored for later use when the occasion arises. It is from this premise that this theory is used as a framework to explain the reasons why learners engage in bullying behaviour. Learners engage in bullying because they are displaying behaviour that they have learned from their environment through their social experiences.

The Social Learning Theory proposes that "aggression is learned through the direct consequences of aggressive and non-aggressive acts and through observation of aggression and its consequences" (Kauffman, 2001, p.347). This therefore, implies that children learn specific aggressive behaviour through observing people who model aggression. This is especially common when the model of aggressive behaviour does not receive negative consequences for such behaviour (Calvete, Orue, Esteves, Villadon, & Padilla, 2010). It is important to note that children may first learn aggressive problem resolution behaviours from their parents who might be displaying aggressive acts in problem solving. Thereafter, the children are mostly likely to model such behaviour in their interaction with others and may regard such behaviour as normal. Sometimes, children who bully others may be coming from homes where physical or corporal

punishment is exercised and they may also be taught to fight back when in a confrontation (Calvete et al., 2010).

Violence witnessed in the community or through media, that is, televisions and video games, may be modelled as well by bullies. They may witness a character engaging in aggressive and violent acts yet going unpunished and this may be a motivating factor to imitate such behaviour (Swarts & Bredekamp, 2009). They exercise the aggression to gain peer dominance over weaker peers, rarely empathising with the victims (Swarts & Bredekamp, 2009). For example, bullies who see a spouse physically or psychologically abusing another at home and getting away with it may learn that it is acceptable to aggressively dominate weaker peers at school without considering how their behaviour impacts others (Swarts & Bredekamp, 2009). The Social Learning Theory is relevant to this study on Soweto learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying as it lays a background in understanding the phenomenon. It should be noted that cyberbullying can be said to be an extension of traditional bullying in that it is an innovative way of bullying others based on technology (Li, 2007). Given the very high incidents of crime, violence and the reputation of being one of the violent countries in the world (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009), it is interesting to understand South African Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying using this framework.

Another reason given for the high incidents of bullying among adolescents can be attributed to the Social Dominance Theory. This theory proposes that individuals belong to group-based hierarchies (Sidanius, Protto, Van Laar & Levin, 2004). Based on the theory, each individual is continually trying to gain social status by dominating others (Thornberg, 2010). For the youth, asserting and maintaining dominance involve agonistic and affiliative strategies (de Waal, 1986). Agonistic strategies may include physical aggression and verbal abuse while affiliative involves management or manipulation of people to secure social status (de Waal, 1986).

The implication of the Social Dominance Theory is that bullying is simply an aggressive act employed by young people to dominate others in order to gain and maintain social status among peers. Bullies who observe aggressive behaviours as explained by the Social Learning Theory may want to gain social status by becoming dominant as explained by the Social Dominance Theory. For the bullies, gaining dominance may be equated with power and authority. This is so because the Social Dominance Theory suggests that the young people use aggression against weaker peers to force them into submission (Beran & Li, 2005). They do this to gain high social

status among peers (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach & Unger, 2004). Due to the large audience in cyberbullying, the bullies might feel dominant over the victims and this gives the bullies a sense of satisfaction and reward which feeds their aggressive needs (Olweus, 1993).

In addition to the above mentioned theories, Social Presence Theory is also used to explain why learners engage in cyberbullying. Social presence is defined as the amount of interpersonal interaction and personal relationship involved when people are communicating (Citron, 2009). Face-to-face communication has high social presence whereas written and technological communication has low social presence (Citron, 2009). This is also supported by the claim that interaction through technological gadgets, "deprives users of the sense that another actual person is involved in the interaction (Griffin, 2009, p.138)". Lack of social presence therefore affects how people communicate, which may lead to cyberbullying in young people due to lack of interpersonal interaction. Citron (2009) and Mark (2009) stated that in digital communications, there is an increase in physical and emotional distance among people and this leads to an increase in impersonal nature of these communication forms.

Communication through technological gadgets has absence of non-verbal communication cues (Mark, 2009). This means that people who communicate through technological tools are unable to assess the other person's reactions through facial expressions or body gestures. This therefore, may lead to lack of empathy and inhibitions to those communicating through technology, hence, cyberbullying perpetrators may lack perceptions of how their actions might be affecting their victims. In other words, when the actual interpersonal interaction is removed, the empathy for people's feelings is likely to be removed. This makes it much easier to attempt to gain power over another person because online interaction makes some people not consider the person on the other end. Those low in social presence may post or send information that they would not show others in face-to face communication, which leads to increased cruelty in cyberbullying happening in the digital communications (Li, 2008). According to Mark (2009), it is much more difficult for a person to actually look into the face of another and inflict harm whereas online, it is much easier.

By taking Social Presence Theory into account, the ease with which people can access and distribute information is based on the notion that the information is not going to an individual, but rather to a harmless online entity. This is a cause for concern because such a notion removes the threat that information could provide power to the sender, and that power gained over another could potentially ruin a reputation.

It is interesting to note that through the Social Learning Theory, learners may learn to model and copy hurtful aggressive behaviour towards others and through Social Dominance Theory, they may act out these learnt aggressive acts by dominating others in order to elevate their self-worth. In addition, through Social Presence Theory, this behaviour is carried over through communication technological gadgets due to lack of, or low social presence leading to increased cyberbullying. Even learners who may have modelled bullying behaviour through social learning but fear to act it out, are more comfortable doing it in cyberspace under the cover of anonymity and also due to absence of social presence (Mark, 2009).

In conclusion, the development of aggression and other potentially deviant behaviour is posited to be a result of exposure, hence, the Social Learning Theory is deemed suitable to describe the influence of modeling on bullying (Hawley, 1999; Payne, 2014). On the other hand, studies reveal that the Social Dominance Theory is useful to explain bullying because researchers are of the opinion that victimization of others serves the purpose of establishing and maintaining a social hierarchy within a group (Blumenfeld, 2005; Hawley, 1999, Hawley & Bulton, 2001). Finally, the nature of cyberbullying puts the target into a submissive position in relation to the perpetrator (Beran & Li, 2005). Through lack of social presence, the perpetrators become increasingly vicious and aggressive (Citron, 2009; Mark, 2009). These theoretical frameworks therefore, assist in explaining why cyberbullying occurs and it will be interesting to understand South African high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying using the frameworks.

2.8. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the type of bullying that takes place when a learner or a group of learners use information and communication technological tools to engage in intentional, repeated and unfriendly behaviour with the intention to hurt or harm a defenceless victim (Belsely, 2005). This form of bullying is carried out in various platforms like social network sites, emails, online games, text messages and any other electronic forms of contact. Many researchers (Besley, 2004; Li, 2007; Shariff, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008) are of the notion that cyberbullying is an extension of face-to-face bullying and that the new technological devices used in cyberbullying have made it easy for the perpetrators, that is people who bully others, to access their victims or targets. However, unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can happen anywhere, anytime and this leaves a challenge in addressing the phenomenon.

One thing to note, however, is that some definitional issues of cyberbullying are under debate especially the aspect of repetition and power imbalance (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). These may be clearly manifested in traditional bullying but not so in cyberbullying. For instance, if a perpetrator uploads a picture which then gets circulated by other viewers, it is difficult to regard it as repetition if the act was not done by the perpetrator. Therefore, it may be argued that the issue of repetition may not be always be clearly defined in some incidents of cyberbullying.

Olweus (1993) in defining bullying refers to power imbalance when the victims are both physically and psychologically weak to defend themselves, or when they are outnumbered in a peer group setting. This aspect in cyberbullying incidents may not always be applicable because neither physical nor strength in numbers is necessary for the perpetration of cyberbullying. Nonetheless, power imbalance may be manifested through the ability and expertise in information and communication technologies as well as aspect of anonymity.

It may be argued that pupils with advanced skills and greater knowledge in information and communication technologies are more powerful than those who do not (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). This might be so in that they use their advanced skill to indulge in deviant mobile activity. Ybarra and Mitchel (2004) indicated that cyberbullies consider themselves as internet experts compared to those who do not cyberbully others. This is more evident in situations whereby the bully has to impersonate someone else and that might require some level of technological knowledge and expertise (Ybarra & Mitchel, 2004). Arguably, not all cyberbullying acts require advanced skills, for example sending a text message or picture in an abusive manner does not require advanced skill. Therefore, some advanced internet skill is not a necessary contributing skill in cyberbullying.

Anonymity may also contribute to the issue of power imbalance. A number of studies have shown that cyberbullying victims often do not know who the person bullying them is (Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008). This makes it more challenging to effectively respond and curb this phenomenon if one does not know the identity of the perpetrator. However, on the other hand, if the cyberbullying victims know the perpetrator, Olweus' (1993) factor of power imbalance in regard to physical and psychological strength may come into play. That is, the victim may fear to fight back against the perpetrator who may take further action offline if the perpetrator is physically strong, or belong to a popular peer group.

Although Hamurus and Kikkonen (2008) claimed that a clear definition of cyberbullying has not yet emerged, it is important and imperative that researchers develop a clear definition of cyberbullying. This definition should perfectly fit with the learners' perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon, especially in South Africa, to avoid researchers' and learners' definitions contradicting thereby viewing and addressing cyberbullying differently (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008).

Of importance to note, is that cyberbullying can occur in different forms and the most common ones are flaming, harassment, cyber stalking, denigration, masquerading, outing and trickery and also exclusion (Willard, 2004). Shariff (2006) also mentioned another form that is gaining popularity called happy slapping. The following definitions of forms of cyberbullying are given by Willard (2004): *Flaming* is sending messages that are insulting, hostile and disrespectful. These messages can be sent privately or openly to an online platform or group and this may lead to an exchange of angry words. *Harassment* as a form of cyberbullying happens when the perpetrator continually sends offensive and insulting messages to a specific person. The persistence of these harassing messages is intended to cause emotional distress and upset the targeted victim. *Denigration* on the other hand is sending untrue rumours, spreading cruel gossips in order to ruin someone's reputation. *Cyberstalking* may be seen as threats of harm or intimidation being sent to another person.

Masquerading is another form of cyberbullying whereby the perpetrator posts material or creates a profile pretending to be the victim with the intention of making the victim look bad (Willard, 2007). Under this disguise, the perpetrator may gain access to the victim's accounts and send inappropriate and negative information in pretence of being the victim (Willard, 2007). *Outing* is used when the perpetrators divulge the victims' sensitive information, messages or secrets that were never intended to be revealed to the public, and in *trickery* the victim is tricked to reveal such information which then is made public online by the perpetrator (Willard, 2004). In some instances, victims of cyberbullying may be excluded from an online group or chat and this may be done to intentionally upset the victim through a form of cyberbullying called *exclusion* (Willard, 2004).

