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# A Qualitative Exploration of Teachers Experiences of Bullying by Parents: A Job Demands-Resources Perspective




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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Organisational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2024/03/15.

# DECLARATION

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

Signed: NM MOODLEY

Date: 2024/03/15

# PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Noelle M Moodley (1862501), hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Upon completion of this research report, I want to offer a heartful appreciation to those who supported me. Without you, this academic milestone would have not been possible.

- To my parents, Denise and Norman, I sit and look back to how far I can remember, and you were always there for me. Each and everyday you were helping me be the best that I can be. Thank you for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself.

- To my supervisor, Colleen Bernstein, I cannot thank you enough. Your passion and support have been invaluable throughout this journey. I am immensely grateful for your mentorship and unwavering belief in my abilities. Thank you for inspiring me to reach new heights and for being a source of inspiration.

- I would like to thank all the teachers who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in interviews. Your contribution means we are now one step closer to understanding the impact of parent-enacted TTBH in South African schools.

# ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine South African teacher's experiences of being bullied by parents (referred to as Teacher Targeted Bullying and Harassment (TTBH)). The study was guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, in which parent-enacted TTBH was seen as one of the many job demands faced by South African teachers as part of their jobs. Job resources, that is those offered by the school as well as the personal resources of teachers, were explored as means by which teachers cope with the demand of parent-enacted TTBH. Furthermore, outcomes of the experience of job demands, more specifically the demand of parent bullying and harassment on teachers' psychological and physiological well-being, were examined.

A qualitative research design was utilized. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with teachers who have experienced parent-enacted TTBH. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to analyze the data. The main findings of this study indicated the multifaceted nature of parent-enacted TTBH, ranging from undermining authority and verbal or physical intimidation to attacks on social media and group bullying. Additionally, findings indicated that parent-enacted TTBH was influenced by societal pressures, parental expectations, power dynamics, and the overall school environment. Lastly, participants expressed feelings of fear, anxiety, and avoidance, and reported various health issues such as headaches, sleeplessness, and digestive problems. The coping strategies observed among participants included active coping strategies, and seeking social and professional support.

The implications of this study contribute to the awareness of parent-enacted TTBH in South African schools. In doing so, this study may encourage the Department of Education to protect teachers from the escalation of parent-enacted TTBH and its associated consequences for teachers' physical and psychological well-being.



Keywords: Workplace Bullying (WPB); Teachers; Teacher Targeted Bullying and Harassment (TTBH); Psychological Wellbeing; Physiological Wellbeing; Job Demands; Job Resources; Parent Bullying

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction and Aim

Previous research, which has identified teaching as a high-stress vocation, has generally neglected to investigate bullying as a contributing factor to stress, instead, research has focused on systematic changes, such as work performance and increased workload (e.g. Van Tonder & Fourie, 2015; Simbula et al., 2012; Montgomery et al., 2005).

While a number of research studies have been done on bullying and the subsequent strategies for intervention, most of them are in the context of learners bullying learners, teachers bullying learners, or learners bullying teachers (e.g. Adewusi, 2021; Billett et al., 2020; Burns et al., 2020; Billett et al., 2019; Fahie, 2014; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Bullying has serious adverse effects on an individual's psychological and physical well-being and has been identified as a precursor of stress and its various outcomes (e.g. Fahie, 2014; Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; De Wet & Jacobs, 2021; Boudrias et al., 2021).

The present study highlights the important issue of teachers being bullied by parents. The study aims to examine South African teacher's experiences of being bullied by parents and will be guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, in which bullying by parents is seen as one of the many job demands faced by South African teachers as part of their jobs. Job resources, that is those offered by the school as well as the personal resources of teachers, will be explored as means by which teachers cope with the demand of parent-enacted bullying. The outcomes of the experience of these demands, more specifically the demand of parent-enacted bullying on teachers' well-being, will also be examined.

## 1.2 Rationale

Due to the context of schools, where teachers are assumed to be in positions of power, many people have trouble believing teachers are victims of bullying and harassment (Billett et al., 2019). However, De Wet and Jacobs' (2013) study on workplace bullying (WPB) in the Free State found that 90.8 percent of the teachers who took part in the questionnaire experienced bullying. The study also found that 89.1 percent of teachers experienced at least two different forms of bullying (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). The first most common form of bullying involved behaviours that undermine the professional status of victims (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). These

behaviours include constantly evaluating the victim's performance, increasing the victim's workload, and constantly finding errors/mistakes in their work and work results (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). The second most common form of bullying experienced was isolating behaviours (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). These behaviours include behaving as if the victim is not seen or present in the school environment and ignoring meeting requests made by the victim (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). While De Wet and Jacobs (2013) single out these two main behaviours in their study, WPB consists of many more behaviours.

One specific form of bullying that is focused on is the experience of Teacher Targeted Bullying and Harassment (TTBH), which is defined as intentional and continuous violence against teachers (Gul et al., 2022). While this type of bullying is prevalent worldwide in the teaching profession, it is particularly evident in South African schools (Billett et al., 2019, p.8).

The high prevalence rates of TTBH within South African schools stem from the fact that teachers in South Africa operate within physically and psychologically toxic work environments (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013; De Wet, 2010). South African schools are characterized by under-resourcing, overcrowded classes, load shedding, lack of proper hygiene facilities and poor infrastructure, communities fraught with racial conflict, economic despair, violence, moral degradation, lawlessness, high levels of learner-on-teacher and learner-on-learner bullying, and stressed, disgruntled and overworked teachers (De Wet, 2010; Kirsten et al., 2005 as cited in De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). Additionally, workplace hostilities in South Africa are 'abnormally high' due to general feelings of disempowerment, economic uncertainty, rapid and continual change, and unrealistic expectations (De Wet, 2010).

Although, South African schools are legally required to "adopt a zero-tolerance approach to all perpetrators of any form of bullying, to ensure all incidents of school bullying are reported by all stakeholders to police services and school authorities, to ensure appropriate support and empowerment for the victim, and to ensure that abuse is managed with care, sensitivity and confidentiality to mitigate against secondary abuse"; in reality, TTBH is not mitigated or properly managed (Gauteng Province, 2011, p.6).

By not recognizing or understanding parent-enacted TTBH, schools are neglecting their responsibility to honor this moral obligation. Hence, this study aims to shed light on teachers' experiences of parent-enacted bullying and harassment while working in South African schools

and will present findings on teacher's experiences of parent-enacted bullying and harassment. This study will be undertaken using the Job Demands-Resources Model which, to our knowledge, is the first research of its kind in South Africa. In addition, the findings will bring awareness to the impact of parent-enacted TTBH and how it could bear negative consequences for the teaching and learning process, thus having a spiral effect on the learners themselves. The research may also serve as a starting point for research into the effective development of interventions to reduce parent-enacted TTBH.

## 1.3 Research Questions

### 1.3.1 Primary Research Question

1.) What are teachers' experiences of being bullied and harassed by parents in South African schools? **(Here the underlying factors contributing to parent-enacted TTBH will be probed)*

### 1.3.2 Secondary Research Questions

2.) How has parent-enacted bullying and harassment affected teachers' physical and psychological well-being? **(Here teachers will be probed as to how parent-enacted bullying and harassment affected them emotionally and physically)*

3.) What are the coping strategies employed by teachers to cope with parent-enacted TTBH? **(Here coping strategies from external resources, such as colleagues, supervisors, friends, family support, etc. and internal coping resources will be probed)*

4.) How do job demands and job resources within schools contribute to the levels of parent-enacted TTBH?

5.) What do teachers think schools are doing to mitigate parent-enacted TTBH?

6.) What do teachers think schools should be doing to mitigate parent-enacted TTBH? **(These last two questions are aimed at getting insider viewpoints on what sort of interventions would be best to reduce parent-enacted TTBH)*

## 1.4 Research Report Structure

The structure of this research report consists of five chapters. Each chapter contributes to the overall understanding of teachers' experiences of being bullied and harassed by parents in South African schools and is demarcated as follows:

Chapter One, that is, the current chapter, serves as an introduction and sets the context for the study. It outlines the aim of the research, which is to examine teachers' experiences of parent-enacted bullying and harassment. The rationale highlights the prevalence of WPB among teachers, with a specific focus on TTBH in challenging school environments. The research questions are also presented, exploring the impact of parent-enacted TTBH on teachers' well-being, coping strategies employed, perceptions of school efforts to address the issue, and suggestions for effective interventions.

Chapter Two is devoted to a literature review that explores WPB and TTBH. It defines both concepts and explores the consequences, antecedents, and coping strategies, respectively. The chapter also introduces the JD-R model as the theoretical framework for the research and discusses the schooling context in South Africa. We also delve into the issue of teacher burnout in relation to the JD-R model, and examine the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.

Chapter Three of the research report discusses the methodology employed for the study. It outlines the research design, the sample and sampling strategy, the research instruments, the procedure, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four reports on the findings collected from the semi-structured interviews. These findings are presented in the form of themes and are integrated with the findings in the literature. In addition, direct quotes from the transcripts are included in the write-up to capture the trustworthiness of the themes.

Chapter Five includes the practical implications, limitations, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two is devoted to defining the constructs of WPB and, more specifically, TTBH. Moreover, this section examines the antecedents, consequences, and coping strategies of these forms of bullying and focuses on the unique context within which South African schools are situated. Lastly, this section outlines and defines the JD-R model which will frame the present research. We will also delve into the issue of teacher burnout in relation to the JD-R model, and examine the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.

## 2.2 Defining Workplace Bullying

WPB is described as repeated aggressive and violent behaviour categorized by a misuse of power in favour of perpetrators over victims, which is meant to cause intentional injury or suffering to the victim (UNESCO, 2017 as cited in Mahabeer, 2020). WPB refers to repeated, unwanted actions or practices that are carried out frequently and over a prolonged period of time, usually against an employee by their colleagues or supervisor (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

There is no clear consensus on what constitutes WPB; however, the above-definitions of WPB share the following characteristics: (1) bullying is intentional, harmful behaviour, (2) occurring repeatedly over a prolonged period of time, (3) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by a power disparity (Kõiv, 2015; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006).

Thus, WPB is about prolonged and frequent exposure to negative acts, which are unwanted by the victim and are done consciously/deliberately to cause distress, an unpleasant work environment, humiliation or offence, and may interfere with job performance (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Fox & Stallworth, 2010). Workplace bullies abuse their positions of power in order to control, intimidate, disempower, undermine, dehumanize, or strip their victims of their human rights in the workplace, such as the right to growth, voice, esteem or dignity (Woudstra et al., 2018).

Negative acts are clustered into the following categories: (1) isolation (e.g. withholding of information or physical isolation), (2) physically aggressive behaviour (e.g. threats of violence, abuse of power or physical attacks), (3) threats to professional status (e.g. public humiliation, accusations regarding lack of effort or belittling opinions), and (4) threats to personal standing

(e.g. shouting, devaluation, slandering, offensive remarks, insults or intimidation) (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). In order for negative acts towards a victim to be considered bullying, victims must feel they are exposed to repeated, patterned, persistent or long-term hostile behaviour in the workplace in a way that affects their physical, psychological, and professional health (Byers, 2012).

The requirement that WPB be defined in terms of repeated, patterned, persistent or long-term behaviours distinguishes it from single incidents of hostile behaviour or trivial accusations (Fox & Stallworth, 2010). This distinction is critical in establishing legal and organisational approaches to addressing and preventing WPB. However, the intensity of single events, their potential for continued harm, and the occurrence of repeated events involving different individuals raises ongoing debates regarding the classification of once-off incidents of bullying (Branch et al., 2013). Furthermore, WPB is perceived subjectively by the victim, leading to different interpretations by different individuals (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Hence, Jacobs and De Wet (2018) propose that a list of elements could be used to assess behaviour, and if most of these elements are present, the behaviour could be classified as WPB.

Lastly, power disparities are a prerequisite for both the maintenance and development of WPB (Fahie, 2014). The perceived/real power disparity that exists between the perpetrator and victim allows for repeated, prolonged exposure to negative acts and subsequently the negative consequences of WPB, as victims perceive themselves as helpless and defenseless.

### 2.2.1 Antecedents of WPB

WPB definitions capture the essence of these negative acts, emphasizing intentionality, repeated occurrences over an extended period, and the existence of a power disparity within interpersonal relationships. Recognizing the antecedents of WPB is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and serves as the basis for developing successful prevention and intervention efforts.

WPB is influenced by various individual-level antecedents (such as personality traits, gender, age, or race) and organisational-level antecedents (such as leadership styles, organisational culture and ethical climate, the presence of clear organisational policies, or certain situational factors). Both individual and organisational-related antecedents are important as they may

interact in predicting WPB. Recognizing and addressing these factors is essential for preventing and mitigating WPB, and its subsequent consequences.

Individuals with certain personality traits, such as neuroticism or conscientiousness, may be more prone to becoming bullying victims. For instance, Persson et al (2009 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012) found that victims of WPB may have higher levels of neuroticism. Conversely, Glaso et al (2007 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012) found that victims have higher levels of neuroticism but low levels of conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness. Bullying victims with low levels of introversion may be perceived as vulnerable to potential perpetrators, as they are less likely to retaliate and are passive (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, it is assumed that individuals with low levels of conscientiousness are less likely to recognize subtle forms of bullying, making them more susceptible to being targeted (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Similar to neuroticism, bullying victims with higher levels of negative affect (i.e. the tendency to experience feelings of emotional distress) appear more vulnerable to perpetrators (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012) found a causal relationship between self-esteem, negative affect, and bullying. They found that high levels of negative affect and low levels of self-esteem develop and increase as bullying behaviours persist (Samnani & Singh, 2012). One reason is that individuals with higher levels of negative affect appear to be fearful, anxious, or sad making them more vulnerable to perpetrators (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Similarly, individuals with low levels of self-esteem are perceived as vulnerable and less likely to retaliate (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

While researchers have found conflicting results on gender, age and race, there has nonetheless been a consistent finding that victims are targeted on the basis of their gender, age and/or race. Some researchers have reported little to no difference between genders; others have reported that females are more likely to be bullied than males (Ortega et al., 2009 as cited in Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; Samnani & Singh, 2012). Researchers have also found that males usually target other males, whereas females are bullied by both males and females, with a higher occurrence of bullying from other females (Samnani & Singh, 2012). With regards to age, Einarsen and Skogstad (1996 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012) found that younger employees are more likely to bully older employees. In relation to race, Fox and Stallworth (2005) found that White people experienced significantly lower rates of bullying than Hispanics/Latinos. However, they

did not observe significant variations in bullying prevalence among Black, Asian and White people (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). Conversely, Lewis and Gunn's research focusing on WPB within the United Kingdom's public sector found that ethnic minorities were almost four times more likely to experience WPB than their White counterparts (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

In the South African context, Cunniff and Mostert (2012) found that minority groups, like White, Coloured, and Indian employees, experienced lower levels of WPB when compared to their Black counterparts. Regarding gender, men reported higher levels of direct bullying from colleagues, as well as higher levels of indirect and direct bullying from supervisors than women (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). Lastly, older employees experienced lower levels of WPB than their younger counterparts- younger employees usually have a lower status in terms of job security and pay, creating a power imbalance conducive to WPB (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

The relationship between WPB and leadership styles is another focal point, as ineffective/poor leadership styles foster and facilitate bullying cultures (Fahie, 2014). Destructive leadership styles, such as passive or laissez-faire leadership, act as catalysts for bullying behaviours, as management avoids confronting perpetrators or may tacitly condone bullying behaviours through indifference, thus allowing for the development and maintenance of bullying dynamics (Fahie, 2014). Furthermore, research has consistently linked WPB to abuse of power. Authoritative leaders who misuse their power contribute to WPB by creating fear and indirectly encouraging supervisors to use bullying as a means of displaying their authority (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

Organisational culture and ethical climate can contribute to the occurrence of WPB. Organisations that normalize competitive or abusive behaviours may enable, trigger, or reward bullying by normalizing competitive and abusive behaviours (Lutgen-Sandvik et al, 2007, p. 857 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012; Coyne et al., 2003; Salin, 2003). Encouraging toughness and rewarding aggressive behaviour may inadvertently promote bullying as a means to improve employee performance, and display assertiveness and strength (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Senior management in some organisations may even perceive WPB positively, considering it a means to achieve desired outcomes (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Therefore, WPB can be attributed to broader concepts of organisational control and power (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016).

O'Leary-Kelly et al (1996 as cited in Samnani & Singh, 2012) found a bi-directional relationship between organisational culture and individual personality traits. For instance, an individual's

inclination towards aggression could shape the organisation's culture to promote WPB, while organisational culture may promote aggressive and bullying behaviours (Samnani & Singh, 2012). It is important to note that instances of bullying are most commonly observed in organisations where bullying behaviours are either openly or indirectly endorsed by senior management, highlighting the significant role of organisational culture (Finchilescu et al., 2019; Samnani & Singh, 2012).