In addition to the already mentioned forms of cyberbullying, *happy slapping* is another form that is increasingly becoming popular with bullies. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) stated that *happy slapping* is a combination of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying whereby the perpetrators film themselves slapping or hitting a victim then posting the incident online. It is

also important to note that new words are also emerging to describe some forms of cyberbullying. For example, *sexting* describes the form of cyberbullying whereby a person's images are sexualized then uploaded onto the internet or mobile phones without the victims' consent (Smith, 2012). It is therefore imperative that researchers, school authorities, parents and those involved in cyberbullying intervention strategies keep up to date with terms used in cyberbullying so that they are aware what these words refer to.

2.9. Gender differences in cyberbullying

Research findings on the relationship between gender and cyberbullying varies. Some studies show that females are more likely to engage in cyberbullying than males. This was revealed by the study conducted by Walrave and Heirman (2011) who concluded that more females in Belgium were involved in incidents of cyberbullying than males. A study done by Goddard (2007)) also highlighted that girls are more likely to be nasty when using technology for communication than boys. This is supported by Owens, Shute and Slee (2000) who found that adolescent females show more online aggression as a way of victimising others when compared to adolescent males. In a study of 20 406 students across Metro West, Massachusetts, United States, school reports of cyberbullying were slightly higher among girls at 18% compared to boys who were at 13% (Schneider, O'Donell, Stueve & Coulter, 2012), indicating that female students are more involved in cyberbullying compared to male students.

On the other hand, it may be argued that males are more prone to engage in cyberbullying when compared to their counterparts (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Li, 2006). A study conducted in 48 states in United States found that 57% of male participants compared to 47% of their female counterparts from a sample size of 713 participants were perpetrators of cyberbullying (Kraft & Wang, 2009). In addition, it is important to note that from a study by Li (2006) based on Chinese participants, male Chinese learners were more likely to be cyberbullies while the females were cybervictims. Furthermore, a study done in Canada with a sample size of 214 participants revealed that 22% of males were more likely to be cyberbullies than females who constituted only 12% (Li, 2007). In Central China, study findings also revealed that from a sample of 1 438 school students, significant gender differences were found, with boys 40% more likely to be perpetrators compared to girls who made up to 28% (Zhou, Tang, Tian, Zhang & Morrison, 2011). Beale and Hall (2007) were of the opinion that boys prefer crude sexual

comments or aggression and threat while girls resort to name calling and putting each other down when involved in cyberbullying.

However, some researchers claim that there seems to be no gender differences with regards to cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Willams & Guerra, 2007). This implies that both boys and girls compare equally to cyber perpetration and victimisation as supported by Bauman (2010) and Campbell (2005) who argued that girls and boys report equally in terms of cyber victimisation and perpetration.

It should be noted that the above statistics are from the Euro-Western countries, and there is dearth of literature from Africa on cyberbullying (Burton, 2016). The little that exists on cyberbullying seems to be mainly from South Africa and this presents difficulties in drawing conclusions on both the nature and extent of the phenomenon of cyberbullying especially with regard to gender differences in Africa (Burton, 2016). Nonetheless, a study conducted in Zimbabwe indicated that 89% of females from a sample size of 200 participants reported being victims of cyberbullying compared to 83% of their counterparts (Chiome, 2015). In Nigeria, a study revealed that 26% boys and 22% girls were perpetrators of cyberbullying but the difference was not statistically significant given the large sample of 653 participants (Olumide, Adams & Amodu, 2016).

A study conducted in South Africa has revealed that girls are more susceptible to cyberbullying both at home (43%) and at school (33%) compared to boys who are 42% at home and 29% at school (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). The results are based on a sample of 1 726 participants from Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. However, research shows no significant differences between the males and females with regard to the perpetration of cyberbullying (Tustin, Zulu & Basson, 2014; Van Turha & Johnston, 2015). In Cape Town, a study on high school students showed that no statistically significant gender differences could be found between the sexes of students who reported being cybervictims or cyberbullies based on a sample of 310 participants (Van Turha & Johnston, 2015). Similarly, no gender differences were observed in a study conducted in Gauteng and Western Cape involving 14 schools with 4 245 participants (Tustin et al, 2014).

Based on the research done thus far in regards to gender and cyberbullying, it can be concluded that there is conflicting evidence on gender differences and more research is necessary.

2.10. Reporting of Cyberbullying

In order to add to the body of research pertaining to ways to prevent cyberbullying in high schools, it is important to explore the reasons that lead learners not to report incidents of cyberbullying. Based on the research conducted by Cornell and Unnever (2004), it seems the school environment and the home settings are factors that influence the reporting of cyberbullying. The study concluded that the learners are less likely to report the incident of cyberbullying if they believe that the school handles the incidents ineffectively. Furthermore, Cornell and Unnever (2004) revealed that cyberbullying victims who came from homes where parents use coercive child- rearing styles were also less likely to report that they are being cyberbullied to their parents. It also seems that children who are given low levels of affection and support by their parents hardly report the incidents of cyberbullying, but they are most likely to be cyberbullies themselves (Holfeld & Gabe, 2012).

Research conducted by Chou and Huang (2010) showed that from a sample of 200 participants, 11% reported to their parents and only 4% reported to their teachers. The reasons given for not reporting incidents of cyberbullying were that the adolescents were afraid of getting into trouble, feeling helpless, afraid of the bullying intensifying and being rejected by an in-group (Chou & Huang, 2010). From the same study (Chou & Huang, 2010), it was observed that most of those who witnessed the incidents of cyberbullying also did not report either to the teachers or to the parents because they felt it was none of their business, or it was not important. This sheds light into the attitudes of adolescents' reluctance to inform adults and school authorities about cyberbullying incidents.

Some of the reasons for not reporting cyberbullying as stated by the learners included fear of having their technological gadget such as cell phones and computers monitored or restricted (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). This observation is supported by Li (2010) who found that 27% of the 269 participating students in 5 Canadian schools did not report incidents of cyberbullying because they were concerned that their parents might limit their access to technology while 17% were of the opinion that adults cannot prevent cyberbullying. In a study conducted by Juvonen and Gross (2008), it was found that some young people thought that they had to solve the problem of cyberbullying themselves while findings by Li (2010) showed that 45% of students involved in that particular study were of the opinion that incidents of cyberbullying should simply be ignored because it was not a huge issue.

From an investigation by Li (2010) in 5 Canadian school involving 269 participants, 40% of the sample highlighted that even after reporting the incidents of cyberbullying, the situation remained the same with 80% of the participants stating that they will not report to being cyber victimised in the future. Even when the incidents of cyberbullying are reported to the school authorities or parents, Holfeld and Grabe (2012) argued that stopping the incidents is very challenging, which discourages the learners from reporting when cyberbullying occurs. This implies that the learners might be feeling that they are not provided with the help they need. Of a major concern was that Li (2010) found that adults tried to assist in less than 3% of cases.

In South Africa, 40% of 3 341 participants of a study conducted in 24 schools in Gauteng revealed that the victims did not report being cyberbullied and 8% were uncertain about it (Tustin, Goetz, de Jongh, Basson, Zulu, Leriba & Mayatula, 2012). This investigation showed that the pattern of reporting in South Africa is almost similar when compared to the international trends. Xaba (2006) argued that given the violent environments most South African children are exposed to in the society, it is imperative that the schools create a safe space within the school environment before the issue of any form of bullying can be dealt with. This suggests that a safe space will make it easier for the learners to come forward with psycho-social challenges they are faced with concerning cyberbullying. In social contexts where aggression is accepted, victims are prone to internalize incidents of bullying and making it normal (Crothersa & Kolbert, 2008). Some psycho-social issues like promotion of violence on media make aggression tolerable and such issues cannot be ignored when attempting to curb cyberbullying (Powell & Ladd, 2010; Smith, 2004).

In addition, there is a relationship between a positive school climate and the reporting of cyberbullying. Williams and Guerra (2007) argued that learners who were victims of text bullying were prone to report that they felt unsafe at school than those who were not involved. It would appear that a positive relationship between the school climate such as a trusting environment, consistent and fair discipline and school involvement reduces the incidents of both traditional bullying as well as cyberbullying (Williams & Guerra, 2007). Therefore, a positive school environment allows learners to express themselves because they trust the school's policies.

A challenge facing most adults, especially parents when attempting to deal with the phenomenon of cyberbullying is that they might not be familiar with the social purpose of technology (Strom & Strom, 2005). This observation is supported by Mason (2008) who noted

that most parents are ignorant on the use of technology for the social purpose. Some parents may feel that they are not adequately equipped to deal with cyberbullying because of their limited knowledge of technology (Holfeld & Gabe, 2012).

2.11. Impact of cyberbullying

Although the impact of cyberbullying was not addressed in this particular study, it was important to review the effect of the phenomenon on learners in order to highlight its broad negative influence. Like the traditional form of bullying, cyberbullying has negative effects. Literature shows that due to the covertness and the wide audience that exist in cyberbullying, the impact of the incidents tends to be serious (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). This means that the target's humiliation tends to be greater as well. Studies have shown that the impact of cyberbullying on children seems to be uniform in research (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Mark & Ratliffe, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). The consistent negative impact that has been observed include poor academic performance, low self-esteem, depression and decline in the quality of family relationships (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

According to Luster, Small and Lower (2002) cyberbullying in high school may lead to issues of social unhappiness. Furthermore, it leads to psycho-social emotional problems revealing the serious impact of the phenomenon. Cyberbullying can be described as more harmful than traditional bullying because it gives room for the perpetrator to be cruel and sadistic due to lack of face-to-face contact with the victim. Consequently, this may cause extreme emotional response such as the target contemplating to commit suicide (Clearly, 2000). Hinduja and Patchin (2010) demonstrated a relationship between cyberbullying and increased risk of suicidal thoughts, as well as attempted and successful efforts. These suicidal ideations and the successful suicides are due to depression, low self-esteem and the sense of helplessness felt by the victims. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) postulated that targets of cyberbullying are twice more likely to attempt committing suicide than those who have not been bullied, reinforcing the serious concern surrounding the phenomenon.