A lack of clear policies regarding WPB poses significant challenges for employees who wish to report bullying incidents (Finchilescu et al., 2019). Organisations need to establish explicit policies that differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. An organisation's climate, based on clear rules and policies, is associated with lower levels of bullying, suggesting that embedding these policies into the organisation's culture can be effective in preventing WPB (Samnani & Singh, 2012). The absence of anti-bullying policies implies no consequences against perpetrators and low monitoring, and can lead employees to perceive a tacit approval of bullying behaviours (Finchilescu et al., 2019; Samnani & Singh, 2012).

Additionally, certain situational factors within an organisation can contribute to WPB. Institutional practices, organisational state of affairs, and environmental circumstances can foster interpersonal conflict leading to WPB (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). For instance, job insecurity, lack of trust, intolerance towards diversity, and excessive performance pressure informs and enables bullying behaviours (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Further, a lack of resources and increased workload creates an environment of excessive demands (Goodboy et al., 2017). Demanding work environments cultivate employee mistreatment leading to occupational stress and subsequently enabling bullying behaviours (Goodboy et al., 2017).

While the above-mentioned antecedents apply to the majority of professions, teachers face a unique work situation in that they interact with the same 'customers' (learners) every day and find themselves in situations where they are the only adults present (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Furthermore, teachers' performance is based on the performance of their learners, rather than their own (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Parents, viewed as a second layer of customers may pay school fees and invest interest in their children's performance, can influence bullying dynamics in the teaching environment (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Introducing parents as a second layer of customers adds another layer of complexity to the teacher's role. Beyond the primary

responsibility of educating learners, teachers must navigate relationships with parents, who, as stakeholders in their children's education, can extend their influence to impact the social dynamics within the teaching environment (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). Specifically, the role parents may play can have a major impact on bullying and harassing dynamics.

### 2.2.2 Consequences of WPB

In general, the consequences of WPB for employees are widespread, affecting individuals both psychologically and physiologically. At an individual level, WPB results in lowered self-esteem, headaches, musculoskeletal problems, fatigue, sleep disorders, stress, increased fear, depression, burnout, anxiety, and a lowered belief in one's professional competence (Boudrias et al., 2021; Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). At an organisational level, WPB results in increased absenteeism, turnover, reduced task performance, intention to leave, and reduced job satisfaction (Boudrias et al., 2021; Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). More specifically, WPB introduces a potential workplace hazard and stressor for teachers with widespread consequences that are not limited to the teachers' physical and psychological well-being but can adversely affect the school and the teaching-learning process (Bernstein & Batchelor, 2022).

Teachers' self-esteem may suffer as a result of WPB, leading them to become anxious, depressed, and even suicidal (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Bullied teachers often feel helpless and dysfunctional leading to an increase in burnout, stress, and absenteeism (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Bullied teachers may also experience feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, anger, panic attacks, insomnia, psychological distress, tension, indecisiveness, hypervigilance, obsessional thinking, confusion, chronic fatigue, and fear of loss of reputation and their jobs (Fox & Stallworth, 2010). The physical health of teachers is also affected by bullying. Teachers may experience eating disorders, self-destructive and addictive behaviours (such as substance abuse), headaches, body aches, cardiovascular problems, respiratory problems, digestive problems, nausea, weight loss/gain, and increased risk of infection (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021; Fahie, 2014).

Lastly, the school may be harmed by staff absenteeism, reduced work commitment, reduced work performance, employee turnover, reduced productivity, teacher detachment, cynicism, and apathy (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Fox & Stallworth, 2010). Consequently, the quality of education learners receive will deteriorate as teachers become apathetic, lose empathy towards their

learners, leave the profession, take out their frustrations on learners, change their teaching styles, and stop preparing for and teaching planned lessons (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021).

### 2.2.3 Coping with WPB

Victims of WPB may employ different coping strategies to deal with the previously mentioned consequences of WPB. However, the impact of the previously mentioned antecedents may vary among employees depending on their inclination to these coping strategies. Victims may use active or passive coping strategies (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018).

Active coping strategies are problem-focused and involve confronting problems directly (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). Active strategies include assertiveness, where victims stand up to the perpetrator using personal resources (which include a sense of coherence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, assertiveness, and a proactive personality), and seeking help, which involves the enlistment and assistance of others (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). Engaging in active coping may reduce or even eliminate bullying behaviours and may also moderate the relationship between bullying, self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). Passive strategies involve inaction and may reduce the association between emotions and work stressors (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). Passive coping strategies are avoidant and emotion-focused (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). These include doing nothing, where victims pretend that nothing is wrong, hoping the perpetrator will stop, and avoidance, where victims passively ‘run away’ from the perpetrator’s threats (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018).

Individual and personal characteristics can also come into play when determining how victims cope with bullying. For example, individual characteristics, such as a sense of coherence (SOC), may play a role in how victims cope with bullying (Francioli et al., 2016). SOC is a personal disposition that influences how individuals evaluate and cope with demands (Francioli et al., 2016). SOC comprises three dimensions: a sense of comprehensibility, a sense of meaningfulness, and a sense of manageability (Francioli et al., 2016). Victims with high SOC tend to view the world as comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable allowing them to better mobilize resources and cope with WPB (Francioli et al., 2016). Conversely, victims with low SOC may be less resilient and ill-equipped to cope with bullying, as they possess few resources

and poorer coping mechanisms, which may lead to negative interactions with colleagues (Francioli et al., 2016).

Social support also plays a crucial role in helping victims of bullying cope with the challenges they face. According to Finchilescu et al. (2019), social support can come from various sources within the victim's social network, such as subordinates, colleagues, supervisors, and family members. When victims receive social support, they feel cared for and validated, which boosts their self-esteem and reduces feelings of anxiety (Finchilescu et al., 2019). Social support also provides practical benefits by offering solutions to the issues victims are facing and giving them an opportunity to vent their emotions and frustrations (Finchilescu et al., 2019).

The presence of social support acts as a buffer, helping to reduce the negative effects of bullying on the victims' well-being (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Social support also moderates the relationship between the victim's overall well-being, the strain caused by bullying, and the occurrence of bullying incidents (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Additionally, when supported, victims view bullying as separate from their work experience, and are better able to mitigate its impact and reduce its prominence in their lives – this separation allows victims to maintain a healthier perspective on their work environment, helping them cope more effectively with the challenges of bullying (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013).

However, it is important to note that social support from organisations may have unintended consequences. This is based on the norm of reciprocity, in which individuals who receive support are also expected to offer support to their support network- this implies that receivers of support receive both costs and benefits simultaneously (Finchilescu et al., 2019). In an organisational context, employees repay support with attitudes and behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Thus, while lower levels of WPB are associated with higher levels of organisational support and the existing evidence suggests a link between poor work environments and higher levels of bullying; the associated costs of reciprocity may lead to hesitancy in seeking help, especially during periods of stress when the individual is already overwhelmed (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013; Finchilescu et al., 2019). Thus, victims of bullying may not always seek out and utilize this resource as the norm of reciprocity creates an additional burden for them.

Lastly, constructive leadership behaviours recognize and encourage employees for their contributions, foster growth and development, and support organisational needs (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). These leaders may reduce the negative effects of bullying by clarifying work roles and goals, reducing victims' perceptions of loss of control, acting as role models for appropriate behaviour, and managing conflict (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Constructive leaders intervene immediately when bullying incidents are reported, taking swift action to protect employees from further harm (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). By holding individuals accountable for their actions, constructive leaders send a clear message that bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the workplace. Beyond addressing bullying directly, constructive leaders focus on reducing the impact of strain on victims by cultivating a culture of trust, encouraging open communication, and creating a supportive atmosphere for their employees (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013).

## 2.3 Defining Teacher Targeted Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are difficult concepts to define as there is a lack of awareness as to what constitutes an incident of bullying or harassment or when one becomes the other (Billett et al., 2020). Language, such as staff bullying, teacher bullying, and teacher victimization, tend to be ambiguous and misconstructed by mediatized public policy and discourse which presents teachers as perpetrators, rather than victims, of bullying (Billett et al., 2020).

The term harassment is used to describe persistent communication, actions, behaviours, or unwelcome conduct which puts down, demeans, ridicules, mocks, or disparages a person (Heathfield, 2018 as cited in Billett et al., 2019). Bullying is defined as an extreme form of harassment, characterized by intentional or aggressive behaviour that is carried out repeatedly over time in an interpersonal relationship that involves a real or perceived power imbalance (Billett et al., 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Furthermore, teacher-targeted WPB is a more complicated form of WPB, referring to direct negative behaviours that undermine the professional status of teachers, leading to experiences of isolation (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

In order to clarify the concept of WPB and its application in the teaching context, the term TTBH was adopted and defined as "a communication process that involves a real or perceived power imbalance where "a teacher is subjected, by one or more [parents], to interaction that he or she perceives as insulting, upsetting or intimidating" (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012 as cited in Billett et al., 2019, p.8), this may be verbal, nonverbal or physical in nature, it may be premeditated or

opportunistic, be a single instance or recurring and or of short or long duration" (Billett et al., 2019, p.8).

TTBH expresses itself in a variety of behaviours ranging from direct physical acts (e.g. kicking, hitting, verbal/physical aggression, etc.) to indirect psychological acts (e.g. name calling, spreading rumours, shouting, insults, manipulation, threats, etc.) (De Wet, 2012). Parents may also challenge a teacher's abilities and professionalism through relentless, ongoing advocacy which erodes their ability to condemn and control learners' behaviour- this experience is both humiliating and disempowering for teachers (Billett et al., 2019). Furthermore, low-stress environments are needed for productive teaching-learning processes and the attainment of educational objectives and goals (Byers, 2012). With parent-enacted TTBH on the rise, the stress teachers manifest will have detrimental effects on both their psychological and physical well-being, and learners' learning experience (Byers, 2012; Billett et al., 2019).

Additionally, the South African educational system is inherently vulnerable, stemming from the injustices of Apartheid that disadvantaged both schools and learners (Damoah & Omodan, 2022). While acknowledging progress in addressing this legacy, the COVID-19 pandemic further intensified social and economic disparities, particularly affecting the upward social mobility of low-income communities (Damoah & Omodan, 2022). Firstly, race, socioeconomic position, and geographic location continue to be significant determinants of academic success in South Africa (Damoah & Omodan, 2022). The significant mathematics achievement gap of 75 points between no-fee schools and fee-charging schools in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019 indicates that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds consistently perform at a lower level compared to their counterparts (Reddy et al., 2020 as cited in Soudien et al., 2022). In addition, the rate of mathematics improvement has significantly decreased from 7.4 points per year from TIMSS 2003 to 2011 to 4.6 points from 2011 to 2019 (Soudien et al., 2022). The Minister of Education noted that the influence of COVID-19 was still significant. The pandemic's effects on education in South Africa followed global trends, including the potential erasure of previously achieved learning gains, learning losses due to school closures, and exacerbation of existing disparities (Soudien et al., 2022).

During the lockdown in March 2020, learners had two options: self-learning or online learning (Soudien et al., 2022). While advantaged schools and families adapted well to online learning,

disadvantaged schools faced difficulties facilitating online learning, with many learners lacking essential resources like a computer, internet connection, or a quiet workspace (Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Soudien et al., 2022). These resource disparities translated into differentiated learning experiences at home (Soudien et al., 2022). Additionally, learners in disadvantaged areas were the most negatively impacted in terms of access to safety, nutrition, and the curriculum provided at school (Damoah & Omodan, 2022). Schools in advantaged areas were more likely to ask for the early return of additional grades to class, to continue with virtual learning, or to provide well-supported learning at home (Damoah & Omodan, 2022). Thus, the opening and closing of schools had an impact on the socioeconomic disparities (Damoah & Omodan, 2022).

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated educational and socio-economic disparities, creating an environment where parent-enacted TTBH can emerge. In such an environment, teachers become unintended victims as frustrated parents may direct blame towards them for perceived disparities in the education system. The socioeconomic disparities, coupled with disparities in educational opportunities, create a volatile setting where some parents may resort to TTBH as a means to express dissatisfaction or exert pressure on teachers and the educational system. Thus, teachers find themselves caught in the crossfire of systemic inequalities.

### 2.3.1 Antecedents of TTBH

There appears to be a dearth of literature focusing on the antecedents of TTBH. Studies which focus on the antecedents emphasize the role of gender, otherness, age and length of experience, the school as an organisation, and the category of a school (e.g. De Wet & Jacobs, 2021; Billett et al., 2019; Byers, 2012; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Recognizing the antecedents of TTBH is pivotal, not only for academic discourse but also for developing targeted strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating and preventing the detrimental consequences of TTBH within the educational context.

Research shows that gender is not consistently identified as a significant risk factor for TTBH. For instance, Jacobs and De Wet (2015 as cited in De Wet & Jacobs, 2021) found that male teachers are more at risk of being bullied, while female teachers are more at risk of being bullied by parents. On the other hand, Phooko et al (2017 as cited in De Wet & Jacobs, 2021) found similar levels of risk between both genders. In addition, teachers may be bullied due to factors

related to otherness, such as non-conformity to group norms, language, religious affiliation, race, or ethnicity (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021).

The age and length of teacher experience appears to be a more influential factor with mid-career teachers experiencing less risk, while younger and older teachers are more susceptible to bullying (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). Similarly, Billett et al (2019) found that teachers aged between 21 and 30 reported higher incidents of TTBH compared to teachers over 60, whereas, in 2020, Billett et al found that late-career teachers experienced higher rates of parent-enacted bullying compared to early and mid-career teachers- this may be ascribed to teacher burnout (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Although there is some variation in findings regarding age groups, it does appear that junior teachers and those perceived as 'old' are easy targets and thus more vulnerable to bullying and harassment.

The school as an organisation can significantly impact the occurrence of TTBH. Studies have found that leadership styles play an essential role in determining the prevalence of TTBH. An autocratic leadership style, where cliques form and/or where principals are incompetent, creates an environment where TTBH thrives (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). Additionally, school safety climate, which consists of safety policies, procedures and practices, is also a significant predictor of TTBH (Byers, 2012). Schools that do not actively prioritize and pursue safety, through encouraging and rewarding safety compliance, generally lead teachers to have negative safety climate perceptions, which in turn mediate the relationship between stress and bullying (Byers, 2012). Furthermore, TTBH may affect a teacher's appraisal of their work environment leading them to feel unsafe (Byers, 2012).

Lastly, the category of a school (primary, secondary or combined) plays a part in the risk of TTBH. Matsui (2005 as cited in De Wet & Jacobs 2006) found that TTBH is most likely to affect teachers of the intermediate grades (grades 7-9). Combined schools appear to have a higher risk of TTBH compared to primary or secondary schools (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). Teachers working in government/public schools are more vulnerable to TTBH than those in private/independent schools (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). Additionally, teachers working in schools located in urban areas are less at risk of being bullied than those in rural/township areas (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). However, the size of the school does not appear to be a determining factor of TTBH (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021).

### 2.3.2 Consequences of TTBH

Teachers should feel secure, comfortable, and peaceful in their working environment in order to actualize teaching-learning activities (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019). However, previous studies have found that teachers psychological and physical well-being, personal lives, relationships with others, performance, as well as the teaching-learning process are negatively affected by TTBH (e.g. Gul et al., 2022; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Billett et al., 2020; Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

Bullied teachers may experience low self-esteem, increased loneliness, anxiety, peer rejection, high blood pressure, disturbed sleeping patterns, migraines, weight loss or weight gain, coronary heart disease, stress, fatigue, nightmares, back pain, eating disorders, digestive problems, depression, fearfulness, anger, loss of energy, forgetfulness, emotional exhaustion, burnout, disturbing levels of attrition, post-traumatic stress disorder, stomach cramps, and stress-induced nausea (Gul et al., 2022; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Billett et al., 2020). TTBH may also cause 'battered teachers syndrome' which results in stress-related symptoms, such as sleep disturbances, burnout, eating disorders, anxiety, disillusionment, apathy, and depression- this in turn can cause a drop in job and life satisfaction (Gul et al., 2022).

TTBH may affect teachers' personal lives, including their personal relationships. For instance, teachers' family lives may suffer as they take out their frustrations on their family members and spouses (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). Teachers also report being fearful for their safety within the school premises and their local communities (Billett et al., 2020). The financial position of teachers is also impacted as teachers may relocate, resign from their jobs, or may be reluctant to apply for promotions as a result of TTBH (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

TTBH is experienced on a continuum of relatively harmless, separate experiences that eventually wears down and erodes teachers' sense of efficiency, enjoyment in the workplace, and self-confidence (Billett et al., 2020). This would align with theories on Life Events Stress (LES), which posits that experiencing multiple stressors compounds over time, leading to a cumulative effect that gradually erodes one's long-term coping abilities (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Ongoing issues of TTBH cause teachers to lose their desire to teach as they find themselves unable to re-ignite their passion for teaching and feel unmotivated (Billett et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers

consider leaving the profession or contemplate a career change as a result of TTBH (Billett et al., 2020).

Lastly, schools where TTBH takes place may also be affected. Bullied teachers may experience loss of drive, deterioration of work, low motivation, loss of concentration, low morale and become detached from their work (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). TTBH also has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning, as teachers may fall behind on their work, battle to teach or stop teaching planned lessons- this in turn impedes learners' right to quality education (Billett et al., 2020). Furthermore, absenteeism may increase as teachers take sick, unpaid or holiday leave to avoid ongoing bullying and harassment (Billett et al., 2020). Teachers are also left increasingly dissatisfied due to the schools' lack of acknowledgement regarding TTBH (Billett et al., 2020).

### 2.3.3 Coping with TTBH

As with antecedents, there appears to be a dearth of literature focusing on the coping strategies of TTBH. Studies that focus on coping mechanisms emphasize the role of social support and school safety climate (e.g. Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Byers, 2012; Van Jaarsveld & Mentz, 2021; Barnes et al., 2011; Billett et al., 2020).

Social support plays a central role in helping teachers manage stress and uncertainty. Seeking support from family, spouses, friends, and colleagues can help teachers cope with the challenging experiences they face in the workplace and reduce the negative effects of bullying and harassment on their well-being (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Social support is effective in reducing the effects of TTBH by facilitating workplace coping mechanisms, providing employees with a new source of knowledge, and enhancing their sense of well-being and self-identity (Byers, 2012).

Social support provides a sense of personal control and acceptance of one's life experiences. By sharing their experiences with others, teachers are provided with emotional support, helping them feel valued and accepted despite the challenges they may face (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Teachers with high levels of social support are presumed to feel less vulnerable when confronted with bullying and harassing behaviours (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). This is because having a strong support system reduces the psychological and emotional impact of TTBH (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). In addition, teachers could receive practical advice and assistance that could put

an end to bullying and harassment, and reduce the uncertainty and stress they feel due to victimization (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Therefore, social support buffers the negative effects of stress by aiding in the appraisal and coping of stress, resulting in less intense stress responses (Byers, 2012).

As mentioned previously, school safety climate consists of safety policies, procedures and practices (Byers, 2012). It also refers to the psycho-social context in which teachers work, influencing their effectiveness and well-being in the classroom (Van Jaarsveld & Mentz, 2021). Moreover, school climate is closely tied to teachers' morale, affecting their job motivation and satisfaction (Van Jaarsveld & Mentz, 2021). It also reflects the level of empowerment teachers experience, indicating the extent to which they have influence and autonomy in decision-making processes (Van Jaarsveld & Mentz, 2021).

Effective risk-prevention programmes are positively linked to school climate and may lower the levels of aggressive behaviours toward teachers, thus reducing the impact of TTBH on teacher well-being (Barnes et al., 2011; Billett et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers who feel supported by school management and work with colleagues who consistently enforce rules, are less likely to be victims of TTBH (Billett et al., 2020). Lastly, promoting a positive school climate and fostering teacher satisfaction could be effective strategies to reduce teacher burnout (Barnes et al., 2011).

## 2.4 The Schooling Context in South Africa

In South Africa, teaching is regarded as a highly stressful vocation due to the high job demands being placed on teachers as a result of current socio-political changes (such as affirmative action, mass retrenchments, and diversity) and the influence these changes have on the education sector (Montgomery et al., 2005). These job demands may include an unsatisfactory school climate, low decision-making authority, increased workload, overcrowding, a shortage of teachers, inadequate financial support, limited promotion opportunities, insufficient colleague support, a lack of basic resources, various and competing tasks, as well as a lack of material aids to complete these tasks (Woudstra et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2005). Furthermore, teachers note a lack of support and assistance from the government and school management (Van Tonder & Fourie, 2015). These factors themselves influence teachers' performance and well-being leading to burnout, low morale, and strain (Woudstra et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2005).

Therefore, schools constitute an ideal site for bullying and harassment to occur as they are characterized by high job demands and low job resources, and have hierarchical structures with active power disparities (Li et al., 2023; Vos & Kirsten, 2015).

Government/public schools lack the necessary resources to prepare learners for a future that requires meaningful contributions towards economic growth. Plagued by crumbling infrastructure, a lack of educational progress, teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of basic learning material and equipment, and dysfunctional sanitary facilities, the education system is perpetuating inequality by failing to provide a conducive learning environment for its learners (Sommer, 2023).

Furthermore, in South Africa, the quintile system is used to categorize and allocate financial resources to public schools based on their socioeconomic status (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). The system divides schools into 5 quintiles, with quintile 1 (Q1) schools located in the most disadvantaged geographical areas and quintile 5 (Q5) schools located in the least disadvantaged geographical areas (Van Dyk & White, 2019). Non-fee-paying schools fall into quintiles 1 to 3, these schools are located in low-income areas and are the most economically disadvantaged (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). Schools that fall into quintiles 1 to 3 receive additional resources and support per learner in order to address educational inequalities caused by socio-economic disparities (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019).

Fee-paying schools fall into quintiles 4 and 5, these schools are located in areas with relatively better socio-economic conditions and often receive less government support as it is assumed parents can afford to pay school fees (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). However, it must be noted that despite lower quintile schools receiving more government aid, this aid is extremely inadequate and is not able to address the disparities that exist and arise between fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools. In this regard, it is often the case that Q4 and Q5 schools have more financially well-off school governing bodies (SGBs), resulting in organisational, societal, and material advantages (Van Dyk & White, 2019). These advantages usually include smaller class sizes, enhanced learning materials, quality teachers, improved infrastructure, and financial resources. The resources available to a school also significantly impacts the educational outcomes that learners can achieve and could impact the extent to which teachers experience bullying and harassment. For instance, the government is responsible for the funding and

maintenance of physical facilities, this involves the general maintenance, repair, and replacement of physical features within the school buildings, safety systems, and grounds (Van Dyk & White, 2019). Facilities maintenance also includes service systems, which involves landscaping, fire control, sanitation, waste disposal, plumbing, access control, electricity, and safety and security (Van Dyk & White, 2019). However, these funds are often insufficient, resulting in a lack of resources for maintenance- this negatively impacts learners' educational outcomes and the learning environment, as proper maintenance ensures that learners have access to conducive learning environments that promote their success (Van Dyk & White, 2019). Furthermore, the government is responsible for building new schools and classrooms, but this task is often neglected, leading to overcrowded schools (Van Dyk & White, 2019). Mosteller (1995 as cited in Van Dyk & White, 2019) found that learners placed in smaller class sizes in the early years of their education performed better in later school years.

The above-mentioned conditions make employment at private/independent schools more attractive, resulting in a smaller pool of motivated and qualified teachers for government schools (Sommer, 2023). Private schools often offer higher salaries, more resources for teachers, and better working conditions. This includes smaller class sizes and updated teaching materials. Thus, learners in private schools experience a full year of consistent, supported learning with ample resources (Nyembezi, 2023). Additionally, due to the financial investment they make in private schooling, parental involvement in private schools is often higher. This active involvement can positively impact the overall learning experience. For instance, parents who are actively involved are more likely to speak up for the educational needs of their children. This may involve securing additional resources, ensuring that individualized educational plans are implemented or working with teachers address specific learning challenges.

Given the severe constraints that most schools operate under, particularly public or government funded schools, and given that teaching is a high demand profession, this research employs the JD-R model as its theoretical framework. Within this framework job demands may include crumbling infrastructure, a lack of educational progress, teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of basic learning material and equipment, and dysfunctional sanitary facilities, particularly in lower quintile schools. Additionally, job resources may include social support, teaching materials that help teachers cope with job demands, and professional development

opportunities. The JD-R model also expands its application to look at how the previously mentioned environmental factors in South Africa might cause parents to have higher expectations for their children's education.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework: Job Demands-Resources Model

The JD-R model is an occupational stress model that helps to explain how certain job characteristics (i.e. job demands and job resources) can influence work-related well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands refer to the social, organisational, psychological or physical aspects of a job that require sustained cognitive, emotional or physical effort and are therefore associated with psychological and/or physiological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Examples of job demands include role overload, emotional demands, poor working conditions, workload, and high work pressure (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources refer to the social, organisational, psychological or physical aspects of a job that: (1) help employees achieve their work goals, (2) reduce job demands and the associated psychological and physiological costs, and (3) stimulate personal learning, growth, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Examples of job resources include training and development opportunities, a positive work environment, feedback, autonomy, social support, and task significance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The JD-R model proposes that job demands and job resources play a role in the development of work-related strain and motivation through two different underlying psychological processes: the health impairment process and the motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The health impairment process suggests that chronic job demands exhaust employees' mental and physical resources leading to low levels of energy and health problems (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The motivational process suggests that job resources have motivational potential and may buffer the health-impairing impact of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

In view of parent-enacted TTBH, the literature may clearly benefit from a JD-R approach as victims' reports of bullying and harassment have been associated with a range of job characteristics such as increased workload and a lack of social support, as well as work-related strain (Woudstra et al., 2018; Montgomery et al., 2005).

Presented below is a conceptual diagram illustrating the application of the JD-R model to parent-enacted TTBH. Please note, this diagram does not imply a causal relationship. Instead, it serves as a visual representation to illustrate the relationship between TTBH and the theoretical framework based on existing literature.

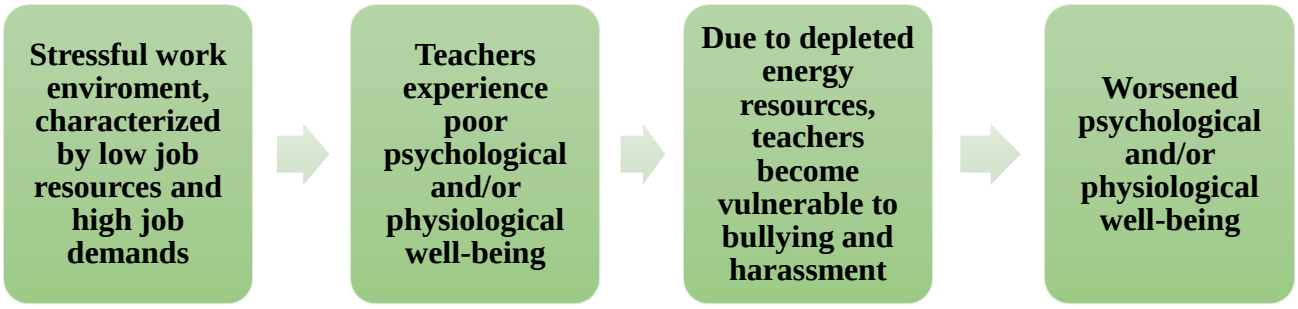



*Figure 1- Job Demands-Resources Model and TTBH* (Modified from Batchelor, 2019, p.20)

In addition, some schools may have a socio-educational advantage over other schools- that is the combination of social and educational factors that influence a learner's educational experiences and outcomes (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015). Socio-educational factors, such as access to resources and acceptance into tertiary educational institutions, play a crucial role in educational outcomes. In certain environments, such as South Africa where resources and opportunities are limited, parents may resort to TTBH in order to secure advantages for their children (Benbenishty et al., 2019; Ruswa & Gore, 2022). This may stem from intense competition over resources, such as university placements, funding, bursaries, and job opportunities. In such contexts, parents may feel compelled to use bullying and harassing tactics to ensure their children receive preferential treatment and to ensure that they obtain high marks, and thereby access to these limited resources post-schooling.

To the researchers knowledge, academic research on parent-enacted TTBH, done within a framework of examining job demands and job resources among teachers in South African schools, is lacking. This study intends to examine South African teachers' experiences of being bullied by parents and will be guided by the JD-R model, in which bullying and harassment by parents is seen as one of the many job demands faced by South African teachers as part of their jobs. Job resources, that is those offered by the school as well as the personal resources of teachers, will be explored as means by which teachers cope with the demand of parent-enacted TTBH. The outcomes of the experience of these demands, more specifically the demand of

parent-enacted bullying and harassment on teachers' well-being, along with teachers' perceptions of how schools and the Department of Education (DoE) can intervene to prevent this problem will also be examined.

The following sections discuss burnout and the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, respectively. Firstly, the researcher will further contextualize the relationship between job characteristics, burnout, and ill health, emphasizing the importance of addressing both job demands and job resources to promote a more productive and healthier work environment for teachers. Secondly, the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis and its application to the context of aggression in South African schools, specifically focusing on parents as potential aggressors, will be discussed.

### 2.5.1. Teacher Burnout and the JD-R Model

Burnout describes the condition of physical and emotional exhaustion, as well as the associated negative attitudes resulting from the intense interaction in working with people (Montgomery et al., 2005). Burnout is characterized by three main components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Emotional exhaustion refers to the gradual depletion of one's emotional resources over time (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Emotional exhaustion occurs when teachers feel overwhelmed and are unable to provide for their learners, both physically and emotionally, leading to fatigue and stress (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Depersonalization involves developing cynical attitudes towards the workplace, parents, and learners (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Teachers may display cold or indifferent behaviour, distancing themselves from others or using derogatory labels (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Lastly, reduced personal accomplishment is experienced when teachers feel they are no longer making meaningful contributions to their learners' development (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

South African teachers are experiencing a significant degree of burnout. Teachers report concerns that are closely linked to burnout and ill-health such as a lack of teaching aids to accomplish tasks efficiently, classroom overcrowding, low salaries, a lack of acknowledgement and support for what is being accomplished, an unsatisfactory school climate, increasing work stress, little support from colleagues, increased workload, low decision-making powers, and a lack of classroom discipline, routine, tension within the school (Montgomery et al., 2005).

According to the JD-R model, job resources may either foster growth, learning and development or be instrumental in achieving work-related goals (Montgomery et al., 2005). Furthermore, high job demands and low job resources may exhaust teachers' physical and mental resources leading to ill-health and burnout (Montgomery et al., 2005). Low job resources may also cause failure and frustration as they preclude actual goal accomplishment (Montgomery et al., 2005).

Based on the above, it appears too many job demands and too few job resources lead to burnout, which in turn leads to ill-health (Montgomery et al., 2005). It follows logically that job demands and job resources influence ill-health through burnout, meaning that burnout mediates the relationship between job demands, job resources, and ill-health (Montgomery et al., 2005). Furthermore, burnout occurs when job demands outweigh available job resources, highlighting the importance of addressing both job characteristics to promote a more productive and healthier work environment.

### 2.5.2 The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

Aggression is an antisocial behaviour characterized by intentional actions that aim to hurt or harm other people or objects, while frustration is defined as any obstacle that prevents one from achieving their goals (Botha et al., 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2023). According to the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, the presence of external stressors in the workplace may lead to the worsening of the organisational climate, transforming it into a stressful environment which may induce negative feelings such as blocking of professional goals and psychological discomfort (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2020). At the same time, these negative feelings may give rise to aggressiveness. Hence, when an individual is unable to reach their personal goals, they experience feelings of frustration, and in order to reduce the discomfort caused by these feelings, the Individual resorts to aggressive behaviour directed at existing persons around them (Botha et al., 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2023).

Aggression in South African schools has become a growing concern, affecting people of all genders, ages, and cultures (Botha et al., 2013). It is common for individuals to resort to aggressive behaviour as a means to express their frustrations and emotions (Botha et al., 2013).

Within the context of this research we refer not to the aggression of teachers but rather to the aggression of parents. Parents may experience external stressors leading to frustration. In assessing the literature, the researcher believes that parents' frustration could be linked to their

interactions with teachers, broader issues within the school environment, and expectations or concerns about their child's education. The external stressors in this context might include dissatisfaction with the educational system, concerns about their child's performance, or perceived injustices. In order to cope with their feelings of frustration, parents may become aggressive. This aggression may appear as verbal abuse, altercations, or confrontational interactions. Teachers may become the targets of this aggression since they are the most visible individuals in the school environment.

Presented below is a conceptual diagram illustrating the application of the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis to parent-enacted TTBH.

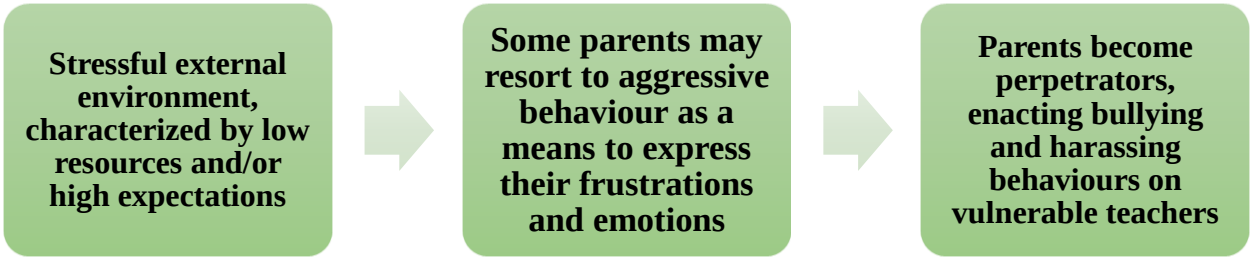



*Figure 2- The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis* (Modified from Batchelor, 2019, p.20)

## 2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, WPB is defined as a pervasive pattern of intentional, harmful behaviour characterized by a misuse of power over an extended period (UNESCO, 2017 as cited in Mahabeer, 2020). This behaviour, often initiated by those in positions of authority, is aimed at causing intentional injury or suffering to the victim (UNESCO, 2017 as cited in Mahabeer, 2020). Additionally, TTBH encompasses a communication process characterized by a real or perceived power imbalance, where teachers are subjected to interactions perceived as insulting, upsetting, or intimidating (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012 as cited in Billett et al., 2019, p.8). This can manifest in various forms, ranging from direct physical acts to indirect psychological acts, including challenges to a teacher's abilities and professionalism (De Wet, 2012; Billett et al., 2019).