In addition, symptoms of depression and emotional distress were experienced by some victims of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Some victims of cyberbullying experienced loneliness, anxiety, fear of rejection, humiliation, difficulty concentrating, headaches, stomach aches and most of these symptoms may lead to truancy as victims try to avoid school (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007). According to Tokunaga (2010), although the impact may depend

on the chronicity of the threat, young people seem to display a greater internalized negative reaction due to cyberbullying. They may view themselves negatively, have self-pity and increased sense of vulnerability (Hubert, 2012). A study carried out in 24 Gauteng schools revealed that 22% of the 3 337 participants indicated feeling sad, 10% were depressed, 10% felt helpless and powerless. Another 10% were angry while 7% felt degraded (Tustin et al., 2012). Young people, especially teenagers are sensitive about what is said about them, hence any negative comment is likely to negatively affect them, more so when the comments are in a public domain such as a cyber space.

It is of importance to note that although incidents of cyberbullying sometimes happen outside the school premises, its effects are still seen in the learners' poor performance at school (Li, 2006). Targets of cyberbullying also avoid school friends or any school related activities just like the traditional bullying victim. Their school performance tends to decline and other victims may even want to drop out of school (Li, 2006). If incidents of cyberbullying are not curbed the educational standards of schools and the achievement of the learner will be at risk. It is a concern that cyberbullying has a negative impact on children's learning as well. The observation is supported by Feinberg and Robey (2008) who stated that cyberbullying can destroy and undermine a school climate and interfere with how the school functions.

Cyberbullying does not only affect the victims, but also other learners by creating a sense of lack of safety at schools (Feinberg & Robey, 2008). The whole school system may be directly or indirectly affected by cyberbullying. Welker (2010) is of the opinion that direct cyberbullying is the one that happens during school time and it may disrupt the normal operations, safety and academic achievements of the school. In a more indirectly level, Welker (2010) articulated that the schools authorities may find themselves in an awkward situation of having to exercise their authority over cyberbullying incidents that "technically may occur outside of school, but for which the effects on students in school are very real" (Feinberg & Robey, 2008, p.10). It is therefore important that the school authorities understand and respond to cyberbullying as it has effects that impact the functioning of the schools.

Research also highlight that learners who engage in cyberbullying have an increased chance of being convicted of crimes later in life as found by the study done by Mason (2008) showing that 40 % of perpetrators of bullying had three times more convictions by the age of 24. This implies that the perpetrators of cyberbullying are more likely to get into trouble with the law as they grow if necessary interventions are not provided for their negative behaviour.

Furthermore, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found that victims of cyberbullying may exhibit behavioural problems such as substance abuse and delinquency causing them to get into trouble. On the same note, Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak and Finkerlhor (2006) stated that cyberbullying victims were more likely to indulge in drugs, alcohol and carry weapons at school.

Therefore, it can be seen that cyberbullying does not negatively impact the victims only, but the perpetrators as well. When cyberbullying in schools is not curbed it will have a negative effect on the learners, even long after they leave school.

2.12. Learners' beliefs regarding cyberbullying

In order to develop interventions that will help curb and prevent cyberbullying in schools, it is important to have an insight into the learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying. This insight will assist in giving advice on what is perceived as cyberbullying. Adolescents' perceptions of cyberbullying to a greater extent depends on the context in which it takes place (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). This means that an incident that may be viewed as a cyberbullying act can be considered differently depending on the intent and the context the incident takes place in.

Slonje, Smith and Frisen (2012) argued that some learners believe cyberbullying to do great damage and has a huge impact on them. This, according to the learners is due to the anonymity of the perpetrators who can choose to hide their identities by using fake accounts or names making it difficult for victims to know who their bullies are. The learners then feel vulnerable and powerless, and unable to protect themselves or fight back because of not knowing who they are dealing with (Butler, Kift, & Campbell, 2010). For the learners it is a challenge trying to fight a faceless perpetrator. In addition, cyberbullying has no time and space constraints and Tettegah, Betout and Taylor (2006) confirmed the inescapable harassment from the perpetrators by stating that before the internet children were able to escape being bullied by going to their homes but now the perpetrators of cyberbullying can reach their victims even in the confines of their homes, invading their safety. Furthermore, cyberbullying is perceived as greatly damaging by adolescents because of the wide audience it has due to advancement in technology which allows information to travel very fast in a short space of time. Slonje and Smith (2008) found that when students perceived the audience to be bigger, their humiliation and shame increased.

As mentioned before, cyberbullying occurs in different forms. A study conducted by Smith and Slonje (2008) revealed that students perceived cyberbullying where images and video clips are posted on the internet or shared through mobile phones to be the worst acts. This is perceived to be so because their faces will be seen and identities revealed to all who see the posted material. On the other hand, some students reported that any form of cyberbullying is equally bad as it all evokes feelings of vulnerability (Smith & Slonje, 2008).

Studies conducted on the phenomenon of cyberbullying show that young people do try to come up with coping strategies such as blocking the perpetrator, switching off their electronic gadgets or changing numbers or accounts if cyberbullied (Slonje et al., 2012). Some young people stated that they ignored the cyberbullying while some indicated a confrontational approach by telling the bully to stop (Slonje et al., 2012).

Moessner (2007) conducted a research on young people's perception on the phenomenon of cyberbullying and concluded that 81% of the 824 participants thought that bullies victimised others because they believed that it was fun. The same study stated that 64% of the bullies did not like the person they were bullying, 58% of the bullies were of the opinion that cyberbullying was no big deal while 47% did not think there would be consequences for their behaviour. In addition, the study (Moessner, 2007) revealed that 45% thought the targets of cyberbullying were losers and another 45% believed they would get away with it. The victims of cyberbullying thought they were targeted because the bullies were being nasty or jealousy (Thomas, 2009). Other victims believed the bullies were showing off, however, the perpetrators justified their actions as punishment for those who deserved it (Thomas, 2009).

Thomas (2009) conducted a study for Cox Communications involving 665 United States teenagers which found that 81% of the participants thought it was easier to get away with cyberbullying than the traditional form of bullying, 80% believed that cyberbullying was easier to hide from parents compared to traditional bullying. However, based on the same study (Thomas, 2009), 33% highlighted that cyberbullying was worse than traditional bullying while 68% were of the opinion that cyberbullying is a serious problem. From the same study, 49 % of the participants stated that there should be legal consequences for cyberbullying perpetrators. It would seem as if young people's beliefs are important motivators of their behaviours.

Findings on the opinions and beliefs of students about cyberbullying revealed that 35% of students in a study with 269 participants conducted in 5 Canadian schools were of the opinion that what happens online should stay online (Li, 2010). Also based on the same study (Li,

2010), 18% expressed that people have a right to say what they want online despite what they say hurting other people. From the same study (Li, 2010), it was seen that close to 50% believed that cyberbullying others is a serious issue yet they voiced that nothing can be done about it. This implies that cybervictims are expected to deal with the problem on their own. Such sentiments may reveal why some witnesses of cyberbullying incidents chose to do nothing. However, Li (2010) found that 45% of the 269 participants were concerned about the phenomenon, viewing it as a serious problem that calls for intervention.

2.13. South African Context

From the literature reviewed, no studies focused on the learners' beliefs regarding cyberbullying within the South African context, hence, the necessity of this particular study to address that gap. However, it should be noted in South Africa, learners have a right to freedom of speech and expression in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (2006). However, cyberbullying in schools could hamper other basic rights engrained in the same Constitution such as the right to equality, dignity and privacy. This is due to the increasing incidents of cyberbullying in South African schools (Henderson, 2008). According to Henderson (2008), despite being less technological when compared to the Euro-Western countries, South Africa has reported incidences of cyberbullying in schools to indicate that the problem is a cause for concern.

Studies conducted in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town found 81% of young people aged between 13-17 year olds had access to a computer and 62% of them were able to access the internet from these computers (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). Furthermore, Chetty and Basson (2006) concluded that nine out of ten (92.9%) of young people between 12-24 years olds either owned or had access to mobile phones which they used for personal purposes. Popovac and Leoschut (2012) highlighted that South Africa has one of the highest usage of mobile phones and social networking in Africa. This increases the chances of learners being exposed to some form of cyberbullying. The increasing affordability of smartphones and internet access through data bundles reduces the number of young people in South Africa who do not use technology for communication or accessing information (Popovac & Leoschutt, 2012). These findings therefore highlight how easy access to the internet has created a fertile breeding ground for cyberbullying in the country's schools.

In addition, Mark and Ratliffe (2011) revealed that the higher the number of learners who have access to the internet, the more likely they are to be involved in cyberbullying either as perpetrators, victims or both. Given that violence in South African schools is not a new phenomenon where this has claimed the lives of both learners and educators in some instances (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009), it is not surprising to see this violence translated into the online dimension in the form of cyberbullying. Hugh and Louw (2013) stated that the added advantage of anonymity found in cyberbullying fuels the bullying problem in South African school, "exacerbating it" (Mienie, 2013, p.146). This form of bullying is usually carried out by sending upsetting messages, spreading rumours, circulation of other peoples' pictures without consent, or exposure to sexual remarks (Coetzer, 2012).

Another contributing factor to the increasing incidents of cyberbullying in South Africa is the lack of parental internet use supervision on the youth. Popovac and Leoschut (2012) concluded that in South Africa many parents fail to monitor their children because of limited knowledge about technologies and the dangers they pose. Lange and Solms (2011) further emphasized that there is often lack of supervision on children's internet use which gives room for cyberbullying to occur unnoticed and for an extended period without any intervention. This lack of monitoring and supervision is shown through the study which was conducted in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University revealing that 37% of the young people between Grades 6 and 12 that participated indicated that they often have access to the internet in the privacy of their rooms, 63% did not require permission to access the internet (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). Also of interest was that more than half of these participants (54%) did not have any monitoring when using the internet.

Due to the increasing reported incidents of cyberbullying in the country, it is important to understand the learner' beliefs and behaviours regarding this phenomenon in an attempt to devise ways that curb and reduce these incidences. Popovac and Leoschut (2012) stated that in South Africa, most children do not report cyberbullying both at home and at school because they lack trust in adults' responses as they are of the opinion that the older generation does not understand this phenomenon. This implies that young people fear that the adults will respond in a manner that will make the cyberbullying worse instead of stopping it. Also, the lack of knowledge and awareness among the older people means they rarely offer help when informed about the incidents of cyberbullying and this leads to young people losing confidence in the adults' abilities to handle cyberbullying.