The JD-R model serves as a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand the dynamics of TTBH. The JD-R model explains how job characteristics, specifically job demands and job resources, can impact work-related well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Job demands encompass aspects of a job that require sustained emotional, physical, or cognitive effort, leading to psychological and physiological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources are factors that help employees reduce job demands and their associated costs, achieve their work goals, and stimulate personal development and growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Acknowledging the burnout experienced by teachers and its connection to job characteristics, the JD-R model emphasizes the importance of addressing both factors to promote a healthier work environment (Montgomery et al., 2005). Additionally, the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis suggests that parent's exposure to external stressors may lead to frustration and subsequent aggression, which may be directed at teachers, who are the most visible targets in the school environment.

By exploring the JD-R model, burnout, and the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing TTBH. This approach not only sheds light on the experiences of teachers but also paves the way for targeted interventions to reduce parent-enacted TTBH.

The methodology used to operationalize this study on teachers' experiences of parent bullying and harassment is outlined in detail within Chapter Three.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three outlines the research design and methodology. The research adopts a qualitative approach to delve into teachers' experiences of TTBH. The chapter also discusses the sample and sampling strategy, utilizing purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling techniques to ensure a diverse representation of teachers. Research instruments, particularly semi-structured interviews, are detailed. The procedure followed, ethical considerations, and the method of data analysis will also be discussed. Lastly, the chapter underscores the importance of trustworthiness and reflexivity throughout the research process.

## 3.2 Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design as it explored teachers' experiences of parent-enacted TTBH. Thick descriptive data was generated to "describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" – such as parent-enacted TTBH (Van Maanen, 1979, p.520, as cited in Rahman, 2016, pp.103-104).

A qualitative approach was utilized as it has particular advantages, compared to quantitative methods. Qualitative findings provide an in-depth contextual perspective on social phenomenon which allowed the researcher to understand participants from their own perspective (Rahman, 2016). Qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, allowed for direct interactions between the researcher and participant, thus collected data was detailed and subjective (Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, an interpretivist approach to qualitative studies allowed the researcher to understand human experiences in specific settings and was regarded as ideographic research, as it studied individual cases or events to better understand different people's meanings, events, and voices (Rahman, 2016). Lastly, qualitative methods are more adept at generating new theories (Rahman, 2016).

The research design was also exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory research was necessary when researching new or under-researched topics in order to break new ground and yield new insights into phenomenon (Babbie, 2013a; Blaikie, 2000). This study was exploratory in nature, as it did not claim any inferences, but merely sought to provide some understanding about a

phenomenon that received limited attention from researchers, namely parent-enacted TTBH, as well as the contribution that the JD-R model made to the development and mitigation of parent-enacted TTBH. The study was also descriptive in nature, as it sought to provide an accurate account of phenomenon (Blaikie, 2000). In this study, teachers' experiences of parent-enacted TTBH were the described phenomenon. Descriptive accounts of the phenomenon were gathered by recording what participants say (with words) and observing specific behaviour, such as body language and tone of voice (Babbie, 2013a). Taking notes on body language and changes in tone during an interview provided the researcher with valuable insights and additional information beyond what was communicated through words alone (Babbie, 2013a).

## 3.3 Sample and Sampling Strategy

The study utilized non-probability sampling techniques, namely: purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling. The researcher approached both primary and secondary schools located in Gauteng. By examining parent-enacted TTBH in both primary and secondary schools, the researcher was able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Furthermore, teachers at different educational levels may have varying levels of experience and different coping strategies for dealing with parent-enacted bullying and harassment. Including primary and secondary schools in the sample allowed for a comparison of how teachers across different stages of their careers navigate and cope with bullying and harassment incidents. Additionally, including lower quintile, higher quintile, and private schools in the sample facilitated an exploration of potential variations in the prevalence or nature of parent-enacted TTBH incidents across a wide range of school contexts. Purposive sampling was used when selecting members from a specialized population (Neuman, 2014). The sample was purposefully selected based on the judgement of an expert who selects cases based on a specific criteria (Neuman, 2014). In this case, the sample was made up of teachers in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal who had experienced parent-enacted bullying and harassment.

Snowball sampling was also utilized. Snowball sampling is a technique in which a researcher identifies initial participants and then subsequent participants are identified by referral (Neuman, 2014). This technique was used because the researcher was “interested in an interconnected network of people”, that is teachers who were victims of parent-enacted bullying and harassment (Neuman, 2014, p.274). Convenience sampling was also used to some extent in order to access

schools available to the researcher. The primary criteria for selecting schools were those that were convenient, easy to reach and readily available (Neuman, 2014). These samples are usually easy and quick to obtain (Neuman, 2014).

The final sample consisted of 8 teachers (6 female and 2 male). Participants fell between the ages of 32 and 63. The sample included participants who identified their race as Black (n = 2), White (n = 3), Coloured (n = 1), and Indian (n = 2). The sample further identified their schools as private (n = 3), lower quintile (n = 3), and higher quintile (n = 2). Additionally, the sample identified their schools as secondary schools (n = 1) and primary schools (n = 7). Lastly, the range of tenure was 11 and 40 years with an average of 23 years.

## 3.4 Research Instruments

### 3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview was used to examine teachers experiences of parent-enacted TTBH. Semi-structured interviews offered more flexibility around the sequence in which issues were addressed and questions were answered (Roberts et al., 2003). Due to the open-ended nature of responses, semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak more broadly about a topic and provided the opportunity for participants to develop their own train of thought and express themselves in their own words (Roberts et al., 2003). Thus, allowing the researcher to gather in-depth, detailed data.

The interview schedule consisted of twenty-one main questions and five sub-sections, which explored: general job demands and job resources experienced by teachers, if and how these demands or resources contributed to greater experience of parent-enacted TTBH (in the case of demands) or alleviated the experience (in the case of job resources), how teachers perceived/understood the concept of bullying and TTBH, teachers personal experiences of parent-enacted TTBH, how teachers coped with parent-enacted TTBH, the impact of parent-enacted TTBH on teachers health and ability to work, and the perceived reasons why teachers think parent-enacted TTBH happens in school. In addition, questions focused on teachers' thoughts regarding possible policies and procedures that could be put in place to eliminate parent-enacted TTBH or at least mitigate its' possible negative effects. The interview took approximately an hour to an hour and a half to complete.

### 3.4.2 The Researcher as an Instrument

The success of qualitative interviews is dependent on the professional and personal qualities of the interviewer (i.e. the researcher) as they, themselves, are research instruments (Legard et al., 2003). To ensure the collection of accurate, relevant, and in-depth data, the interviewer established a good rapport with participants by putting them at ease and creating a climate of trust (Legard et al., 2003). This involved being able to show empathy and understanding, demonstrating respect and interest, and actively listening to and responding flexibly to the participant (Legard et al., 2003). Furthermore, the interviewer established their credibility with participants by asking relevant and meaningful questions which were based on an understanding of the research topic (Legard et al., 2003). The interviewer also used probes to clarify unclear/ambiguous responses and gain a better understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions (Legard et al., 2003). Careful preparation and efficiency was also important. The interviewer managed the interview process by ensuring the interview stayed ‘on track’ and within the allocated time frame (Legard et al., 2003).

Lastly, the interviewer kept a reflexivity diary throughout the research process to establish an audit trail, and ensure their values, assumptions, and biases did not influence the collection and interpretation of data. The interviewer recorded the daily logistics of the research, rationales, and methodological decisions, as well as personal reflections on their insights, values, and interests (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, the interviewer worked closely with their supervisor throughout the research process. This included conducting participant interviews together, and working together to identify and analyze codes and themes within the dataset. This collaboration enhanced the credibility of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

## 3.5 Procedure

Before conducting research, the University of the Witwatersrand required the researcher to gain ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). To gain ethical clearance, the researcher had to draft a research proposal detailing the nature of their study and how research would be conducted, complete an ethics form, and contact the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to obtain consent to access teachers within Gauteng schools. The HREC then approved the research (Ethics Protocol Number MAORG/23/08).

Additionally, the researcher had to contact principals telephonically and via email to request their permission to allow the researcher access to respective schools. Principals were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (refer to: Appendix B), which detailed the nature of the study, in order to gain access to respective schools. Once approved by the GDE and the HREC, data collection commenced.

The PIS (refer to: Appendix D), which informed potential participants about the nature of the study and served as an invitation to participate, was distributed to teachers by the principals of respective schools. The PIS allowed the researcher to purposively sample potential participants as they were asked if they had ever experienced parent-enacted TTBH. In order to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the teacher within the school context, teachers were requested and encouraged to communicate directly with the researcher regarding their willingness to participate in the study.

Interviews were face-to-face or online. Participants willing to participate in the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were provided with a venue, time, and place that best suited them. Participants willing to participate in the semi-structured online interviews were provided with a meeting link at a time that best suited them. It should be noted that the researcher was unable to observe non-verbal behaviour due to the nature of online interviews.

On the day of the interview, the researcher introduced themselves and made small talk with the participant in order to ease their stress or nervousness regarding the interview. This introduction also allowed the researcher to develop a healthy rapport with participants. Once the participant seemed comfortable, the researcher verbally explained the nature of the study and provided the participant with the PIS and the informed consent form (refer to Appendix E). Participants were encouraged to read the PIS again and sign the informed consent form prior to the interview.

The interview began once the participant gave the researcher permission to record. The researcher created a safe environment by presenting themselves with an open and comfortable demeanor. The researcher actively listened to participants and showed sincere interest in the participant and their experiences. During the interview, the researcher guided the participant through the key research themes as framed by the research questions- both those anticipated by the researcher and those that emerged during the interview. Each question was explored in-depth with a series of follow-up questions and probes. It is important to note that participants were

informed that if there were any questions that they did not want to answer they were free not to answer without any prejudice towards them.

About five to ten minutes before the end of the interview, the researcher signaled the approach of the end of the interview. This allowed the participant to gradually return to a level of everyday social interaction. The researcher used phrases, such as 'in the last few minutes ...' or 'the final topic ...' to signal the end of the interview. The researcher also checked that the participant had not been left with any ‘unfinished business’, for example, issues of importance left unmentioned or feelings unexpressed. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participant and helped them move out of ‘interview mode’ by saying speaking, fairly briefly, about how their contribution aided the research. The researcher also reassured the participant about confidentiality and the use of the interview data. During this time, the researcher asked if the participant had any questions that they would like to ask and answered any questions raised by the participant during the interview. The researcher also reminded and encouraged participants to contact the researcher or the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand should they experience stress or anxiety.

It was important to be cognizant of the possibility that moving away from the interview sometimes sparks some final reflections, or even new information, from participants. If those were significant, the researcher asked the participants to repeat themselves to take notes. The researcher also took their cue from the participant - if they seemed to want to talk, either about the interview subject or more generally. By the time the researcher took leave of the participant, the process of coming out of the interview was fully completed and the participant was left feeling 'well'. Once the interview stage had concluded, the researcher began transcribing and analyzing collected data. In addition, the researcher remained cognizant of the possibility that participants may have experienced negative emotions during the interview that could leave them with feelings of distress. Participants were thus asked how they felt at the end of the interview and offered free counselling if they felt they needed it. In addition, where needed, the researcher’s supervisor engaged in debriefing with participants. As a registered psychologist, the researcher’s supervisor was capacitated to do such debriefing.

## 3.6 Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to analyze data collected from interviews. TCA is a method used to systematically identify, organize, and offer insights into patterns and themes across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Using TCA, the similarities and relationships between different extracts of data were explored to uncover themes and produce a rich, detailed, and complex description of the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher began by transcribing the interviews into written form. Although time-consuming, the transcription process informed the early stages of data analysis and allowed the researcher to develop a better understanding of the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher paid close attention during the transcription process to facilitate the interpretive and close reading skills needed to analyze a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

TCA is made up of six phases. *In phase one*, the researcher immersed themselves in the data through repeated, active reading. Note-making was important during this phase as it allowed the researcher to become familiar with the content of the dataset and allowed the researcher to mark initial ideas for codes that were used in subsequent phases (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher also read the transcript while listening to the audio recordings to check for accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once the researcher read and familiarized themselves with the dataset and generated notes, *phase two,* in which initial codes are generated from the dataset began (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "Codes are building blocks of analysis" that allowed the researcher to identify and provide labels for features of the dataset that addressed the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.61). Codes also provided an interpretation of the data content (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

*Phase three* began once the researcher fully coded and collated the data, and once the researcher had a list of the different codes identified across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase involved the analysis of themes, which represented patterned and meaningful responses that addressed the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). During this phase, the researcher sorted the different codes into potential themes and collated relevant coded data extracts within these identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of a thematic map helped the researcher

sort the different codes into themes and allowed the researcher to start thinking about the relationship between codes, main overarching themes, and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During *phase four,* the researcher reviewed and refined themes in relation to the coded data extracts and the entire dataset; by reviewing and refining themes against the collated data extracts the researcher was able to consider whether they form coherent patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

*Phase five* involved defining and naming the themes that would be present in the analysis, and analyzing the data within each theme. Firstly, the researcher provided theme names and clear working definitions that captured the essence of each theme in a concise manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To create working definitions the researcher refined the most important aspects of each theme and the aspects it covered in the dataset in order to create a coherent narrative of how and why the coded data within each theme contributed to addressing the research questions, provided unique insights, and interacted with other themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, the researcher also planned a write-up, figured out the structure and flow of the analysis and research report, as well as mapped the way the outcomes of the analysis would be reported.

Once the researcher had a set of fully worked-out themes, *phase six*, which involved the final analysis and write-up of the research report, began (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The write-up of the analysis provided a logical, interesting, concise, non-repetitive, and coherent story about the data in a way that convinced the reader of the validity and merit of the researchers analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In addition, throughout the analysis process, the researcher ensured **Trustworthiness** and **Reflexivity.**

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which research findings are credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable, and authentic (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher aimed to meet the criteria of trustworthiness during each phase of the TCA:

During *phase one,* the researcher archived raw data with dates and stored it in a repository in order to create an audit trail and confirm the adequacy of data analysis and interpretation

(Nowell et al., 2017). By establishing an audit trail, the researcher enhanced the *dependability* of the research findings. Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the research process and findings over time and across different contexts (Nowell et al., 2017). By providing a detailed record of the research process, an audit trail increased the *credibility* and trustworthiness of the findings and enabled critical evaluation by other researchers (Elo et al., 2014).

The coding framework used during *phase two* provided a clear audit trail and enhanced the credibility of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher also worked systematically through the dataset, paying full and equal attention to each data extract (Nowell et al., 2017). During *phase three,* the researcher documented the development of the main and subtheme in a codebook, which was included in the audit trail and used to establish *confirmability* (Nowell et al., 2017). The use of a thematic map during this phase allowed the researcher to visualize and make sense of the connections between themes and further interrogate themes (Nowell et al., 2017). During *phase four,* the researcher's supervisor reviewed the coded data extracts for each main- and sub-theme to determine if a coherent, logical pattern was apparent and ensured that each theme reflected the participant's voice (Nowell et al., 2017). During *phase five,* the researcher met with their supervisor to discuss each theme and ensured themes held true across all cases (Nowell et al., 2017). During these meetings, the researcher and the supervisor organized and reorganized themes in a way that best reflects the data (Nowell et al., 2017). During *phase six,* the researcher ensured that they had transparently detailed the methods used to achieve their findings (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher also identified where their findings contrast/support broader literature, or added to existing bodies of knowledge (Nowell et al., 2017).

## Reflexivity

In addition, the researcher ensured reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's deliberate and conscious effort to reflect on their own beliefs, biases, assumptions, and values, which may influence the research process and findings of the study (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Dodgson, 2019). Reflexivity ensures the trustworthiness and quality of research findings (Dodgson, 2019). During the research process, the researcher kept a reflexivity diary in which they reflected upon and clarified their assumptions, expectations, and conscious/unconscious reactions to participants, contexts, and data (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

## 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher had to gain ethical clearance to conduct this research by submitting an ethics application form to the HREC. An ethics approval was needed because the research involved human participants. All registered Masters students at the School of Human and Community Development whose research involved human participants must gain research ethics approval before conducting their research (Wits University, 2023).

The researcher applied the following ethical principles to their research:

Informed consent is a criterion that emphasizes the importance of accurately informing participants as to the nature of the research and obtaining their written consent to participate (Babbie, 2013b). Informed consent forms (refer to Appendix E) were handed to and signed by all participants. This form included information regarding the purpose of the research, the researcher's contact information, potential benefits or risks of the study, participants' right to withdraw from the study, participants' rights to decline to answer any questions without prejudice, procedures, confidentiality and anonymity, and how data will be managed, stored and maintained (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012).

Informed consent also adhered to the following principles: voluntary participation and protection from harm (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). All participants were informed of their rights in this regard. Regarding voluntary participation, research participation disrupts the participant's regular activities and required them to reveal personal information about themselves to strangers (i.e. the interviewer) (Babbie, 2013b). Research participation was completely voluntary and based on a full understanding of the purpose of the study and what is expected of the participant (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). Additionally, refusal to participate involved no loss of benefits or penalty, and the participant could discontinue participation at any time without loss of benefits or penalty.

With regards to protection from harm, at the end of the interview, participants were debriefed (as described above in Section 3.5 *"Procedure"*), to ensure that the researcher had obtained informed consent and that none of the participants were harmed in any way by the study (Babbie, 2013b). The debriefing also allowed participants to ask questions about the study to ensure they fully understood the content of it (Babbie, 2013b). Although no psychological harm was expected, participants were informed that should they experience feelings of stress or anxiety

after the interview, counselling with a clinical psychologist would be provided through the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The researcher made it clear to the participant that this research project was confidential rather than anonymous as the researcher was able to identify the participant given the face-to-face nature of the interview (even in an online platform where cameras were on) (Babbie, 2013b). Confidentiality was guaranteed when a researcher could identify a given participant's responses but promised not to do so publicly (Babbie, 2013b). Confidentiality and anonymity were also important in the writing up of findings (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). In the write-up, the researcher used pseudonyms rather than participants' real names to prevent community recognition of participants (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). The researcher also attended to how participants were described and quoted as their responses would be shared and would serve as an identifier- this means that community and individual descriptions were kept vague and ambiguous (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). Further to this, the results of this research were reported in general themes to ensure that no single participant would be identifiable. The researcher also took the necessary measures to protect the dataset while the research was in progress. The data obtained, and the interview recordings, were kept on a password-protected computer which only the researcher and supervisor knew the password to. The data was also saved with the use of pseudonyms, rather than participants' real names to ensure that the findings could not be traced back to a certain participant by anybody other than the researcher. In addition, the schools' names were not mentioned in the research. Thus, the data was fully sanitized with all names and any other possible identifying features removed from the data.

Lastly, although the research findings were confidential for research purposes, the study was published on the University's research platform and findings could be used for research papers and conferences in the future. Thus, participants were also asked to consent that the research report might be made available on a public platform and that data could be used later for publication purposes, secondary analysis, or conferences. However, once again, in this format, the data will be fully anonymized and sanitized so that there is no way of identifying participants by their responses.

The data analysis resulted in the identification of the following themes, which captured teachers' experiences of parent-enacted TTBH:

1. TTBH Experiences
2. Why Does TTBH Happen?
3. Impact of TTBH on Physical and Psychological Well-Being
4. Coping with TTBH
5. Job Demands and Job Resources
6. Current School Interventions
7. Teachers' Perspectives on School Interventions

These themes are discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, that is, Chapter Four: Results and Discussion.

# Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

## 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four will identify and discuss the predominant themes that emerged from the data set analysis. In addition, to capture the trustworthiness of the identified themes, direct quotes from the transcripts were included in the write up (Fossey et al., 2002; Kawulich & Holland, 2012).

## 4.2 Theme One: TTBH Experiences (In relation to research question (1.))

A closer look at specific parent-enacted TTBH incidents unveils the harrowing tales teachers often face. These incidents, ranging from undermining the teacher's authority, targeting teachers with verbal and/or physical intimidation, attacks on social media, and group bullying, paint a vivid picture of the challenges teachers encounter.

### 4.2.1 Sub-theme: Parents Undermining the Teacher's Authority and Credibility

Bullying is defined as an extreme form of harassment, characterized by intentional or aggressive behaviour that persists over time in an interpersonal relationship that involves a real or perceived power imbalance (Billett et al., 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Harassment is used to describe persistent communication, actions, behaviours, or unwelcome conduct which puts down, demeans, ridicules, mocks, or disparages a person (Heathfield, 2018 as cited in Billett et al., 2019). Additionally, TTBH is a more complicated form of WPB, encompassing direct negative behaviours that erode the professional standing of the teacher (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).

Participant 3, a sports coach, described several incidents in which he felt that his authority and credibility were severely undermined. Firstly, a group of grade 7 parents were dissatisfied with the communication and management of sports-related information. Despite efforts to address concerns, some parents bypassed Participant 3 and directly approached his line manager. One particular parent organized a school meeting to discuss these issues. The school decided to open the meeting to include all grade 7 parents. However, it became apparent that the discontent was primarily driven by a small group of mothers, leading to misunderstandings among other parents who were satisfied with the sports program. Participant 3 described this incident as *"a witch hunt and a lynch, a public lynching".* Participant 3 also faced challenges during team selection in netball and hockey. Unlike objective sports like swimming and athletics, determining team placements in subjective sports led to parental dissatisfaction and external pressures. Participant

3 described parents as ‘car park assassins’, stating, “*I'm sure you've heard the term … ‘car park assassin’, where they (parents) all have their own opinions and voice them behind our backs and don't come to talk to us directly, which is also another irritant because half the time we can sort it out but we only hear about it once it's gone via the grapevine and the damage is done”.* This lack of direct communication not only compromises the participant's credibility but also damages his authority by undermining his decision-making.

Lastly, Participant 3 points out that parents hold teachers responsible for issues, often without self-accountability*: “parents don't hold themselves accountable, so often they want all the information laid on a silver platter. (They’re) not prepared to go and look for it … It always seems to be our mistake, it's our error and no matter the measures we put in place (it) just doesn't always seem to hit home”.* Similarly, Participant 6 suggests that parents often blame teachers for various issues, overlooking their child’s behaviour: “*I find that parents don't know how to be parents. They blame the teacher for everything. They fault find and blame us with whatever goes wrong and it's never the child's fault”.*

### 4.2.2 Sub-theme: Targeting the Teacher with Verbal or Physical Intimidation

WPB involves exposure to unwanted, prolonged, and frequent negative acts (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; Fox & Stallworth, 2010). Negative acts include physically aggressive behaviour (e.g. threats of violence, abuse of power or physical attacks), threats to professional status (e.g. public humiliation, accusations regarding lack of effort or belittling opinions), and threats to personal standing (e.g. shouting, devaluation, slandering, offensive remarks, insults or intimidation) (De Wet & Jacobs, 2021).

Participant 2 described an incident whereby a parent expressed dissatisfaction by standing up, slapping the desk in front of her, and directly stating that they believed she was not good enough. This physical and verbal confrontation suggests a high level of frustration on the part of the parent, highlighting the challenging dynamics that teachers face when dealing with parents.

Participant 7 also experienced verbal assault noting that in an unexpected confrontation, a child's father pointedly warned the teacher not to reprimand his child, stating, “*(he) came into my class. The father put his finger on my nose and said, ‘don't you dare say anything to (my child) …*

*because this is not on' and I was shocked out of my mind".* Following this incident, Participant 7 went to the police station laid a charge against the father and got a restraining order.

Participant 5 also described a challenging situation where parents confronted a PY (teaching assistant) who was allegedly bullying their child. The parents, familiar with the PY due to community ties, confronted the PY on the school premises, leading to a physical altercation. Participant 5 intervened to prevent further conflict and took the parent into their office for discussion where the parent suggested changing the child's class to prevent further interaction between the child and PY. However, this was a difficult situation for Participant 5 who stated, *"I can change the class for (the PY) so that she cannot be next to their child. But what (about when the) children are at assembly? Will that child not pass next to the PY? And what if we're having a function?."*

Participant 8's TTBH incident spilled over into the community as parents spread details of her incident amongst community members. As a result, the participant was not only fearful of the parents but also the community, stating, *"maybe in the morning when I go to school, I'll find them waiting for me somewhere or after school, they will attack me. I was so vigilant. I was checking every day that maybe I'll be attacked because they know me. I've been working there for a long time. Most of the community, the people, they know me, I taught them and now I'm teaching their children. So they know me. They know me, they could attack me anytime if they wanted to".* Participant 8's fear was exacerbated by the school's unsafe environment where parents frequently enter and exit the school premises without clear reasons or proper protocol: *"I know that there are some parents who just hate teachers, and then they just come in and attack teachers (at school). There are lots of incidents that happened at the school where teachers were attacked by the parents. A long time ago, even the parents came and beat up a teacher there at the school. So teachers are not safe at all."*

Participant 8 also recounted an incident whereby a parent physically intimidated her by entering her classroom and attempting to harm another child, stating, *"I was…busy teaching, a parent came inside the class, passed me and went straight to another child and then wanted to hit that child in front of me. Never greeted me or asked me permission, 'can I come and talk to that child?', just walk straight to that child"*. When the participant reported the incident to the school

office, she was informed that the parent involved was a friend of the principal. The victimized learner, feeling unsafe, eventually decided to take a transfer to another school.

Lastly, Participant 8 recalls an incident involving a male teacher and twin girls who were reprimanded by the teacher for their untidy hair. The girls reported the incident to their mother, who then visited the school to address the matter with the teacher. The mother, accompanied by another woman, requested to speak with the teacher and invited him to a meeting in the boardroom where he was physically assaulted.

In the case of Participant 2 and Participant 5, their confrontations encompass both physical and verbal intimidation. On the other hand, both Participant 5 and Participant 8 recount instances where confrontations escalated to physical altercations.

All participants involved in the described incidents are female teachers. Therefore, female teachers, irrespective of the school's socioeconomic environment, appear to be more susceptible to physical and/or verbal intimidation incidents involving parents. These findings align with that of Samnani and Singh (2012) who reported that females are more likely to be bullied than males. Additionally, Jacobs and De Wet (2015 as cited in De Wet & Jacobs, 2021) found that female teachers are more at risk of being bullied by parents. Lastly, the narratives presented came mainly from teachers in lower quintile schools. This implies that there may be a higher incidence of physical intimidation in lower quintile schools, suggesting a potential link between the prevalence of physical conflicts in school environments and socioeconomic factors. This finding aligns with that of Lowe et al (2020 as cited in Billett et al., 2020) who found that schools with a lower socio-educational advantage experienced more incidences of TTBH.

### 4.2.3 Sub-theme: Cyberbullying: Targeting the Teacher Through Attacks on Social Media

Social media has become a powerful tool that can either divide or unite. Unfortunately, it has been weaponized to amplify parent-enacted TTBH by providing a platform for public shaming, false accusations, and the dissemination of misleading information. This type of cyberbullying was a prevalent form of parent-enacted bullying and harassment noted by most of the teachers. Hinduja and Patchin (2013) characterize cyberbullying as the deliberate harassment of individuals through chatrooms or social networking websites.

WhatsApp has become a platform for aggressive and accusatory communication. Cyberbullies may share messages, post photos, or make comments directly targeting or discussing the targeted individual. Cyberbullies also employ shame as a tool, utilizing condemning, offensive, or hateful posts to spread gossip, engage in other harmful behaviours, or expose lies (Shin & Choi, 2021). The transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic brought about various negative aspects and even though the pandemic is now over, many of the online behaviours adopted remain, including the negative aspects of such behaviours. According to Participant 3, *"it is just unrelenting messaging and … I think it's a headache from a hangover from COVID days. There's just, accessibility is 24/7 now, you know there's no boundary, they (parents) don't know when the work day ends and when the work day begins".* Furthermore, WhatsApp groups contribute to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and the amplification of conflicts. The instantaneous nature of WhatsApp adds to the pressure on teachers to respond promptly, often leading to further misunderstandings. These sentiments were echoed by Participant 4 who recalled an incident with *"keyboard warrior moms that are so confident in just typing you a demand or typing you a request",* whereby the participant received a message from a parent in a WhatsApp group expressing a query. To address the situation, Participant 4 collaborated with a colleague, however, the response led to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction from the parent. From these narratives, we see that WhatsApp has inadvertently become a double-edged sword for teachers. While WhatsApp offers accessibility, it also serves as breeding ground for bullying and harassing behaviours.

Facebook also plays a detrimental role in distorting and amplifying incidents of parent-enacted TTBH. Participant 7 recalls how bullying parents and grandmother shared false information about an incident involving their child on Facebook. The misinformation sparked backlash from people who began commenting and passing judgment based solely on one side of the story, leading to public condemnation and causing emotional distress: *"they put a whole lot of nonsense on Facebook where they were saying that this is what happened (between me and their child) … They put a whole lot of things and they put it on groups where… people that don't know you start commenting because they (are) only listening to (their) side of the story and reading (their) version and then they were like, 'oh poor (child), how could this teacher do that? she*

*should be fired, how could she live with herself? I'm sure she's not a mother', things like that, it was horrible".*

Similarly, parents used social media to rally support against Participant 8, influencing other parents to come to the school to confront and even physically harm the participant. Participant 8 was involved in an accident in which a child was burnt with boiling water at school, even though the accident was not her fault and a district hearing found her innocent. The participant's experience highlights the power of social media in amplifying baseless claims and inciting a community against a teacher. Participant 8 states, *"the parent was not happy (and) she started talking about me on Facebook. She formulated a group chat about me, talking on Facebook… (influencing) parents that they must come to school to beat me up because (I hurt her child)".* Additionally, on an online community forum, *"they were talking about me, how cruel I am. How can I burn the child with burn with water? They must come to school as a group and beat me up for doing that".*

Lastly, Participant 1 described instances where he was targeted on both Facebook and WhatsApp. Participant 1 recounts an incident where parents called him derogatory terms such as, 'A White M*****f****r' and 'Gangster Principal'. According to Participant 1, parents created fake accounts on Facebook to post content within community groups, tagging the participant and potentially tarnishing his reputation within the community. In addition, *"they've got their WhatsApp group right, so this is how they work, say for example you wanna say something to me, so you get someone else to write the WhatsApp and they forward the message to you… so that when I get the message it's forwarded".* Participant 1 explains the purpose of using this indirect method is to maintain a level of anonymity, making it challenging to trace the origin of the messages as *"you cannot pinpoint where the message comes from".* The same applied to fake accounts as the participant was unable to determine which parents defamed him on Facebook.

The creation of Facebook posts and online community forum discussions, indicate a concerted effort to not only incite verbal and physical assaults against teachers but also align with sub-theme 4.4.5 in which there is damage to and an undermining of the teacher's professional standing. The above-described behaviour falls under the categories of 'flaming' and 'denigration'. Flaming refers to the act of posting or sending electronic messages that are intentionally insulting, inflammatory, or provocative (Nadali et al., 2013). It often involves the

use of strong language, offensive content, or personal attacks directed towards one or more individuals, that aims to evoke strong emotional reactions from others or incite conflict. Denigration occurs when cyberbullies publish or send false statements or gossip about a victim with the intention of damaging their reputation (Nadali et al., 2013). This involves spreading negative and often untrue information to tarnish the social standing or image of the targeted individual (Nadali et al., 2013). It also demonstrates that teachers can be targeted anonymously. Such anonymity can make one even more fearful as the victim has no idea where the threat is coming from.

These narratives highlight the nuanced ways in social media becomes a weapon in the hands of parents. The incidents described highlight not only the immediate emotional toll on the teacher but also the potential long-term consequences on their well-being and professional standing within their communities. These narratives also underscore the urgent need for addressing cyberbullying within the broader context of teacher-parent interactions, prompting a reflection on the ethical use of social media.

### 4.2.4 Sub-theme: Mobilizing Other Parents to Collectively Target Teachers (Often on Social Media)

Linked to the above theme, is the use of social media as a tool where parents gang up on the teacher and engage in ‘mobbing’. Mobbing involves persistent and prolonged actions or behaviours directed at an individual by one or more other individuals, involving ongoing harassment or threats that undermine the individual’s belief in their professional competence (Peker et al., 2018; Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka, 2018). Leyman (1996 as cited by Peker et al., 2018) provides a more detailed definition, describing mobbing as an incident where the victim consistently and systematically experiences aggressive, insulting, hostile, and unethical behaviours, rendering them helpless and defenseless. For actions to be classified as mobbing, (a) they must occur on a very frequent basis, at least once a week, and (b) they should persist over an extended period, lasting at least six months (Picakciefe et al., 2017). While the definition indicates the involvement of one or more individuals, in this specific case, the study uses the term "mobbing" to describe instances where parent-enacted TTBH occurs within the context of a group.

Participant 3's previously mentioned 'carpark assassin' incident (refer to sub-theme 4.2.1 *"Parents Undermining the Teachers Authority and Credibility"*) and the creation of Facebook and WhatsApp groups (refer to sub-theme 4.2.3 *"Cyberbullying: Targeting the Teacher Through Attacks on Social Media*) expose the systematic use of other parents to gang up on teachers, often enabled by social media.