Based on the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) paper issued in 2012, 67% of perpetrators of cyberbullying are also cybervictims (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012), meaning that they have also been at the receiving end of cyberbullying. This indicates that due to this behaviour, cyberbullying ends up becoming a vicious cycle which might not stop without any form of intervention. The bully-victim scenario blurs the part played by the perpetrator making it possibly difficult to understand the incidents of cyberbullying hence the importance of being aware of the learners' beliefs and behaviours in regard to the phenomenon.

However, from the literature on cyberbullying in South Africa, there are limited studies that focus on the behaviours and beliefs of learners regarding the issue of cyberbullying. This is supported by Popovac and Leoschut (2012, p.13) who stated that "children and youth's voices and experiences are largely missing in the development of effective online strategies" hence the importance of this study.

2.14. Conclusion

In this chapter, a review of existing literature pertaining to studies on cyberbullying was given. As the review has indicated, cyberbullying is a global issue which seems to be exponentially increasing among the youth. Various studies have shown that cyberbullying is perceived in many different ways by learners and young people across different settings. This motivates learners to behave differently based on their attitude about the phenomenon. Interestingly, the literature reviewed in this chapter also revealed discrepancies with regards to gender and cyberbullying with some researchers claiming that girls are more likely to be involved in cyberbullying while others think the reverse is true. On the other hand, some are of the opinion that there are no gender differences with regard to cyberbullying.

However, of importance to note, is that students' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying from the studies that have been mentioned above seem to broadly come from settings outside of the South African context. It was important therefore, to conduct this particular study within the South African context to address the gap. In addition, it is imperative for researchers to get insight into the learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon of cyberbullying for effective interventions to be put into place in preventing cyberbullying in the South African schools. Li (2008) claimed that culture is a strong predictor for both cyberbullying and cybervictimization. Therefore, conclusions about cyberbullying from studies utilizing samples

influenced by Euro-Western cultures may not be generalized to South African culture, more so to the township context hence a necessity to have a study on this setting.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1. Introduction

In the previous Chapter, literature, theoretical framework and the South African context pertaining to the research topic was discussed. This Chapter explores the context of the study as well as the method of the present study with attention paid to the research design, sample and sampling, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2. Context of the study

This study was conducted at a government school situated within a township area located in Soweto, Johannesburg. This is a pre-dominantly Black populated community. The school is graded as a quantile one school by the Gauteng Department of Education. Based on the poverty ranking of the community, quantile one schools in South Africa cater for the poorest communities and have been declared no-fee paying schools. The school admits learners from Grade 10 up to 12. From the literature reviewed, it was noted that very little research has been conducted on learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Also, the studies carried out thus far were conducted abroad hence the need to carry out this particular study within the township area. In South Africa, the socio-economic status of the township communities is mainly in the low range. Also common in the township setting in South Africa is cultural diversity. Therefore, it was important to focus the study on this context in order to provide school interventions of cyberbullying based on the beliefs of learners from this context instead of relying on research findings from international countries which might not address the needs of the South Africa township communities.

3.2.1. Research Design

The study was quantitative in nature. Quantitative data can be viewed as gathering of information which can be conveniently displayed in "statistical, numerical and diagrammatic forms" (Gleen, 2010, p.96). After permission had been granted by the participants/learners, data was collected using questionnaires handed out to learners. The study employed a non-experimental approach since there was neither a control group nor manipulation of variables.

Specifically, a survey research design was adopted to collect the data because it is efficient for collecting data from a large sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003).

3.2.2. Sample and sampling

Convenience, purposive, and non-probability sampling was used to select participants. This strategy was used because the participants were asked to partake in the study voluntarily. Convenience sampling relies on the availability and willingness to participate in the study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). Furthermore, non-probability sampling allows participants to be selected if they are conveniently available and meet the characteristics required for the study (Creswell, 2008). The only criterion for inclusion was the grade of the learners, between Grades 10-12 as the chosen school for the study was a senior high school.

The sample size was 221 learners, comprising of 104 (47.1%) males and 116 (52.5%) females. There was 1 (0.5%) participant who did not indicate his/her gender. Most of the participants were Africans. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, the term "Africans" was used to refer to the Black African population as described by Statistics South Africa (2016), a national department of the government of the Republic South Africa. The participants' ages ranged from 14 years to 21 years old, with a mean age of 16.76 years. However, it is imperative to note that although in South Africa learners in Grade 10-12 typically fall within the age range of 16-18 years old according to the South African Schools Act, (ACT 84 of 1996), outliers in the sample were observed. The demographic of the sample is demonstrated according to gender, race and age in Table 1.

Table 1: *Demographics of the Sample*

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	MEAN	SD	RANGE
GENDER: *(N = 220)*					
Male	104	47.1			
Female	116	52.5			
RACE: *(N =218)*					
African	216	97.7			
Coloured	2	.9			
AGE:			16.76	1.100	14-21

(Due to missing values, the total does not add up to 100% for Gender & Race distribution)

The majority of the participants spoke IsiZulu and Sesotho which are the languages that seemingly dominate the sample. The distribution of other languages is displayed in Table 2 below:

Table 2*: Home Language*

HOME LANGUAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Afrikaans	2	.9
English	11	5.0
IsiZulu	81	36.7
IsiNdebele	15	6.8
Sepedi	16	7.2
Sesotho	28	12.7
SiSwati	9	4.1
Xitsonga	12	5.4
Setswana	11	5.0
Tshivenda	8	3.6
IsiXhosa	13	5.9
Other	15	6.8
TOTAL	221	100.0

The sample consisted of Grade 10 to Grade 12 learners. Most of the participants were in Grade 11. However, there were 3 participants who did not indicate their grade as depicted by Table 3.

Table 3: *Learner Grade Distribution*

GRADE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
10	78	35.3
11	93	42.1
12	47	21.3
Missing	3	1.4
TOTAL	221	100

3.2.3. Instruments

The instrument used in the present study was administered by the researcher to the participants (Appendix A). The instrument is called Cyberbullying Survey and it was adapted and used by Salus (2012) in the cyberbullying study for the Capstone Project. Initially, it was developed by the Director for the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use, Nancy Willard in the USA. Although attempts were made to get reliability coefficients of this instrument from previous studies, they were not successful. The instrument was adapted for the present study. The item for race was adapted by including different races such as African, Indian, Coloured and Asian. In addition, the item for home language was adapted by including the South African official languages which are Afrikaans, English, IsiZulu, Ndebele, Sepedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa. This was done to fit the instrument to the South African context. It was later piloted to a small sample of 10 learners to check for its applicability to the South African context. The results of piloting indicated that the instrument was suitable and applicable to the South African context as indicated by no challenges in completing the questionnaire by the pilot sample.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was for collecting the participants' demographic information such as age, gender, race/ ethnicity, home language and grade. The second section consisted of 13 items, some requiring one answer and some multiple answers under each sub question, addressing the research questions of the study. The first seven

items of the second section of the instrument were summed up to focus on the participants' experience and reaction to cyberbullying. To assess whether these seven items that were summed to create the cyberbullying experience and reaction to cyberbullying formed a reliable scale, Cronbach's alpha was computed using the SPSS (Version, 24, 2016) software. Attempts to get reliability coefficients of the scale from previous studies were not successful. The alpha for the seven items was .729 indicating that the items formed a scale that has reasonable internal consistency reliability. The .729 alpha is acceptable as a test for internal consistency reliability because an acceptable alpha should be above .70 (Leech, Barrett & Morgan 2005). However, it should be noted that the reliability coefficients for the rest of the items in the instrument were not available.

3.2.4. Procedure

The present study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand (Appendix B). The protocol number H16/07/21 was granted for this study. Thereafter, permission to conduct the study was requested from the Gauteng Department of Education (Appendix C) and the chosen school (Appendix D). With the help of the principal, the researcher informed the parents and the learners about the research study through information letters (Appendices E & F). After receiving approval from parents (Appendix G) and assent from learners (Appendix H) below the age of 18, the questionnaires were administered to the learners on a pre-arranged date. This was done in a group setting per grade in a classroom allocated by the school. The survey took about 35 minutes to complete. Once the participants had completed the survey, all the questionnaires were collected by the researcher. It is important to note that data was collected during the participants' free periods, without disturbing their class lessons.

3.2.5. Ethical Considerations

The sample for this research ranged from 14 years old to 21 years old including teenagers under the age of 18 years old who fall within the vulnerable group category. Thereby, ethics clearance as required by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand was obtained (Appendix B). Consent from the school and parents as well as assent from the participants was obtained after providing them with information letters. All were informed that

participation was voluntary. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Confidentiality was guaranteed by informing the participants and the school that the data collected would be held in the strictest of confidence by the researcher and her supervisor. Anonymity was assured as the participants were not required to include identifying information on the questionnaires.

The phenomenon of cyberbullying is a sensitive issue with possibilities of some participants being negatively affected by the survey. However, none of the participants involved in this particular study reported being negatively affected due to their participation. Nonetheless, the researcher had informed the parents and the participants through their respective information letters (Appendix E & F) to contact her or her supervisor for referral to Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand for counselling in such an event.

3.2.6. Data analysis

The data was entered in an Excel spreadsheet and imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 24, 2016) for analysis. This software is designed for use by social scientists (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to answer the research questions.

Descriptive data analysis was used because it allows the researcher to have an impression of the data collected (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Descriptive Statistics also help the researcher identify underlying patterns in the data through summarizing the data collected (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution of the phenomenon in the sample thereby establishing the facts in percentages and frequencies for the categorical variables that included age, gender, race/ethnicity, home language and grade. These were analysed mainly to describe different facets of the demographic data. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were employed to explore what learners do when they witness cyberbullying, perceptions about cyberbullying and the reasons cybervictims choose not to report the incidents.

In addition, inferential statistics were used because they allow the researcher to reach beyond the data by determining correlations between variables (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In this study, a t-test and a One way ANOVA were used to identify statistical significances. The t-test was used to determine if there are significant differences between gender groups based on

learners' experiences of cyberbullying incidents. Four dependent variables were employed to determine if gender predicts differences with regards to how learners perceive cyberbullying. The first variable was termed regularity of self and it was used to determine the frequency the learners had been targets of cyberbullying. The second variable was the regularity of others and it was for establishing the frequency the learners thought others were cybervictims. Bullying-reaction which explored how learners react to being cyberbullied was the third variable. The fourth variable was cyber-perception which explored the learners' opinions and beliefs about cyberbullying. On the other hand, ANOVA was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the grades on how learners experience cyberbullying employing the four dependent variables which are regularity of self, regularity of others, bullying-reaction and cyber-perception.