The mobbing process begins with an assault on the employee's integrity, credibility, reliability, and professional competence (Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka, 2018). Perpetrators of mobbing are typically individuals in positions of authority and although parents are not teachers' direct superiors or managers, their influence is significant (Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka, 2018). This influence may stem from their role as fee-paying parents in private schools or higher quintile schools and/or their collective impact as a group. As a result, they have significant authority and power that surpasses that of school principals. As such, they can employ various mobbing strategies, such as:

- Intimidation Strategy: Mobbers enforce specific behaviours through threats, instilling fear in the victim. This was the case for Participant 8, whose mobber created online community forum discussions or Facebook posts, where numerous individuals formed a collective attack and incited violence against the teacher.
- Indirect Actions: This includes spreading rumours to demean the victim in the eyes of others; which was the case for Participant 1, who described instances where he was targeted anonymously on WhatsApp and Facebook, and where numerous individuals attacked the participant with malicious comments.
- Direct Strategies: Involve more direct actions such as public criticism or ridicule, aiming to justify the mobber's actions by discrediting the victim. This was the case for Participant 4, who dealt with *"keyboard warrior moms"* who she noted acted as a group.
- Public Image Formation: Actions at this stage aim to portray the victim as irrational, often gaining support from their environment. This was the case for Participant 7, whose mobbers spread false information about her TTBH incident on Facebook. The misinformation sparked a backlash leading to public condemnation.

(Kozak, 2009 as cited by Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka, 2018; Einarsen & Bjorkvist, 2008 as cited by Kowal & Gwiazda-Sawicka, 2018).

### 4.2.5 Conclusion of Theme

The incidents shared by participants highlight the multifaceted nature of parent-enacted TTBH, ranging from undermining authority and verbal or physical intimidation to attacks on social media and mobbing. These experiences underscore the complexity and severity of parent-enacted TTBH, shedding light on persistent power imbalances, unwelcome conduct, and deliberate actions that erode the professional standing of teachers.

## 4.3 Theme Two: Why does TTBH happen? (In Relation to Research Question (1.))

It is crucial to understand the underlying factors contributing to parent-enacted TTBH. Examining the root causes will provide insights into developing strategies to address and prevent such incidents, fostering a safer and more supportive educational environment for both teachers and learners.

### 4.3.1 Sub-theme: Parents' Unmet High Expectations of Their Child(ren)

In an environment where post-school opportunities may be limited, children need to succeed and stand out from their peers. In South Africa, approximately 61 percent of individuals aged between 15-24 are unemployed, with this figure rising to 70 percent when accounting for those who have given up on job hunting (Leshoro, 2023).

In the first half of 2023, South Africa experienced a slight decrease in the official unemployment rate, primarily attributed to a 5 percent year-on-year increase in employment during the second quarter, resulting in the creation of 784 000 jobs (Leshoro, 2023). However, a PwC economy report revealed that out of the 784 000 jobs generated, only 45 000 were allocated to young people (Leshoro, 2023). Despite a projected decline in the youth unemployment rate from 46.3 percent in 2022 to 45.4 percent by the end of 2022, the report indicates that the number of jobs created for young people will fall short of accommodating the rate at which new youth enter the labour market (Leshoro, 2023).

Additionally, with more than 897 000 learners having passed matric in 2023, concerns have mounted over how many of them will be able to access higher education. According to the Universities South Africa's chief executive, Dr Phethiwe Matutu, the estimated number of spaces available for first-time entrants across public universities was 196 324. Dr Matutu emphasized that universities use various admission point scores and the number of quality bachelor passes as

determinants of supply and demand (Makwea, 2023). Consequently, limited access to higher education may potentially worsen youth unemployment as more youth will enter the job market without the enhanced skills and qualifications needed by employers. Thus, it may be crucially important for parents that their children excel, whether academically or in sports, to enable them to take advantage of limited future education, career, and job prospects.

In this regard, Participant 3 noted that parental aspirations for their children are very high and may not align with the child's interests, abilities, or aspirations, thereby contributing to incidents of TTBH. The incident described related to a parent's exceptionally high aspirations for their child in netball. Participant 3 noted that *"the girl is happy to be in the B or C team or D team. She just wants to play. She's not interested in making an A-Team, but yet there's this expectation from the parent to say well, 'I was a Springbok netball player, my daughter must be', and (I want to say) your daughters got two left feet and you try to be honest and you try to paint the picture and it's just hard for them to fathom. They can't get their head around it so we must be the problem".*

When it comes to academic excellence teachers are also blamed. Participant 6 mentioned that parents tend to attribute any decline in grades to the teachers, leading to a strain in the teacher-parent relationship, stating, *"parents tend to blame us as teachers and they start not liking us, and you see the grade that I teach is grade 7, it's a big jump from grade 6 to 7, where we always see that dip in their marks, so four or five parents have seen their children as 93, 98 (percenters) etcetera and now come grade seven they dropped to 80 and a 70. So who's to blame? The teacher."*

These narratives align with the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, whereby aggressive behaviour often becomes a way for individuals to express their frustrations and emotions (Botha et al., 2013). Parents, in particular, may experience external stressors, such as the aforementioned limited post-school opportunities for their children, leading to frustration, potentially stemming from interactions with teachers, broader issues within the school environment, or concerns about their child's education. These stressors may include dissatisfaction with the educational system, worries about their child's performance, or perceived injustices. Teachers, being the most visible individuals in the school environment, become the targets of aggression for frustrated parents.

### 4.3.2 Sub-theme: Ill-disciplined or Lying Children

Many teachers noted that children often lied to their parents about school-related matters which would then lead to parents targeting teachers.

Participant 2 recounted a troubling incident involving a learner who fabricated stories about being bullied by peers, ultimately accusing the participant of neglecting her duty as a teacher. The participant, unaware of the learner's alleged bullying experiences and never directly approached by the learner, was confronted by the learner's father, a prominent figure in her community.

Participant 6 describes an incident whereby she advised a learner about the length of her dress, noting that it was too short. Despite being exceptionally careful in her choice of language to address the learner's inappropriate dress, "*the learner went home and said I embarrassed her",* leading to the parent of the learner accusing the participant of making a sexist remark.

Participant 7 also narrated an incident involving a 'disruptive' grade two student who exhibited lying behaviour, stating*, "this little boy used to lie a lot…… (he fabricated) a whole story where I reprimanded him and he went home and he gave his parents the wrong side of the story. So the next day the parents came to school, it was the mom, the dad and the grandmother, and they were very upset. They went to the principal and they said for some reason that we don't like this child, not just…me…but the teachers in general."*

Lastly, Participant 8 recalled an incident whereby a parent entered the school, approached her, and accused her of physically disciplining their child. The participant, surprised and unaware of any such incident, clarified that they had not interacted with or even taught the child in question, especially since it was early in the school year, stating, *"I don't even know the child's name. I said let's go to the class teacher of the child. Then when we go to the class teacher, we find out the class teacher is absent and then the parent change(d) (their) statement saying, 'if it's not you, it's this class teacher'".* Upon discovering that the class teacher was absent, the parent changed their statement, implicating the absent teacher. Participant 8 stated, *"the parent didn't even say 'I'm sorry my child lied'".*

Examining the parent-child relationship is particularly intriguing for lie detection due to the intimacy of the bond and the crucial role of trust in a healthy parent-child relationship (Evans et

al., 2016). “McCornack and Parks (1986 as cited in Evans et al., 2016, p. 2) proposed a model of deception detection in personal relationships” suggesting that in close relationships, individuals tend to perceive each other in a fixed manner, distorting inconsistent information to support their established view. Within such relationships, individuals generally hold a positive opinion of each other, creating a bias towards seeing each other as honest (Evans et al., 2016). This truth bias may arise from parents' belief in their children's honesty and the expectation that their children's peers share similar honesty (Evans et al., 2016). This bias reflects a rigid and possibly biased perception based on prior experiences, allowing children to successfully deceive their parents (Evans et al., 2016). Parents may also be less vigilant in lie detection to avoid disrupting the trust in the relationship (Evans et al., 2016). Thus, the truth bias inherent in close relationships may contribute to the challenges teachers face in accurately assessing and addressing instances of deception. Additionally, parents, having more experience interacting with their children, may be less suspicious of false statements (Evans et al., 2016).

### 4.3.3 Sub-theme: Parents Not Liking the Way Teachers Discipline Their Children

Parents may also challenge a teacher’s abilities and professionalism through relentless, ongoing advocacy which erodes their ability to condemn and control learners’ poor behaviour- this experience is both humiliating and disempowering for teachers (Billett et al., 2019).

Participant 6 describes an incident involving disciplinary action against a learner who damaged another learner’s belongings resulting in a threatening email from the parent of the disciplined child. In a separate incident, another teacher commented on a learner’s attire during a netball tournament, and the parent implicated Participant 6: *“the mother roped me into that, saying that ‘I was part of the (incident) and told her child that she was wearing the wrong uniform’ and I had no part of it. It's kinda like now victimizing me, you know...And although you know you signed as a parent, you signed the Code of Conduct which says about your dress code and everything. So when the parent agreed to put the child in our school, you agreed to all of that”.* The Code of Conduct, which outlines shared responsibilities for learners’ behaviour and adherence to certain standards, is a contractual agreement between parents and the school. Despite this agreement, the incident reveals a disconnect between the agreed-upon responsibilities and the actual attribution of blame.

Teachers, feeling disempowered through ongoing advocacy, become hesitant to assert their authority in managing disciplinary issues or offering guidance, as they anticipate parental bullying and harassment (Billett et al., 2019). This was the case for Participant 6, who felt compelled to withdraw from addressing dress code violations, stating, "*this year I actually don't tell anyone about their short dresses anymore".*

The issue of insufficient discipline in schools is a tangible concern, emphasizing the importance for parents, teachers, and learners to collaboratively address and resolve this challenge (Ndamani, 2008). Schools should prioritize parental involvement in their children's education, recognizing that discipline is a shared responsibility (Chew, 2003 as cited in Ndamani, 2008). Maintaining discipline should extend beyond teachers to include parents and learners, creating a collective effort towards shaping positive behaviour (Ndamani, 2008). When parents and teachers collaborate, they can generate more effective changes in a child's behaviour than when either party tackles the issue in isolation.

Therefore, the success of a child at school is contingent upon the interaction between three key components: the teacher, the parent, and the learner (Ndamani, 2008). Establishing a collaborative partnership fosters a positive and supportive learning environment that prioritizes effective discipline and guidance.

### 4.3.4 Sub-theme: Power Dynamics

Power disparities are a prerequisite for both the maintenance and development of WPB (Fahie, 2014). As mentioned, while parents are not the managers/bosses or colleagues of teachers, they do exert power over the teacher if they have influence over the principal, are parents in high fee-paying schools, are parents who can organize a gang of parents or individuals within the community to mob the teacher over a particular issue. This perceived or real power disparity between the parent and teacher then becomes a determining factor in facilitating the ongoing exposure to negative acts, contributing to the negative consequences of TTBH and fostering an environment where teachers perceive themselves as helpless and defenseless against the repeated negative acts enacted upon them by parents.

Following Participant 2's incident, described above in sub-theme 4.3.2 *"Ill-disciplined or Lying Children"*, the learner's father who was a powerful and affluent member in the school's community, aggressively accused the participant of inaction and negligence, leading to a meeting

where the participant suggested calling the learner for clarification. This seemingly reasonable proposal angered the father further. Consequently, the father escalated the conflict by sending accusatory emails to the principal, challenging the participant's integrity. Thereafter, the principal intervened, conducting multiple meetings that left the participant extremely threatened by the father's unwarranted hostility which was based on false information. This incident highlights the overarching power dynamics at play, where a parent who is an affluent member of the community and holds high standing outside of the school was able to exert influence on school management and amplify conflict based on false information.

Participant 3's previously mentioned 'carpark assassin' incident (refer to sub-theme 4.2.1 *"Parents Undermining the Teacher's Authority and Credibility"*) implies a certain level of authority and agency on the part of the parents, as they gang up, creating a power base, and discuss concerns behind the teacher's back, influencing decision-making processes within the school community. This shift in decision-making dynamics represents a form of power being exerted by the parents, which they can easily enact by virtue of their having power in numbers as a group.

Participant 3 also states that parents attempt to assert power and authority over teachers based on their monetary contributions to the school in the form of paying very high school fees. The participant states, "*we are a high-fee school and without a shadow of a doubt, parents…want a bang for their buck. So they…are… paying all this money and therefore, (they say) because I'm paying so much money, I expect this. Whether it's achievable or not becomes null and void."* Similarly, Participant 2 perceives bullying parents as having an expectation of excellent teaching due to the high cost of education, reflecting a power dynamic where financial contributions are perceived by some parents as a basis for asserting influence and making demands on the teachers.

Additionally, Participant 6 states that parents' affluent backgrounds may contribute to a perceived sense of superiority, leading to a lack of respect towards teachers and subsequent bullying and harassing behaviours. The participant states, *"(parents) overdo it and they obviously come from affluent backgrounds. They (are)… lawyers, doctors, etcetera, so they got good jobs so…I feel they feel they (are) better than us educators and therefore, they have less respect for us, so they come and they just have their way and bully us".* Participant 2 also attributed TTBH to such

parents feeling entitled and confident, with a belief that they have the power to challenge and influence the educational system.

Lastly, Participant 7 illustrated how parents connected to the schools management structures can attempt to exert power and influence and control over the teacher, even resorting to subtle forms of bullying and harassment through their involvement in the SGB. Participant 7 noted that "*a member of our governing body will come and say, 'hey, how are you man?... This child, you know, she was so stressed about this project and I hope she gets a good mark'.* Thus, Participant 7 felt that contained within the parent's comment is the message that the parent is part of the power structures and the teacher needs to ensure that the child does well.

To conclude, TTBH is defined as a communication process involving a real or perceived power imbalance, where a teacher is subjected, by one or more parents, to interactions perceived as insulting, upsetting, or intimidating (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012 as cited in Billett et al., 2019). These narratives further contribute to this understanding by shedding light on the perceived power dynamics within incidents of parent-enacted TTBH.

### 4.3.5 Sub-theme: Lack of Safety Climate or Lack of Supportive Management

The safety climate within a school, encompassing safety policies, procedures, and practices, is a significant predictor of TTBH (Byers, 2012). Participants seeking support from school management and colleagues aligns with research suggesting that a positive school climate, with supportive management and rule enforcement, reduces the likelihood of teachers becoming victims of TTBH (Billett et al., 2020). In the context of weak unsupportive management, the absence of a positive safety climate may contribute to elevated risk of parent-enacted TTBH.

When reflecting on her TTBH incidents, Participant 8 describes the weakness in school management, where incidents of parental aggression were not adequately addressed, stating, *"the principal doesn't care what is happening, (he) doesn't even know what is happening in the school as long as he's in the office and getting his salary (at the) end of the month, that's all".* Additionally, the participant states that the principal often abuses his power in order to protect his bullying friends. As previously mentioned, in sub-theme 4.2.2 *"Targeting the Teacher with Verbal or Physical Intimidation",* when the participant went to report an incident of TTBH in which a parent entered her classroom and verbally intimidated a child, she was informed that the

parent involved was a friend of the principal. Lastly, Participant 8 mentions that parents are free to enter the school premises without proper authorization, stating that, *"(the security lets parents enter) the schoolyard. So you'll find a parent standing in front of your door and we are not even aware that the parent is there"*.

This narrative aligns with existing literature on the relationship between poor work environments and higher levels of TTBH (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013; Finchilescu et al., 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2021). Studies indicate that destructive leadership styles, such as passive or laissez-faire leadership, serve as catalysts for bullying and harassing behaviours. In such cases, management may avoid addressing perpetrators or passively tolerate TTBH, thereby allowing the development and perpetuation of TTBH dynamics (Fahie, 2014). Additionally, schools neglecting safety priorities tend to foster negative safety climate perceptions among teachers, fostering the relationship between stress and bullying (Byers, 2012).

### 4.3.6 Conclusion of Theme

To conclude, a number of sub-themes identified specific factors that could create an environment in which parent-TTBH is fostered. These include the impact of parents' unmet high expectations, the influence of power dynamics, the challenges posed by ill-disciplined or lying children, dissatisfaction with teachers' disciplinary methods, and the lack of a positive safety climate and unsupportive management. Understanding these elements is crucial for developing comprehensive strategies to address and prevent parent-enacted TTBH. The following section, through a number of sub-themes, delves into the detrimental effects that parent-enacted TTBH can have on teachers' physical and psychological well-being.

## 4.4 Theme 3: Impact of TTBH on Physical and Psychological Well-Being (In Relation to Research Question (2.))

The presence of parent-enacted TTBH has emerged as a critical concern, significantly impacting teachers both emotionally and physically. Theme 3 delves into the consequences experienced by teachers as they navigate instances of parent-enacted TTBH. This theme is divided into a number of sub-themes based on the cluster of experiences reported by teachers.

### 4.4.1 Sub-theme: Fearfulness/Anxiety

The consequences of TTBH are widespread, affecting teachers both psychologically and physiologically. At an individual level, TTBH may result in anxiety, fearfulness, and anticipation of forthcoming events, more specifically, anticipatory anxiety (Gul et al., 2022). Anticipatory anxiety aligns with the concept of uncertainty, which is characterized by subjective distress and a heightened anxiety response (Bennett et al., 2018). Uncertainty refers to the inability to determine the outcome of a situation or anticipate the valence, intensity, likelihood, or nature of future stimuli (Bennett et al., 2018). In facing uncertain potential threats, individuals often engage in cognitive and physiological adjustments, such as planning a means of response or activating the fight-or-flight response (Bennett et al., 2018). This anticipatory process can be beneficial, particularly when the perceived threat is imminent and likely to occur (Bennett et al., 2018). However, excessive anticipatory anxiety may lead to heightened distress and interfere with daily functioning (Bennett et al., 2018).

Participant 3 talks about anticipating negative interactions with parents and the emotional burden of handling such situations: *"Sunday nights, in particular, are bad, because I'm preempting the week that's coming and the negativity".* Participant 3 also reveals an anticipatory anxiety about potential parental dissatisfaction and the meticulous scrutiny of every detail: *"for me it is on the days that we have to publish teams. You're already anticipating which parent is not going be happy and the comeback. Like often, I'll answer emails in my head because I know before they've even written to me, I know who's gonna write to me, I know what they're upset about".*

Participant 3 describes TTBH incidents as *"an invisible animal, it's everything you can't see, it's what brings on the anxiety".* Lastly, Participant 8 expressed a deep sense of fear and anxiety, indicating the emotional distress caused by the perceived threat of physical harm, stating that, *"I was scared when I was going to work that maybe they arrange some gangsters because (our area) is full of gangsters. Maybe in the morning when I go to school I'll find them waiting for me somewhere or after school they will attack me. I was so vigilant."* Participant 8 also described a notable impact on their ability to carry out her teaching responsibilities due to TTBH: "*I was even scared to say anything to, to the children, to teach … even to discipline a child. If a child is not, is doing something wrong to reprimand that child, I was scared that they are collecting evidence against me. So I cannot do my work properly because I'm watching my back, who's*

*watching, who's doing what. Because I was not concentrating a lot… sometimes I will even forget what I'm teaching about, so my mind was all over… I was not really productive the way I should be".*

### 4.4.2 Sub-theme: Impact on Personal/Family life

TTBH can have a significant impact on teachers' personal lives, extending to their relationships outside of the workplace. This may manifest in teachers experiencing heightened frustration, which they may inadvertently direct towards their family members and spouses, potentially causing strain and difficulties within their personal relationships (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). This to some extent aligns with the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis whereby the teacher takes out their workplace angst caused by parent-enacted TTBH on family members. While it may not necessarily always manifest in actual forms of aggression, there is a displacement of their frustration onto family members which manifests in absence and disengagement from family members.

Participant 1 described the impact of TTBH on relationships, particularly with his spouse and children, and mentioned the emotional toll of the job affecting his personal life, stating, *"I missed her birthday, my wife's birthday. I just forgot … so there is an impact with my relationship with my spouse. With my kids, it's affecting me in the sense of daddy has always been the one that you call when you need something. In this particular case, they now call mummy because daddy is not responding. My son underwent an operational reconstruction of his knee. It was about three weeks ago. I wasn't there, the day of the operation. I went the next day because the day when he had to be operated on, I had to meeting with the department officials."*

Similarly, Participant 3, stated that, *"I don't communicate well when I'm under pressure, you know, I tried to solve everything myself and then as a result, I don't communicate well with her (my wife) or then my daughters, will get the snap. So because I'm focusing elsewhere, everything that's important and close to me ends up bearing the brunt".*

Lastly, Participant 5 states that she became reluctant to engage in conversation with her partner, stating that, *"I was feeling down and I wasn't even interested in anybody".* These narratives capture the intricate interplay between teaching demands and personal life, highlighting the

emotional impact of parent-enacted TTBH on relationships with family members, especially spouses and children.

### 4.4.3 Sub-theme: Avoidance/Withdrawal/Disengagement

Olafsson and Johannsdottir (2004 as cited in Bernstein & Trimm, 2016) described four types of coping strategies, namely, avoidance and doing nothing, assertiveness, and seeking help. Two of these, that is avoidance and doing nothing, are passive and Bernstein and Trimm (2016) note that these two types of coping strategies lead to more negative health outcomes for bullied individuals as opposed to those who use active strategies (i.e. seeking help or assertiveness). Avoidance, also known as escape behaviour, involves taking passive actions to evade or distance oneself from a problem or stressor (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Avoidance can be employed to manage social or interpersonal stress, and it may be indicative of the participant's desire to minimize negative interactions or perceived conflicts.

While avoidance can provide temporary relief, it may also contribute to feelings of isolation and impact the overall quality of relationships, both personal and professional (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Participant 6 mentions that *"some (parents) ignore me and some will just greet and like walk away. Yeah, but obviously it is the same with me, if I see them standing there and it's group of parents, if we had a social at school. I would not go and join that conversation; I would rather stay away".*

For Participant 7 there was avoidance of both the parent in the community and avoidance engaging with the child in the school, as the participant feared repercussions from the child's family: "t*he mom works as a cashier… So you know, every time I (go to the store), it was like even if I had to go to her, if... the light went on or the buzzer went on for me to go to her till I would send the person behind me to go because I just didn't wanna deal with (her)".* With the learner, the participant stated that, *"even if he's fighting with another child while I'm on duty, I'm gonna stay the hell away from him. I'd rather, I would take the other child and tell the child that this is wrong, but I don't want any sort of interaction because these people are psycho".*

Participant 6 also experienced a change in her approach, refraining from addressing issues related to her school's dress code due to the past incident. This change can also be seen as a form

of avoidance and disengagement where the teacher distances herself from dealing with certain issues, possibly due to negative experiences or fear of repercussions (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

Lastly, Participant 8 found herself disengaged at work stating that "*I (could not) do my work properly because I'm watching my back, who's watching, who's doing what. Because I was not concentrating a lot… sometimes I will even forget what I'm teaching about, so my mind was all over… I was not really productive the way I should be".*

### 4.4.4 Sub-theme: Mistrust and a Climate of Fear

Institutional practices, organisational state of affairs, and environmental circumstances can foster interpersonal conflict leading to WPB (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018). For instance, lack of trust informs and enables bullying and harassing behaviours (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018).
Although Participant 8 continued to treat the learner fairly, the damage caused by the previously mentioned physical harm accusation led to a breakdown in trust. The learner became scared of Participant 8 and would bow her head when she saw the participant, suggesting a change in behaviour indicative of fear or discomfort.

Participant 6 discussed the difficulty of navigating what she says during class because anything relayed to learners might be carried home, and there was a concern about how parents might interpret or react to it: *"you're thinking will the parent turn it around or turn it on you or use it against you? So you have to be careful now. How you joke, what you say, who's gonna take it home. Is this parent gonna come for you and say, 'well, you're not supposed to speak like this or say that in the class, etcetera'"*. This heightened apprehension and awareness about potential misinterpretation may hinder open communication, creating a lack of transparency in teacher-learner-parent interactions.

### 4.4.5 Sub-theme: Reputational Damage

As previously stated, the creation of Facebook posts, WhatsApp groups and online community forum discussions indicate a concerted effort by parents to damage teachers' professional image- refer to sub-theme 4.2.3 *"Cyberbullying: Targeting the Teacher Through Attacks on Social Media".*

Participant 7's TTBH incident impacted her professional life by potentially damaging her reputation: *"you know there could be parents who are like friends,(of the parent you had an*

*altercation with) they will come and park outside the school gates and wait for their kids and they all talk and you know their child has not passed through (your) hands, but because they have this conclusion, they add stigma to the teacher and that's not on, because they have … this mindset. They have already labeled (me as) this educator, and even … if it's few years down the line and you teach their child, then you must know they already know that, ok, this teacher is a bad teacher, you know".*

Additionally, Participant 7, states that, "*for me what was worse was seeing it on social media because you're going to think, 'oh no, these people are now going to believe it and they don't know me' and then you think, 'oh my God, you don't know who's going to think what of you'".* In essence, these incidents has cast a shadow over Participant 7's professional and personal life, fostering a sense of isolation and distrust.

### 4.4.6 Sub-theme: Physical Impact

In this sub-theme, teachers recounted instances of headaches, sleeplessness, stomach disorders, blood pressure problems and musculoskeletal problems. This was aligned to literature which noted that WPB and TTBH manifests in symptoms of headaches, musculoskeletal problems, fatigue, disturbed sleeping patterns, digestive problems, and high blood pressure (e.g. Boudrias et al., 2021; Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Gul et al., 2022; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Billett et al., 2020).

Participants 1, 3, and 7 mentioned disrupted sleep patterns, which is a common manifestation of the psychological distress caused by TTBH (e.g. Gul et al., 2022; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Billett et al., 2020). Participant 1 stated, *"I go to bed at about eleven thirty at night but subsequently at about 3:30 I'm up"*. Participant 3 stated, *"when the pressure is on, sleep at times becomes an issue just purely because you've got so much on your mind".* Lastly, Participant 7's TTBH incident, exacerbated by social media, "*caused a lot of stress and sleepless nights".*

Participant 4's revelation about seeking medical attention for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) underscores the physiological consequences of stress, mirroring findings in the literature where TTBH is linked to various physical health problems, including digestive issues (e.g. Gul et al., 2022; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Billett et al., 2020). In addition,

Participant 8 states, *"my blood pressure was high and I'm also diabetic, so everything was out of control. Yeah, I was struggling a lot."*

Lastly, Participant 7 shares the emotional repercussions of TTBH, describing the stress and anxiety that, in turn, led to headaches and neck spasms: *"the stress and the anxiety of what happened, it causes, well for me, it's not back pain, but like a headache and a neck spasm. Yeah, like your whole neck, your shoulders go into spasm. It's almost as if you feel like you're not concentrating".*

### 4.4.7 Sub-Theme: Changes in Overall Job Satisfaction and Motivation, and Desire to Leave the Profession

This sub-theme explores how parent-enacted bullying and harassment influenced teachers' commitment to their profession. Participants' reflections on contemplating leaving the profession and moments of self-doubt align with the literature's portrayal of reduced job satisfaction and increased turnover resulting from TTBH (Boudrias et al., 2021).

Participant 4 discussed the emotional toll of parent-enacted TTBH, including self-doubt and questioning her choice of profession: "*you go into the resentment of... why am I even doing this job when, you know, I could be making a difference in a lower income school to children that are actually grateful for what you are doing; and you know I actually have a job offer at the moment to work for a nonprofit organisation setting up curriculums".*

Echoing these sentiments, Participant 5 expressed demoralization and stress affecting motivation to go to work, stating, *"I wasn't even coming as early as I used to. You know what, schools starts at half past but on my own, even at my former school, by 6:45, 6:50, I'm at school every day but for this week in particular, I was there around 7:25…And remember, I have to be in office, but I couldn't because I felt so stressed and I wasn't even like, feeling like going to work but because it's obligation, I was going".*

Participant 7 grappled with her child's innocent aspirations of becoming a teacher: *"my little one that's eight years old in Grade 2, she'll often say to me, 'you know, Mommy I want to be a teacher' and I will often say to her, 'but no, you shouldn't because it's not a rewarding profession', and obviously I can't say it to her in those words but I have to explain to her and I have to say to her, I said, 'you know, when Mommy has so many children in her class and they*

*make so much of noise and the whole day you have to tell them to keep quiet' and you know, so …even if it's the child's dream but now you're crashing that dream because of your experiences*". This narrative adds a real-world perspective to these findings. Participant 7's reluctance to encourage her child's dream highlights the enduring impact of parent-enacted TTBH on teachers' perceptions of their chosen profession.

Participant 6 described the emotional and mental draining nature of the job, with some days feeling like leaving the profession: *"it is physically and mentally draining. It's emotionally draining and there's some days when we experience some of these things, you know, you just feel like you don't wanna go on, you don't wanna teach, you just wanna get out of this profession, is it worth it? You know, you really feel like they can bring you down to your knees".* Participant 6's account illustrates the presence of burnout. The participant described the emotional and mental exhaustion inherent in her role, emphasizing the overwhelming nature of the profession and the struggle to meet the needs of learners. This aligns with the concept of emotional exhaustion, characterized by the gradual depletion of emotional resources over time, resulting in both physical and emotional fatigue (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Furthermore, the participant's reflection on questioning the worthiness of staying in the profession suggests reduced personal accomplishment, indicative of burnout when teachers feel their contributions are no longer meaningful to learners' development (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

These narratives highlight the persistent nature of parent-enacted TTBH, contributing to teachers losing their enthusiasm for teaching, struggling to reignite their passion, and feeling a pervasive sense of demotivation (Billett et al., 2020). Additionally, the ongoing challenges posed by parent-enacted TTBH lead some teachers to contemplate leaving the profession or considering a career change, highlighting the profound impact of such incidents on individuals' career trajectories (Billett et al., 2020).

### 4.4.8 Sub-Theme: Resilience and Unwavering Commitment in the Face of Challenges

However, despite facing significant challenges, Participant 5 emphatically asserted her unwavering commitment to the teaching profession, stating, *"I've never felt like leaving teaching as a profession, but I do feel like if I had powers I could have imposed some measures just to protect myself".*

Similarly, Participant 6 shed light on the resilience and unwavering commitment of teachers to their profession: *"in that moment I feel like why did I choose teaching? I just wanna leave and I'm gonna do something else, I've had enough, you know, nobody appreciates you, what you do is not appreciated by anyone. We're not even looked at as professionals. The parents undermine us, but then the next day or () like two days later I'm so over it and I love my job and I wouldn't trade it for the world."*

Thus, while teachers who are targets of bullying and harassment may experience a number of negative work indicators such as loss of motivation, a decline in the quality of their work, low levels of motivation, difficulties concentrating, and a sense of detachment from their profession (Jacobs & De Wet, 2018; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Others still express a strong commitment to the vocation, as distinguished from their current feelings about their work situation.

### 4.4.9 Conclusion of Theme

Parent-enacted TTBH not only impacts individual teachers but also has broader implications for the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Bullied teachers may struggle to keep up with their workload, face challenges in teaching planned lessons, or even stop teaching altogether, negatively affecting students' right to a quality education (Billett et al., 2020). Additionally, absenteeism may rise as teachers take sick or unpaid leave or utilize holiday time to avoid ongoing bullying and harassment. The dissatisfaction of teachers can further escalate as the school fails to acknowledge or address the issue of toxic team behaviours (Billett et al., 2020). Thus, schools themselves become victims of TTBH, ultimately impeding the right to quality education for learners.

## 4.5 Theme 4: Coping with TTBH (In Relation to Research Question (3.))

TTBH has emerged as a pervasive issue within the educational environment, posing significant challenges to teachers well-being and job satisfaction (Byers, 2012; Boudrias et al., 2021). As teachers grapple with the emotional and psychological toll of TTBH incidents, their ability to navigate these consequences becomes paramount. This theme delves into the coping strategies employed by teachers to withstand the impact of bullying and harassment, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of their responses. This theme is sub-divided into sub-themes based on the categories of coping strategies that teachers reported on in their interviews.

### 4.5.1 Sub-Theme: Active Coping Strategies

Prayer/religion and personal hobbies can be categorized as active coping strategies. Active coping strategies aim to address the root causes of stress, seek support, or take affirmative action to mitigate the impact of challenging experiences (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018). In the context of TTBH, engaging in religious practices like prayer or turning to personal hobbies represents a proactive approach to managing the emotional and psychological impact of bullying and harassment.

Participant 1 expressed that music is his form of therapy, *"my hobby is I collect music, all genres. Genres across, from jazz, R&B, rock, soft rock, everything. I collect music. I'm proud of that. I've got about 500,000 albums".* Hobbies, such as listening to and collecting music, play an important role in maintaining good mental health. Engaging in hobbies is believed to alleviate the adverse impacts of stressful experiences, such as parent-enacted TTBH, on both physical and psychological well-being (Iwasaki et al., 2005; Lawton et al., 2002 as cited in Takiguchi et al., 2023). Research indicates that participating in hobbies can have an immediate positive impact on subjective well-being by eliciting positive emotions. This, in turn, leads to the development of effective stress-coping strategies in the long term (Iwasaki, 2006 as cited in Takiguchi et al., 2023).

Participant 4, who is a Christian, finds solace in prayer and attributes her mindfulness and stress management to her faith, *"so I'm a Christian…, I give everything to God. That's my mindfulness zone, and that's how I cope, and I do believe that through, you know, like people that aren't Christian will call it their mindfulness, they'll call it their space, their quiet space, whatever it is … and I do think that because I do have my own techniques, if I can put it that way, that I've developed over the years and that I'm practicing that's why my stress is not gotten to a debilitating physical stage yet".* Religious coping refers to the degree to which individuals employ their religious beliefs and experiences as a means of dealing with stress, seeking strength and comfort, or enriching their well-being through a connection to the transcendent (Whitehead & Bergeman, 2020). In this context, individuals draw on the resources provided by their belief system to navigate life's challenges. This includes establishing a sense of meaning and purpose, fostering hope and optimism, improving perceptions of control, and accessing social and emotional support through religious networks (Whitehead & Bergeman, 2020). Within the

framework of bullying and coping, faith may assist believers in adjusting their assessment or appraisal of a situation, allowing them to perceive it as an opportunity or challenge rather than a threat (Whitehead & Bergeman, 2020). Secondly, faith may serve as coping mechanisms that believers turn to when they perceive a situation as stressful (Whitehead & Bergeman, 2020).