Chapter 4: RESULTS

4.1. Overview of Chapter

In this Chapter, the results of the study are presented. The purpose of this study was to understand high school learners' beliefs and behaviours about the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The results are presented according to the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1. The descriptive statistics are initially presented followed by inferential statistics.

4.2. Reactions to cyberbullying

Question One asked: *"What are the learners' reactions to cyberbullying?"* The results revealed that participants reacted differently to various forms of cyberbullying as illustrated by Table 4. The findings indicated that from the various forms of cyberbullying dealt with in the study, namely, flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerading, outing and exclusion, 45.7% considered masquerading as the most upsetting form of cyberbullying followed by outing (42.1%), cyberstalking (38.9%) and denigration (36.7%).

Table 4: *Reactions to Cyberbullying*

FORM	NO BIG DEAL		LIVE WITH IT		UPSETTING		VERY UPSETTING	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Flaming	37	16.7	62	28.1	71	32.1	49	22.2
Online Harassment	28	12.7	41	18.6	75	33.9	74	33.5
Cyberstalking	27	12.2	35	15.8	71	32.1	86	38.9
Denigration	25	11.3	50	22.6	64	29.0	81	36.7
Masquerade	24	10.9	43	19.5	52	23.5	101	45.7
Outing	31	14.0	24	10.9	72	32.6	93	42.1
Exclusion	65	29.4	71	32.1	49	22.2	31	14.0

It was important to establish how learners reacted to different forms of cyberbullying so as to give insight to those interested in curbing and preventing cyberbullying.

4.2.1. Witnessing of cyberbullying

Question Two asked: *"What do the learners do when they witness cyberbullying?"* The results revealed that about 63.8% of the participants stated that they had witnessed cyberbullying incidents. In terms of bystander behaviour, 23.5% of them indicated that they reported the cyberbullying to someone who can help the victim, while 17.6% and 15.4% tried to help or befriend the victim and leave the online environment, respectively. Table 5 presents other behaviours learners do when they witness cyberbullying.

Table 5: *Witnessing of Cyberbullying*

CONSTRUCT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Witness:		
Never	76	34.4
Occasionally	95	43.0
Frequently	46	20.8
Bystander behaviour:		
Join in	10	4.5
Cheer the bully on	9	4.1
Leave the online environment	34	15.4
Object to others but not directly to the bully	11	5.0
Object to the bully	20	9.0
Try to help or befriend the victim	39	17.6
Report the cyberbullying to someone who can help the victim	52	23.5

4.2.2. Learners' beliefs about cyberbullying

Question Three asked: *"What are the learners' perceptions about cyberbullying?"* The results indicated that 48.9% were of the opinion that cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world and there is nothing anyone can do about it. Interestingly, a large number of participants, 74% were of the belief that what happened online should stay online yet when asked if it was important to tell a responsible adult when someone was being hurt by cyberbullying, 85% agreed. Furthermore, 78% indicated that they would report cyberbullying incidents if they could do so anonymously. Other beliefs and perceptions learners hold about cyberbullying are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: *Learners' Belief about Cyberbullying*

BELIEF	AGREE		DISAGREE	
	n	%	n	%
Cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world. There is nothing anyone can do to stop it	111	50.2	108	48.9
I know someone who has really been hurt by cyberbullying	136	61.5	81	36.7
Things that happen online should stay online	162	73.3	56	25.3
If someone is being hurt by cyberbullying, it is important to tell a responsible adult	188	85.1	32	14.2
I would report cyberbullying incidents, if I could do so without anyone knowing it was me	171	77.4	47	26.3
I have a right to say anything online, even if what I say hurts someone or violates someone's privacy	54	24.4	159	71.9
Adults should stay out of this	47	21.3	170	76.9
I will like to create a more respectful online world	196	88.7	19	8.6

4.2.3. Reasons cybervictims choose not to report cyberbullying incidents

Question Four asked: *"What are the reasons cybervictims choose not to report the incidents?"* The study found that 14% of the participants did not report the cyberbullying incidents to school authorities because they thought the school would or could not do anything to stop the cyberbullying. On the same note, another 14% indicated that they did not think that their parents or guardians would understand or believe them. Other reasons cybervictims gave for not reporting the incidents are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7: *Reasons for Not Reporting*

	REPORT		WOULD NOT REPORT	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
Reporting to school authorities	86	38.9	135	61.5
Reporting to parents or guardians	92	41.6	129	58.4
Reasons for not reporting to school authorities:				
I don't think school would understand			18	8.1
I don't think school would or could do anything to stop it			31	14.0
I could get myself into trouble, because I could also be at fault			6	2.7
The cyberbully could get back at me and make things even worse			26	11.8
Other students could make fun of me			6	2.7
My parents could find out and restrict my internet access			10	4.5
I need to deal with internet bullying myself			24	10.9
Cyberbullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it			15	6.8
Reasons for not reporting to parents:				
I don't think my parents or guardians would understand or believe me			30	13.6
I don't think my parents or guardians will know how to stop it			18	8.1
I could get myself into trouble, because I could also be at fault			6	2.7
The cyberbully could get back at me and make things worse			23	10.4
Other students could make fun of me			3	1.4
My parents or guardians could restrict my internet access			24	10.9
Cyberbullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it			10	4.5
I should be able to deal with cyberbullying by myself			12	5.4

In addition, when asked if the school internet policy prohibits actions that would be considered cyberbullying, 42% said no while a slightly higher number of participants 51% highlighted that it did.

4.3. Inferential Statistics

As already mentioned Question Five posed *"Does gender and grade predict differences with regards to how the learners perceive cyberbullying?"* Inferential statistics were run to answer these questions.

4.3.1. Gender and perception of cyberbullying

In order to determine if gender predicts differences to how the learners perceived cyberbullying, it was important to establish whether there was a statistical difference between male and female participants who were exposed to incidents of cyberbullying through the regularity of self (1) and regularity of others (2). Furthermore, the male and female participants' reactions to incidents of cyberbullying were compared. Finally, differences between male and female participants' cyber-perceptions were explored. A t-test was performed to determine these differences.

The results of the t-test revealed no statistically significant gender differences for the regularity of self, regularity of others and cyber-perception as demonstrated by a p- value > .05 (Table 8). However, there was a statistically significant difference on how males and females react to incidents of cyberbullying t (218) = -2.126, p = .035.

Table 8: *T-test for Gender Differences*

VARIABLE	df	MEAN DIFFERENCE	Sig. (2-tailed)
Regularity of self	218	- .022	.940
Regularity of others	218	- .096	.808
Bullying reaction	218	- 1.420	.035*
Cyber-perception	218	- .693	.141

**p-value < .05*

4.3.2. Grade and perception of cyberbullying

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between learners in different grades on how they perceived cyberbullying. Participants were classified into three groups: Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12. The dependent variables of regularity of

self, regularity of others, bullying reaction and cyber-perceptions were used to determine grade differences. The results of the study revealed no statistically significant grade differences for the variables examined as displayed in Table 9.

Table 9: *One-way ANOVA for Grade Differences*

VARIABLE:	**MEAN SQUARE**	**F**	**df**	**Sig**
BETWEEN GROUPS:				
Regularity of self	5.689	1.173	2	.311
Regularity of others	3.130	.372	2	.690
Bullying reaction	17.093	.683	2	.506
Cyber-perception	8.180	.680	2	.507

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview of Chapter

This chapter focuses on discussing the findings of the study based on the research questions. The findings are framed in the context of the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 and additional literature that was read to understand the findings. It should be noted that no published work on this topic based on the South African context could be found. Internationally, only one article could be obtained (Li, 2010). Despite this lack of studies, the researcher used available related literature to understand the results of the study. For the first time, therefore, this study has investigated the possible relationship between the beliefs and behaviours of the South African township high school learners with regards to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. It is hoped that this study will extend the literature of cyberbullying. Finally, the implications, and limitations of the study are noted, followed by recommendations for future research, the conclusion, and lastly, the key points.

5.1.1. What are the learners' reactions to cyberbullying?

As already mentioned, Question One stated: "*What are the learners' reactions to cyberbullying?*" The findings of this current study revealed that from the forms of cyberbullying dealt with in this study, namely, flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerading, outing and exclusion, 46% considered masquerading as the most upsetting form of cyberbullying followed by outing (42%). On the other hand, exclusion was considered by most respondents (30%) as something of no concern. This concurs with the findings of a Canadian study conducted by Barrett (2009) based on 12 schools which concluded that the participants were indifferent regarding exclusion. These findings are also consistent with those of Menesini, Nocentini and Calussi (2011) which indicated that most adolescents regarded exclusion as less distressing because they did not perceive it as a serious form of cyberbullying. This implies that exclusion may be viewed as a behaviour that is not harmful enough to be reported. Based on this study, flaming is the form of cyberbullying that the learners are most likely to live with and not report although they find it upsetting, contrary to the finding of Barrett (2009) which revealed that Canadian adolescents were indifferent and unaffected by flaming.

It is imperative to note that the duration of victimization could be a contributing factor to how learners react to incidents of cyberbullying. Incidents that persist for longer periods of time (e.g. a month or longer) are usually regarded as more upsetting and distressing than incidents that last for a shorter duration (Tokunaga, 2010). Nonetheless, it does not imply that short-lived cyberbullying experiences do not negatively affect the youth, but a simple act of uploading and posting an embarrassing material of a video or a picture of an individual online can have a profound impact that can be exacerbated by possible anonymity of the cyberbully and the unlimited audience (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Furthermore, the large audience may mean that the posted material may be shared among a lot of people. Such could be evidenced by a Western Cape high school cyberbullying incident in October 2016 whereby an uploaded video of a 14 year girl being intimidated, verbally assaulted and threatened on Facebook by another girl from the same school was viewed 212 080 times within a short space of time and is still available online (Johns, 2016). Thus, this incident may account for and be testament to the seriousness of masquerading and outing, which involve sending and or posting someone's material with the intention of humiliating them. This may also probably explain why the majority of the learners in the study reacted by getting very upset to masquerading (46%) and outing (42%).

It was important to focus on how the learners responded to different forms/methods of cyberbullying. This was done to ascertain if the learners' reactions to cyberbullying differed with different forms of the phenomenon. Such information is important to those formulating strategies of intervention in curbing and preventing cyberbullying because they obtain insight into which form is most likely to affect the learners and which form will most likely be ignored as it would be regarded as a no big deal.

In addition to looking at the learners' reactions, it was essential to explore whether the reactions of males and females were the same. The findings of the current study revealed that male and female participants reacted differently to cyberbullying incidents with females being more upset when cyberbullied compared to the males. The findings are consistent with those of Keith and Martin (2005) which indicated that girls suffer more from cyberbullying than boys. Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, Calmaestra and Vega (2009) noted that females showed higher level of precision in the perception and understanding of emotions and this could be a possible explanation for the difference in cyberbullying reaction. However, Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Calmaestra and Vega (2009) stated that it was also possible that males did not feel

inclined to admit that victimization affected them emotionally which could be another likely explanation for the findings of the current study. Therefore, although males seemed to be less upset by cyberbullying in this study, intervention strategies should raise awareness of the negative emotional impact of cyberbullying on both male and females. It is hoped that this will encourage more males to seek support when affected by cyberbullying.

Paul, Smith and Blumberg (2012) are of the opinion that identifying how students respond to incidents of cyberbullying is important in reducing the negative impact associated with the phenomenon thereby reducing the likelihood of future incidents. The findings of this current study therefore highlight that the reactions of participants reinforce the importance of ensuring that cyberbullying complaints are not to be minimized but guidance and support needs to be provided to the young people. Winter and Lenewey (2008) emphasize that this is important because of the potential for delinquent behaviours mostly performed by those negatively affected by cyberbullying incidents.

5.1.2. What do learners do when they witness cyberbullying?

Question Two stated: "*What do learners do when they witness cyberbullying?"* The results of the present study showed that 5% of the participants joined in the cyberbullying, 4% cheered the bully on while 15% highlighted that they did not intervene but just left the online environment when they witnessed cyberbullying. These findings concurred with those from other studies which revealed that some witnesses joined in the cyberbullying or cheered the bully on (Li, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008), or behaved passively by doing nothing (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). By joining in, the witnesses were probably modeling the behaviour of the perpetrators as described by the Social Learning Theory which proposes that some children learn specific aggressive behaviour through observing people who model it (Kauffman, 2001, p.347).

Furthermore, when witnesses cheered the perpetrators on, they most likely encouraged the bullies to continue with their actions. Such behaviours by the witnesses might have been an indication of absence of social presence due to lack of perception of how their actions of encouraging the bullies might have affected the victims as described by the Social Presence Theory (Mark, 2009). As mentioned in the reviewed literature, the Social Presence Theory explains that people who communicate through technological gadgets are unable to assess the other person's reactions through facial expressions or body gestures (Citron, 2009), hence, the

behaviour of the witnesses who cheered the bullies on. Such behaviour reveals that witnesses can assume a negative role by perpetuating the situation.

It is important to also note that when witnesses behave passively and choose to do nothing, "by doing nothing, bystanders are doing something" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p.174). In other words, simply observing the behaviour and doing or saying nothing is associated with passive participation in bullying. The reasons the witnesses may be reluctant to get involved in cyberbullying could be the same as mentioned by Chou and Huang (2010) in the reviewed literature stating that the witnesses may believe that it is none of their business, not their responsibility or may feel that cyberbullying is no big deal. This is regarded as passive participation because doing nothing contributes to the maintenance of bullying as it gives the perpetrators the impression that their behaviour is acceptable (Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspertz, 1997).

However, on a positive note, some witnesses of cyberbullying do play a positive active role as shown by the present study where 24% of the participants stated that when they witnessed cyberbullying, they reported the incidents to someone who could help the victim. Some (about 18%) tried to help or befriend the victim while 9% objected to the bully. Others (5%), managed to show their disapproval although they did this to others instead of objecting directly to the bully. It needs to be noted that according to literature (Agatston et al., 2007), some witnesses may also want to assist a victim of cyberbullying but are unsure how to effectively help. This behaviour of taking a positive role as a witness of cyberbullying should be encouraged.

From the current study, and the reviewed literature, it could be seen that witnesses play an important role in the maintenance or reduction of cyberbullying behaviours (Hawkins, Pelper & Craig, 2001; Schneider et al., 2012). How adolescents respond and react when witnessing cyberbullying can provide important information regarding the factors that increase or reduce witnesses' willingness to intervene. Therefore, it is important to address "bystanders in education and prevention interventions in order to alter their attitudes and responses to online bullying" (Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk & Solomon, 2010, p. 371). Importantly, if passive witnesses believe that their efforts will lead to positive outcomes, they may be encouraged to behave in prosocial ways in the future.

5.1.3. What are the learners' perceptions of cyberbullying?

Question Three stated: *"What are the learners' perceptions about cyberbullying?"* It was found that 73% of the participants stated that things that happened online should stay online yet 85% voiced that it was important to tell a responsible adult if someone was being hurt by cyberbullying. These findings present a dilemma because although a high number of respondents believed that an adult should be informed when someone was being hurt by the incidents of cyberbullying, yet, many participants wanted to keep what happened online away from adults. This study also revealed that the majority of the participants (about 89%) indicated that they would like to create a more respectful online world. This finding could be explained by the acknowledgment of about 62% of the respondents who stated that they knew someone who was really hurt by cyberbullying.

A troubling finding from this current study, however, was that 24% of the participants believed that they had a right to say anything online even if what they said hurt someone or violated someone's privacy. Such sentiments might be explained by the Social Dominance Theory which views any form of bullying as an aggressive act to dominate others and force them into submission (Beran & Li, 2005). It might be said that those learners who intentionally hurt or violate others' privacy online might be trying to feel dominant over their victims, giving the perpetrators a sense of satisfaction which feeds their aggressive acts (Olweus, 1993). It is important to note that 77% of the participants in this study indicated that they would report cyberbullying incidents if they could do so without anyone knowing that it was them. This suggests that they would have reported if they felt safe by having their identities protected. However, half of the participants were of the belief that there was nothing that could be done to stop cyberbullying. This comes as no surprise given that about 62% of the participants in this study indicated that they would not report cyberbullying to school authorities and 58% would not report to parents.

The above mentioned findings from the current study were consistent with those found in existing research where Li (2010) established that from a study conducted in Canada involving 269 participants, 18% also expressed the belief that people have a right to say anything online despite hurting other people by what they said. However, from the same study (Li, 2010), it was found that 45% of the participants also viewed the phenomenon as a serious problem that calls for intervention. The finding may be indicative of some learners' willingness to stop cyberbullying incidents. Disturbingly, 35% of the participants in the study conducted by Li

(2010) were also of the opinion that what happens online should stay online. Such sentiments should be seriously taken into account and addressed by those aiming to prevent cyberbullying.

According to Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007), young people may not be fully aware of the harmfulness of cyberbullying yet the results of this study differ from this observation. It was shown above that the majority the participants from the present study claimed to know someone who had really been hurt by cyberbullying. In addition, about 89% of the participants indicated their wish to create a more kind and respectful online world which could be their acknowledgement that things that are shared online may sometimes be cruel and disrespectful. Therefore, there is a need for intervention strategies to be implemented in schools as a way of shifting learners' negative beliefs and perceptions for them to be pro-active in preventing and curbing cyberbullying.

5.1.4. What are the reasons cybervictims choose not to report the incidents?

Question Four stated: *"What are the reasons cybervictims choose not to report incidents?"* Research findings from the current study showed that about 62% of the participants indicated that they would not report to school staff after being cyberbullied and 58% stated that they would not inform their parents or guardians. These findings concurred with those from existing literature which showed that the majority of young people choose not to report when they are cyberbullied (Belsey, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2006; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Li, 2006, 2007; Mason, 2008; Mishna et al., 2010; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010; Yilmaz, 2011). This is a serious concern that should be investigated.

The main reasons given by the participants in this study for not reporting cyberbullying incidents was their belief that parents would not understand or believe them, or the school could not do anything to stop the cyberbullying. Other reasons included the worry of exacerbating the bullying, fear of having their technological devices taken away, being blamed for the cyberbullying, and attempts to deal with the situation on their own. These findings were consistent with those found in previous empirical studies (Beale & Hall, 2007; Knight, 2006; Mishna & Alaggia, 2005; Willard, 2007) which revealed similar observations. Belsely (2004) stated that young people know there is a gap in the understanding of technology between themselves and their parents and consequently believe that the elderly would be of no help even when reported to.

Furthermore, Keith and Martin (2005) stated that many parents and teachers, who were not raised in the cyberworld, felt uncomfortable with the tools the youth were using. Therefore, it may be likely that many parents and school staff feel reluctant and uncomfortable intervening in cyberbullying incidents because they lack the technological knowledge associated with the phenomenon to effectively help adolescents (Gerson & Rappaport, 2011). This may explain the reason why young people are of the opinion that they are not supported when reporting cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mishna & Alaggia, 2005). According to Mishna, Saini and Solomon (2009), another prime reason students believed that teachers could do nothing about reported cyberbullying incidents was because cyberbullying often occurred off school grounds, hence, the perception that "I don't think the school would or could do anything to stop it", which was also expressed in the present study. Students may feel that the school is not responsible for incidents that occur away from school, calling for awareness programs by the schools to change such beliefs.

In addition, the current study indicated that a small fraction of the learners (almost 3%) did not report cyberbullying incidents because they feared getting themselves into trouble as they thought they could also have been at fault. This was consistent with claims made by Willard (2007) that other cybervictims may be engaging in risky behaviour online, and fear that their own behaviour would be discovered, leading them to getting punished should they report victimization.

Although the rate of reporting to friends was not investigated in this study, it was interesting to note from other studies that many victims of cyberbullying felt comfortable reporting their experiences to their friends instead of reporting to parents or teachers (Aricak, Sayahhan, Saribeyoglu, Ciplak, Yilmaz & Memmedor, 2008; Li, 2010; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tustin et al., 2012). This implies that when designing intervention strategies to prevent the phenomenon of cyberbullying, friends should also be considered as an important support structure for cybervictims. Reporting of cyberbullying incidents by cybervictims assists in addressing the problem because if there has to be success in preventing cyberbullying, there is a need to break the climate of silence in which cyberbullying incidents will thrive. Therefore, learners need to be encouraged to report cyberbullying incidents.

5.1.5. Does gender and grade predict differences with regards to how the learners perceive cyberbullying?

Question Five stated: *"Does gender and grade predict differences with regards to how learners perceive cyberbullying?"* With regards to gender, findings from the current study revealed no statistically significant gender differences in relation to cyberbullying. These findings are similar to some studies (Bauman, 2010, Campbell, 2005; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008; William & Guerra, 2007) which found no gender differences with regards to cyberbullying. However, it should be noted that there has been debate on the relationship between gender and cyberbullying and the findings from the reviewed literature have been conflicting and inconclusive (Chou & Haung, 2010). Some studies showed that females were more likely to be involved in cyberbullying compared to males (Dilmac, 2009; Keith & Martin, 2005; Owens et al., 2002; Pornari & Wood, 2010; Schneider et al., 2012; Walrave & Heirman, 2011). On the other hand, some studies concluded that boys were more likely to engage in the incidents of cyberbullying compared to their counterparts (Kraft & Wang, 2009; Kolowaski & Limber, 2007; Li, 2006; Zhou et al., 2011).

Interestingly, the findings from the current study seem to concur with other South African studies which found no statistically significant gender differences in relation to cyberbullying (Tustin et al., 2012, Van Turha & Johnston, 2015). The observation of similar results on the South African context compared to some contradictory findings from international countries (Dilmac, 2009; Kraft & Wang, 2009; Keith & Martin, 2005; Kolowaski & Limber, 2007; Li, 2006; Owens et al., 2002; Pornari & Wood, 2010; Schneider et al., 2012; Walrave & Heirman, 2011) may speculatively be due to cultural differences. However, research needs to be conducted to investigate the role of culture in the association between gender and cyberbullying because it was outside the scope of this current study.

In addition, the relationship between grade and cyberbullying is another aspect the researcher looked into. From the current study, no statistically significant differences were accounted for by grade. This concurs with some studies in the reviewed literature that have not found clear grade differences in rates of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012; Slonje, 2011). These findings seem to contradict those revealed by Mark and Ratliffe (2011), where it was highlighted that cyberbullying tends to peak with each progressive grade. Conversely, Vandebosch and van Cleemput (2008) suggested that cyberbullying increased in the eighth grade and then declined by the eleventh grade. However, the observation was also not supported by the current study.

Based on the current findings, it would seem as if gender and grade do not account for much with regards to how learners assume and experience cyberbullying. Therefore, all learners despite gender or grade should be involved in anti-cyberbullying programmes designed to raise awareness about the phenomenon.

5.1.6. Implications of the study

The findings from the current study have some implications for combating cyberbullying incidents. The results of the study revealed that most learners did not report cyberbullying incidents because they believed that parents would not be able to help them. This observation has implications for the parents in dealing with cyberbullying. It is imperative for parents to have the know-how about the gadgets being used by their children. This will help them to effectively support the children when informed of cyberbullying incidents. Having the knowledge of technological gadgets used by their children will also most likely make it easier for parents to supervise their online activities. In order to gain trust and confidence of the children, parents need to create open communication channels that will enable the children to disclose to parents when cyberbullied. There is a need for strong rapport and trust between learners and parents in order to establish support structures for victims.

The results of the study also showed that the learners considered school authorities unable to deal with cyberbullying incidents in schools. Thus, it is important for school authorities to take the lead in empowering themselves with strategies to respond to cyberbullying. Based on this, teacher training workshops on cyberbullying need to be conducted on South African schools. These can be done through continuous professional development (CPD) workshops. Furthermore, school authorities need to understand that teachers are on the frontline with students and are usually the first to be aware of cyberbullying incidents. Thus, schools need to provide a complete and consistent set of procedures and guidelines for teachers to follow when managing cyberbullying. In this way, teachers would have a better understanding of their role in responding to cyberbullying and how to advise learners when incidents are reported to them. It is also important to note that cyberbullying often impacts the learners and the school environment (Li, 2006; Shariff, 2005; Willard, 2007). Explaining this to the teachers will likely help them to understand the importance of providing support for cybervictims. Thus, when learners feel understood and supported, their school performance will most likely improve.

Another observation noted from the study was the behaviour of bystanders when witnessing cyberbullying. The study showed that although some learners reported the cyberbullying, or tried to help the victim, some did nothing, cheered the bully on, or joined in the bullying. Such behaviours implies that the Ministry of Education should design policies for schools that are aimed at shifting attitudes of learners towards a willingness to intervene by reporting cyberbullying incidents. This can be done by encouraging positive bystander behaviours, and ensuring safety and anonymity when reporting cyberbullying.

In addition, this study revealed no gender and grade differences in cyberbullying hence all learners in schools should be taught responsibilities that come with the use of technology. In overall, cognisance should be taken of the importance of collaborative effort in managing cyberbullying. Thus, learners, school authorities, policy makers, and parents should all play an active role in combating cyberbullying in schools.

5.1.7. Limitations

The current study addressed gaps in the literature by particularly examining the behaviours and beliefs of high school learners about the phenomenon of cyberbullying. However, the study was not without limitations. A major limitation of the present study was that the participants comprised of Grade 10-12 learners only. It did not include the Grade 8 and 9 learners who are also part of high school learners in South Africa. The cause for the limitation was that the chosen school for the study only accommodates senior high school learners (Grade 10-12). Therefore, the results of this current study should be treated with caution as they cannot be generalized to the total high school population within a township setting in South Africa.

A further limitation for this study was the lack of psychometric data regarding the instrument used, hence some scales in the measure did not have reliability coefficient information. Furthermore, to the knowledge of the researcher, there were no instruments within the South Africa context that focused on measuring the behaviours and beliefs of learners regarding cyberbullying. The questionnaire used in this study was therefore adapted from an international study (Salus, 2012).

Finally, another limitation of the study was the use of 3 and 4-point Likert Scales in the instrument. This caused the Likert Scales to lack middle ground and it also limited the response

options given to the participants. A 5 or 7-point Likert Scales may have addressed this limitation.

5.1.8. Recommendations

1. In South Africa, there is paucity of studies on cyberbullying and none, to the knowledge of the researcher, on the behaviours and beliefs of learners regarding the phenomenon. This means that the results of this study are novel and should be viewed as an exploratory pilot study and should be replicated with large samples.
2. Continuous research on the subject is needed. This will help in designing intervention strategies grounded on relevant research in order for efforts to prevent cyberbullying to have an impact.
3. In order to be effective in addressing and preventing cyberbullying, a holistic approach focusing on intervention strategies should involve the learners, teachers and the parents/guardians.
4. Parents and guardians should be equipped with skills to support learners and encourage responsible behaviour.
5. Learners need to understand that they might need to be persistent with parents/guardians and school staff when reporting incidents of cyberbullying so as to get the help they need.
6. The victims of cyberbullying should be encouraged to break the silence and avoid attempting to deal with the problem on their own. Instead, it is recommended that they should seek support.
7. It is imperative to create easy and numerous ways of reporting. Those reporting cyberbullying should feel safe and not worry about the perpetrator getting back at them.
8. It is recommended that intervention strategies designed should allow for anonymous bully reporting and online counselling and support for cybervictims who get negatively impacted by cyberbullying.

5.1.9. Conclusion

The focus of this study was to examine high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a growing problem that is increasing with the

advancement of technology (Citron, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to understand learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying in order to provide richer understanding of how cyberbullying displays itself in young people.

The present study revealed that despite the learners' grades, there were no differences regarding how the learners assumed and experienced cyberbullying. It was noted that a worrying number of learners do not report to parents/guardians or school authorities when they are cyberbullied. The behaviour is typical of findings in the international trends with regard to cyberbullying (Knight, 2006). This requires urgent attention because for effective interventions to be put in place, cyber incidents need to be reported. However, it was noted that the learners' lack of confidence in adults was one of the reasons for not reporting incidents of cyberbullying. In societies, it is expected that adults should take responsibility for the protection of young people from any form of emotional, mental and physical harm. Therefore, adults should equip themselves with effective skills to deal with the problem of cyberbullying so as to gain the trust of cybervictims.

From the current study, a number of learners indicated that they experience cyberbullying neither as victims nor perpetrators but as witnesses. It is concerning to note that 15% chose to leave the online environment without assisting the victim or raising the alarm on the bullying. This indicates that there is a need to educate learners who witness cyberbullying in being proactive to curb and prevent future incidents. Another informative finding from this study that may provide pertinent information for policy makers is the belief by a large number (73%) of participants who were of the opinion that what happens online should stay online. This was despite the observation that 85% believed that it was important to inform an adult when someone was being hurt by cyberbullying. It may then be deduced that most learners will not report incidents of cyberbullying in an attempt to keep away things that happen online. This calls for anti-cyberbullying programmes that will assist with correcting such beliefs.

Finally, in an attempt to succeed in fighting against cyberbullying, it is important to consider the learners' beliefs about cyberbullying and to also understand how these influence their behaviour with regard to the phenomenon. Furthermore, there is a call for parents/guardians, school authorities and the communities at large to become involved in developing intervention strategies that will effectively curb and prevent cyberbullying in South Africa.

5.1.10. Key Points

1. This study explored Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon of cyberbullying in South Africa.
2. No research has been conducted to understand high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon regarding cyberbullying within the township setting in South Africa.
3. Therefore, this study was conducted to add to the body of research on South African high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying which in turn will aid in the design of the interventions that address the needs of learners, especially from township areas such as Soweto.
4. Learners' beliefs, whether they are victims, perpetrators or witnesses, influence how they behave with regards to the phenomenon of cyberbullying.
5. Parents and school authorities' responses when learners report incidents of cyberbullying determine whether the victims will report the incidents in future, hence, adults need to be pro-active when informed about cyberbullying incidents.
6. The findings of the study provide support that gender and grade are not significant predictors with regards to how learners perceive and experience cyberbullying.
7. Evidence does, however, suggest that female learners perceive cyberbullying incidents to be more upsetting compared to male learners.
8. In order for effective strategies to curb and prevent cyberbullying to be designed and implemented, the learners' behaviours and beliefs with regards to cyberbullying should be considered by policy makers.

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Appendix A:

Student Cyberbullying Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the definition of cyberbullying below and honestly answer the following questions.

Cyberbullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the internet or other communication technologies such as cell phones.

Section A: Demographic information

Please put a cross next to the correct answer.

1. **Age**: _____
2. **Gender**: Male___ Female___
3. **Race /Ethnicity**

3.1. African ___ 3.3. Coloured___

3.2. Indian___ 3.4. Asian___ 3.5. Other___

4. Home Language:

4.1. Afrikaans___ 4.2. English___ 4.3. IsiZulu___ 4.4 IsiNdebele___

4.5. Sepedi___ 4.6. SeSotho___ 4.7. SiSwati___ 4.8. Xitsonga____

4.9. Setswana___ 4.10. Tshivenda___ 4.11. IsiXhosa___

4.12. Other_____

5. Grade:

5.1. Grade 10___ 5.2. Grade 11___

5.3. Grade12___

Section B

The following are a list of common cyberbullying actions. From the given options, choose **one** for each question.

1. Flaming: Sending angry, rude, vulgar messages about a person to an online group or to that person via email or other text messaging.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often have you been flamed?				
b. How often do you think students are flamed?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to flaming?				

2. Online Harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive messages via email or other text messaging to a person.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often do you get harassed online or through text messaging?				
b. How often do you think students at this school are harassed online?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale what is your reaction to harassment?				

3. Cyber Stalking: Online harassment that includes threats of harm or is excessively intimidating.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often have you been cyber stalked?				
b. How often do you think students are cyber stalked?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to cyber stalking?				

4. Denigration (put-downs): Sending harmful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such material online.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often have you been denigrated online?				
b. How often do you think students have been denigrated online or at home?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to denigration?				

5. Masquerade: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that makes that person look bad.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often has someone masqueraded as you online and made you look bad?				
b. How often do you think masquerading occurs to students?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to masquerading?				

6. Outing: Sending or posting material about a person that contain sensitive, private or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often has someone sent/ posted sensitive personal information of you online?				
b. How often do you think students at this school have had someone send or post personal sensitive information about them online or at home?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to outing?				

7. Exclusion: Cruelly excluding someone from an online group.				
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
a. How often have you been cruelly excluded from an online group?				
b. How often do you think students at this school have been cruelly excluded from online groups?				
	No big deal	Learn to live with it	Upsetting	Very Upsetting
	1	2	3	4
c. On the following scale, what is your reaction to exclusion?				

	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	
	0	1	2	
8. How frequently have you been a witness to cyberbullying incidents?				

9. If you have been a witness to cyberbullying incidents, what is your normal response (Choose **one** that applies to you)			
a. Join in		f. Try to help or befriend the victim	
b. Cheer the bully on		g. Report the cyberbullying to help someone who can help the victim	
c. Leave the online environment		h. Have not been a witness	
d. Object to others but not directly to the bully		i. Other. (Specify)	
e. Object to the bully			

10. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to the following statements				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
	1	2	3	4
a. Cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world. There is nothing anyone can do to stop it.				
b. I know someone who has really been hurt by cyberbullying				
c. Things that happen on line should stay on line				
d. If someone is being hurt by cyberbullying, it is important to tell a responsible adult				
e. I will report cyberbullying incidents, if I could do so without anyone knowing it was me				
f. I have the right to say anything online, even if what I say hurts someone or violates someone's privacy				
g. Adults should stay out of this				
h. I will like to create a more kind and respectful online world				

11. If someone was cyberbullying you at school or if a student from the school was cyberbullying you at home, would you report the cyberbullying to a school counsellor, teacher or any administrator? **If you answered "No", what is the most important reason why you would not report (Choose one only)**	Yes 1	No 2
a. I don't think school would understand		
b. I don't think the school would or could do anything to stop it		
c. I could get myself into trouble, because I could also be at fault		
d. The cyberbully could get back at me and make things even worse		
e. Other students could make fun of me		
f. My parents could find out and restrict my internet access		
g. I need to deal with internet bullying by myself		
h. Cyberbullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it		

12. If someone was cyberbullying you at home, would you tell your parents or your guardians? **If you answered "No", what is the most important reason why you would not report (Choose one only)**	Yes 1	No 2
a. I don't think my parents/guardians would understand or believe me		
b. I don't think my parents or guardians will know how to stop it		
c. I could get myself in trouble because I could also be at fault		
d. The cyberbully could get back at me and make things worse		
e. Other students could make fun of me		
f. My parents or guardians could restrict my internet access		
g. I should be able to deal with cyberbullying by myself		
h. Cyberbullying is no big deal, people should just ignore it		

13. Does the school internet policy prohibit actions that would be considered cyberbullying?	Yes 1	No 2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix B:

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Moyo

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	PROTOCOL NUMBER: H16/07/21
PROJECT TITLE	Cyberbullying in high schools: A study of Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mrs B Moyo
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 July 2016
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	04 August 2019

DATE 05 August 2016 CHAIRPERSON (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor J Seabi

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.

Signature 15/08/16 Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix C:

For administrative use:
Reference no. D2017 / 036 A
Enquiries: Diane Buntting 011 843 6503

GAUTENG PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GDE AMENDED RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**26 April 2016**
Validity of Research Approval:	**26 April 2016 to 30 September 2016**
Previous GDE Research Approval letter reference number	**D2017 / 008 dated 4 April 2016**
Name of Researcher:	**Moyo B.**
Address of Researcher:	**P.O. Box 93630 Yeoville; 2143**
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	**011 079 7353; 073 003 8541**
Email address:	**moyobeatie@gmail.com**
Research Topic:	**Cyberbullying in High Schools: A study of Soweto High School learners' behaviours and beliefs about the phenomenon.**
Number and type of schools:	**ONE Secondary School**
District/s/HO	**Gauteng West**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However participation is VOLUNTARY.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB.) must be presented with a copy of this letter.*

Annexure
2016/05/04

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM)
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506

2. *The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid;*
3. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
4. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
5. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
6. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s; principal/s, educator/s, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.*
7. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the office/s visited for supplying such resources.*
8. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research title, report or summary.*
9. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template). Failure to submit your Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation and Research Summary on completion of your studies / project – a month after graduation or project completion - may result in permission being withheld from you and your Supervisor in future.*
10. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned;*
11. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Dr David Makhado

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2016/05/04

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM)
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Appendix D:

Department of Psychology
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

School Information Letter

Dear Principal,

My name is Beatrice Moyo and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Master's degree in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is to understand Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying.

I hereby request permission to conduct the research at your school. Attached is a permission letter from the Gauteng Department of Education granting me permission to conduct the research in the school.

Participants in the study will involve Grade 10 to 12 volunteers completing a questionnaire on cyber bullying. Consent from the learners' parents or guardians will be requested if they are under the age of 18. Attached is an information letter and consent form for the parents or guardians for your information. The questionnaire will take about 35 minutes. I will administer it myself at a time convenient for you. Participation is strictly voluntary and learners may withdraw from the study at any point. No risks will be associated with this study and participants will not be disadvantaged or advantaged by participating or not. Data collected will be treated confidentially and only my supervisor and I will process it. Anonymity will be guaranteed as no identifying information of the learners or the school will be put in the final report.

The results of the study will be made available at your request. If permission is granted to conduct the research, may you fill in the attached consent form and e-mail it to me or I can come and collect it. For any further questions regarding the study, you may also contact my supervisor Prof. Joseph Seabi.

Your consent in this regard will be appreciated.

Kind Regards

Beatrice Moyo
moyobeatie@gmail.com
073 003 8451

Supervisor
Joseph.Seabi@wits.ac.za
011 717 8331

School Consent Letter

I _____, Principal of _____ (name of the school), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research study. I give consent to allow Beatrice Moyo to conduct research at my school. I understand that the participants and the school may withdraw from the study should we choose to do so because participation is strictly voluntary. I also understand that the responses of the study will remain confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

School stamp:

Appendix E:

Department of Psychology
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Parent /Guardian Information Letter

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

My name is Beatrice Moyo and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Masters degree in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is to understand Soweto high school learners' behaviour and beliefs about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when a learner or a group of learners use technology to engage in behaviours that intentionally hurt or harm others.

I hereby request permission for your child to participate in the study.

Participation in the study will involve your child completing a questionnaire on bullying. The questionnaire will take about 35 minutes to administer and it will be done during school hours. Participation is strictly voluntary. The child may withdraw from the study at any point or they may choose not to answer any question they do not want to. No risks will be associated with the study and participants will not be advantaged or disadvataged by choosing to participate or not. The responses from the participants will only be processed by my supervisor and I to ensure confidentiality of the information collected. Anonymity will be guaranteed as no identifying information from your child or the school will be put in the final report.

Your child might be affected negatively because of the sensitivity of the issue of cyberbullying. In case of such an event, she/he will is free to contact me or my supervisor for referral for counselling at Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand for counselling.

For any questions you might have regarding the study, contact me or my supervisor Prof. Joseph Seabi.

Thank you for taking time to read this information letter. If you would like your child to participate in this study please complete the informed consent form on the next page and return it to the school as soon as possible.

Kind Regards

Beatrice Moyo
moyobeatie@gmail.com
073 003 8451

Prof Joseph Seabi (Supervisor)
Joseph.Seabi@wits.ac.za
011 717 8331

Appendix F:

Department of Psychology
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Learner Information Form

My name is Beatrice Moyo. I am doing a research project for the University of the Witwatersrand. I am trying to understand Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying. The study will help in coming up with ways to prevent and stop cyberbullying in schools. If you would like, you can be in my study. If you decide to participate in my study, you will have to fill out a form after school time which will take about 35 minutes to complete.

Your answers during the questionnaire will be kept a secret and no one will be able to identify you through your responses. You are required not to put your name in the questionnaire. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way if you decide to be part of the study or not.

Your parents or guardians have to agree to allow you to participate in the study. Thereafter, you will have to choose if you want to be in the study or not. If you decide to be in the study now, then later change your mind, it is okay. You can stop at any time you choose to. If you want to talk to someone about your cyberbullying experience after participating in the study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor and we will refer you for counselling at Emthonjeni Centre at University of the Witwatersrand.

By signing this letter you are confirming to have read and understood the contents and that you are agreeing to participate. For further questions on the study contact me or you may also contact my supervisor, Prof. Joseph Seabi.

Thank you for your time.

Kind Regards

Beatrice Moyo
moyobeatie@gmail.com
073 003 8451

Prof Joseph Seabi (Supervisor)
Joseph.Seabi@wits.ac.za
011 717 8331

Appendix G:

<u>Consent for Parents/Guardians</u> (On Behalf of Minors Under 18 Years Old)

I _____, hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher about the nature of the study. I have read and understood the above written information letter concerning the study in understanding Soweto high school learners' behaviours and beliefs about cyberbullying. I am aware that the information gathered during the study will be anonymously processed into a research report. I am aware the information collected will be regarded as confidential and no information will be used to identify my child. I understand participation is voluntary and that my child may choose to withdraw from the study at any time or that she/he may choose not to answer some questions.

I have understood everything that has been explained to me and l consent to my child participating in this research.

Parent/Guardian(s) name :(Please print) _____

Child's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H:

Learner Assent Form

I _____ agree that l have read and understood the contents of this letter and what the study requires. I agree to voluntarily take part in the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any point should I chose to do so. I also understand that my answers in the study will remain a secret. I also understand that will not be identified in the study.

Signature of the participant (Child):_____

Date: _____