Lastly, Participant 6 found stress-relief in humorous sites on the internet such as TikTok, stating, "*I think sitting on my phone for a few minutes, all by myself and no one around me. I find TikTok helps. I find a lot of that, the humorous ones on TikTok are quite nice, you know, to have a good laugh".* In the face of stressful events or situations, humor serves as a valuable coping mechanism, helping to alleviate stress and foster positive emotions (Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023). Moreover, humor proves effective in alleviating stress, psychological distress, depression, and anxiety, while increasing life satisfaction, social relationships, and optimism (Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023). This coping strategy is suggested to be particularly effective in dealing with stressors that are perceived as low in controllability or uncontrollable, such as parent-enacted TTBH (Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023).

Music collection, humor, and prayer, as highlighted by these participants, serve as powerful tools for emotional regulation and stress management, underscoring the deeply personal and individualized nature of coping strategies. This resonates with the existing literature, which recognizes the importance of diverse coping mechanisms tailored to individuals' preferences and needs (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016; Van den Brande et al., 2018).

### 4.5.2 Sub-Theme: Social Support

In the face of parent-enacted TTBH, the importance of social support from colleagues, friends, and family members cannot be overstated. Seeking assistance from family members, spouses, friends, and colleagues assists teachers in managing challenging experiences at work and mitigating the adverse effects of TTBH on their well-being (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). For bullied teachers, social support provides a sense of personal control and acceptance of their life experiences. Sharing their challenges with others not only offers emotional support but also practical benefits by offering solutions to issues and providing an outlet for emotional expression (Finchilescu et al., 2019).

Participants 3, 4, and 6 mention seeking support from external sources such as close family members, friends, and colleagues. Participant 3 stated, *"my wife, particularly being in the same*

*industry, she offers me a huge amount of support but again at times I don't feel I used it effectively enough. I'll become to in my own head to utilize it, but she's a huge support structure for me. I have got very supportive colleagues that I can chat to".*

Despite the theme of unsupportive weak management and a lack of a safety climate (refer to sub-theme 4.3.5 *"Lack of Safety Climate or Lack of Supportive Management*) being identified as factors that worsen parent-enacted TTBH, many teachers did note that they had very good management support structures in their schools which enabled them to cope better with the TTBH they experienced. Participant 3 emphasized the support of his headmaster, stating, *"I'll meet with him weekly just to touch base and yeah, he gives me good advice and for the most part, sometimes I feel, you know, he may have gone against what I would initially have thought. I'm sure he does it for the right reasons but he's a huge mentor in my life".* Echoing these sentiments is Participant 4 who values the support and friendship in the staff room, using humor as a coping mechanism.

Professionally, Participant 6 mentions venting and seeking advice from teacher friends as a way to process TTBH incidents, stating that, *"with my teacher friends they give me their advice, they say 'no, don't do this' or 'you shouldn't have done that' or 'no, the parent is being ridiculous kind of thing', that helps from a professional point of view".* On the personal front, the participant turns to her family for emotional support, stating that, *"obviously with your family, you're free to say, you know, 'they're so stupid' and 'how can they behave like that?' like that kind of stuff. So I find that helps, ranting and raving to them helps me deal with it".*

The participant's reliance on family, spouses, friends, and colleagues resonates with studies highlighting how social support aids in managing stress and uncertainty (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). This support functions by helping teachers develop effective coping mechanisms within the workplace, offering them new insights, and bolstering their overall well-being and self-identity (Byers, 2012). Teachers who experience high levels of social support are likely to feel less susceptible to the negative impact of bullying and harassing behaviours, as a robust support system diminishes the psychological and emotional toll of TTBH (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Moreover, social support provides practical advice and assistance, aiding teachers in putting an end to bullying and harassment, and alleviating the uncertainty and stress associated with victimization (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). In essence, social support acts as a buffer against the

adverse effects of stress by assisting teachers in appraising and coping with stressors, resulting in less intense stress responses (Byers, 2012).

### 4.5.3 Sub-Theme: Professional Support

Professional support emerged as a critical factor influencing teachers' ability to cope with parent-enacted TTBH. Understanding the dynamics of professional support is crucial for designing interventions that not only address the immediate consequences of parent-enacted TTBH but also foster a supportive organisational culture.

Participants 1, 4, 5, and 8 highlight the importance of professional support structures, including, access to mental health care and wellness programs. Participant 1 stated, *"It's difficult to cope, you know, for (the) last two weeks, I was not at school. The doctor booked me off… He said () he just wants me to rest and he booked me off for two weeks".* Similarly, Participant 4 expressed that many colleagues within her professional circle seek the assistance of psychologists, however, Participant 4 refrains from doing so, citing financial constraints as a limiting factor, *"a lot of my colleagues do see… psychologists and, I don't because I can't afford to".* This insight sheds light on the need to establish support systems within the school to assist teachers who may be dealing with the emotional impact of parent-enacted TTBH incidents.

Participant 5 highlighted the existence of a wellness program within the school which served as a valuable resource for teachers seeking support, irrespective of whether challenges arise from their professional or personal lives: *"there's a Wellness program. You can go there, they can help you whether it's problems emanating from your work or from your home because remember, even if they're emanating from my home, they will affect me at work".*

However, Participant 8, mentioned that the teacher wellness committee, despite its existence, was not functional and did not provide the support she needed during her TTBH incident, stating that, "w*e do have a Teacher Wellness committee, but it's not so functional, it's there, but it's not functional. I remember when I was going through (my) situation, I was not helped by any the teacher or the committee didn't even ask me' how am I doing?' 'how am I feeling'"*. Additionally, she noted that her colleagues and principal did not want to be involved in her disciplinary hearing. This experience adds a nuanced perspective to the overall theme of professional support. While some participants, as indicated in previous responses, found support from colleagues, mentors, or external resources like psychologists, Participant 8's experience underscores that not

all teachers may receive adequate support from these formal structures within the school environment and highlights the importance of considering individual differences and the potential gaps in the support systems provided by schools.

As mentioned in sub-theme 4.3.5 "*Lack of Safety Climate or Lack of Supportive Management"*, a lack of safety climate may create an environment in which TTBH can flourish. Safety climate referred to in the literature as Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is defined as the organisational policies, practices, and procedures established to safeguard the psychological health and safety of workers (Dollard and Bakker, 2010, p.580 as cited in Law et al., 2011). PSC reflects the commitment of management to the psychological well-being of workers and emphasizes the priority given to safeguarding psychological health over job demands (Dollard and Bakker, 2010 as cited in Law et al., 2011). Similar to organisational climate, PSC is considered a property of the organisation, shaped by the aggregated perceptions of individuals within that organisation regarding management's dedication to protecting their psychological health and safety (Law et al., 2011). Consequently, the visibility of PSC to individuals can be enhanced through well-developed communication and active involvement of all organisational layers in preventing work-related stress (Dollard and Bakker, 2010 as cited in Law et al., 2011).

The participants' experiences highlight the importance of organisational commitment to creating a safe physical work environment, which cannot easily be invaded by bullying parents, and providing actual support resources to teachers so as to enhance their psychological well-being. Additionally, active involvement of all organisational layers in addressing teachers' well-being are essential for fostering a positive psychosocial safety climate within the school.

### 4.5.4 Conclusion of Theme

The coping strategies observed among teachers, including emotional coping mechanisms, reliance on both internal and external resources, and seeking professional support, align with established theories on social support, PSC, and organisational interventions (e.g. Finchilescu et al., 2019; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Dollard and Bakker, 2010 as cited in Law et al., 2011; Barnes et al., 2011; Billett et al., 2020). As schools grapple with the issue of parent-enacted TTBH, acknowledging and addressing the individualized needs of teachers becomes paramount for fostering a resilient and supportive work environment.

## 4.6 Theme 5: Job Demands and Job Resources (In Relation to Research Question (4.))

This research was in essence guided by the JD-R Model where it was proposed that a lack of job resources and high job demands within schools could expose teachers to greater levels of TTBH from parents. It was also noted (refer to sub-theme 4.3.1 "*Parent's Unmet High Expectations of Their Child(ren)"*) that parents too, experience their own set of demands as they grapple with the limited resources and opportunities that their children may be faced with post-schooling, and this in turn, leads to them pressuring teachers to ensure that their children 'succeed'. In the following section, the job demands and job resources and their interplay in parent-enacted TTBH are examined. This examination takes places by making important distinctions between job demands and job resources as they exist in lower quintile, higher quintile, and private schools.

### 4.6.1 Sub-Theme: Job Demands in Lower Quintile Schools

Within schools in impoverished environments job demands and job resources are often inexorably intertwined. Non-fee paying/Government funded schools often grapple with inadequate financial support, limited basic learning materials, and overcrowded classrooms, contributing to an environment where educational outcomes are compromised and the overall quality of the teaching and learning experience is significantly impacted (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019).

Participant 8 highlighted numerous job demands associated with teaching in a lower quintile school, emphasizing overcrowded classrooms, excessive paperwork and a lack of discipline among learners, as well as physical challenges associated with teaching in mobile classrooms, such as the absence of electricity.

Participant 1 and Participant 5, both school management members who teach minimally, experience different forms of parental bullying and harassment due to their distinct roles within the school hierarchy. Participant 5 highlighted an incident in which she had to manage parents' demands for school furniture amidst inadequate government funding, stating that, "*parents were swearing, (saying) that if by the end of the coming week (if) I (do) not supply learners with furniture they were going to close the gates (of the school)".* The parents, in their confrontations with Participant 5, were expressing frustration and, in a sense, holding the participant accountable for the DoE's shortcomings.

Participant 1 mentions that parents' unrealistic demands often lead to parent-enacted TTBH incidents. The participant states that he schedules parent meetings on Saturdays instead of the weekday *"so that nobody's got complaints because (if) we do it during the week, (they say) 'oh, we've got safety issues' and if they've got safety issues now the school has to pay for Uber or something to get you home and if you do it at 6:00 o'clock now, the school has to provide you with a meal".* These narratives collectively emphasize the multifaceted nature of challenges within the school hierarchy, where the participants navigate complex dynamics, financial constraints, and unrealistic expectations.

### 4.6.2 Sub-Theme: Job Resources in Lower Quintile Schools

As mentioned, the schooling environment is tied to the available job resources, influencing not only the academic achievements of learners but also shaping the experiences of teachers. These sentiments are echoed by Participant 8 who emphasized the scarcity of resources, particularly the sole reliance on textbooks as a resource: *"our main resource is the textbook that are not enough".* Participant 8 also mentioned the existence of a Teacher Wellness Committee but noted that it is not functioning optimally. Lastly, Participant 8 mentions the scarcity of resources for her class of over 40 learners, stating: *"we don't have enough textbooks and the little that you have that the children must share …they are torn"* and *"there are not enough chairs and tables. They have to share, the others will sit on the tables if there are no chairs, then others share the chairs. So we don't have enough furniture. Even if furniture is bought, so we are staying not far from a squatter, they come in and steal some chairs".* In response to the lack of resources, Participant 8 takes the initiative to address the gaps by personally investing her own money. Despite these challenges, the participant notes the presence of assistant teachers, who provide support in managing her workload, but this assistance is minor in the face of a crippling and major absence of basic teaching resources.

### 4.6.3 Sub-Theme: Job Demands in Higher Quintile Schools

Fee-paying schools are categorized into quintiles 4 and 5, situated in areas with comparatively higher socio-economic statuses. These schools typically receive less government assistance under the presumption that parents possess the financial means to cover school fees and, indeed, it does appear that such schools are more than well resourced; enabled by the fees that parents are paying (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019).

Nevertheless, despite these resources, Participant 6 describes a challenging scenario with the school's principal, stating the previous principal was ineffective in addressing parent-enacted TTBH incidents. Participant 6 felt that teachers were left to fend for themselves, with the principal disregarding their concerns: *"so as teachers, you know, at times we feel like we're left out, all on our own to just defend ourselves and come out of the situation".* Participant 6 also notes that one of her demands is to satisfy parents at all costs, stating that, "(*the) two principals that I've experienced recently, it's basically satisfy the parent, make them happy. So the parent can say what they want and (the principals will) pacify the parent … and then the teacher ends up being unhappy in the process".* Echoing these sentiments of frustration and disappointment is Participant 7, who states, *"what's upsetting is I understand from where management comes, I understand from where head of department comes (from), your deputy principal and the hierarchy of it. I understand where my principal comes from and they need to maintain some sort of peace, but it's not on when it's the expense of the educator".*

### 4.6.4 Sub-Theme: Job Resources in Higher Quintile Schools

Higher quintile schools also benefit from more substantial financial resources compared to lower quintiles. Participant 6 mentioned the availability of projectors, smart boards, and laptops that make teaching easier. Additionally, the school provides necessary supplies like stationery and printing. When it comes to support for teachers' well-being, the participant mentions the availability of counseling services if a teacher is stressed.

Higher quintile schools also offer their teachers better professional benefit opportunities, Participant 7 mentions that teachers at her school benefit from professional development opportunities that are funded by the school or DoE: *"the educators from my school are very lucky because all of these, whether it's paid workshop or whether it's funded by the department, we don't pay. So even if we have to pay, the school pays for it because it is benefiting the learners from the school".* Additionally, Participant 7 mentions access to sports training, stating that the school offers a comprehensive sports program and boasts an Olympic-size swimming pool.

The stark difference in the educational experiences of learners in the lower quintile schools and those attending higher quintile schools underscores the impact of socio-economic advantages on educational opportunities. The fee-paying schools, being in higher quintiles, enjoy substantial

advantages, creating a disparity in resources that directly affects the quality of education provided.

### 4.6.5 Sub-Theme: Job Demands in Private Schools

Participants working in private schools state that their job demands are quite distinct from those faced by teachers in lower quintile and higher quintile schools.

Participant 4 highlighted the unique challenges faced by teachers in private schools, emphasizing a shift from material to psychological demands: *"you know the lower resource schools have got their demands of, you know, not having the basic resources like a desk and a chair and water. We, our demands are far more can I say psychological demands where rather than material and, you know, we're dealing with parents that are saying to us we've got a R140 000 product that you are dealing with there, we expect to get a R140 000 worth…of goodness and help… to the point that the parents actually say to us well do something, parent her, how do I parent?… but yeah they literally expect us to parent them so that whole thing in loco parentis really".* Unlike the more tangible material demands encountered in government schools, private school teachers navigate complex expectations from parents who view their child's education as a substantial financial investment.

While it could be argued that in all schools, parents want the best educational outcomes for their children to ensure their children are afforded the best possible post-school opportunities, it is apparent that the focus of what is demanded across different types of schools does differ.

### 4.6.6 Sub-Theme: Job Resources in Private Schools

Private schools present an alternative that is often characterized by superior job resources and teaching conditions. However, as with higher quintile schools, parents are particularly demanding, expecting excellent outcomes for their children based on the fees they are paying. Teachers in these schools frequently express frustration about this expectation, highlighting the absence of job resources available to help them cope with the challenges posed by overbearing parents. Both Participants 3 and 4 mentioned the lack of concrete tools or toolkits for dealing with difficult parents.

However, counterbalancing this, within private schools teachers noted that they had excellent management support, emphasizing the backing received from the headmaster and the

management team. However, despite this support, Participant 3 expressed the difficulty of dealing with parents, stating, *"we've really got the support, it's just the parent is a hard animal to manage and just is unrelenting at times".*

Participant 3 also mentioned the school's supportive stance towards teachers' professional development- aligning with the JD-R model, where training and development opportunities are recognized as essential resources to mitigate the impact of job demands, such as parent-enacted TTBH (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Additionally, Participant 4 discussed the existence of staff wellness stations, stating, *"we have what's called Staff Wellness and our Staff Wellness stations, you know, it's meant to be a switch off session, it's once a week and for half an hour…So although that doesn't deal with the parent bullying, it frees up the time".* While not directly addressing parent-enacted TTBH, these initiatives contribute to staff well-being and may indirectly enhance their ability to handle stressful situations.

However, Participant 4 raised a crucial point about balancing the financial investment in education and the well-being of teachers, stating, *"I think that it's definitely uncharted waters because more and more what is happening is, you know, it's this balance between, OK, yeah, we do have R140 000 product that we (are) dealing with here. That's a lot of money versus we still have a human being that is getting absolutely annihilated".* Despite a lack of job resources to target parent-enacted TTBH, private schools leverage their existing resources to contribute to a more supportive teaching environment. The combination of supportive leadership, wellness programs, and a commitment to ongoing professional development collectively serves as a buffer, enabling teachers to navigate the consequences posed by TTBH.

### 4.6.7 Sub-Theme: In Loco Parentis

In South Africa teachers not only engage in academic tasks with learners but also bear the responsibility for their emotional, psychological, and physical well-being, a duty commonly referred to as 'in loco parentis' (Mampane, 2018; Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). In this role, teachers assume the responsibilities typically associated with a parent, adhering to legal obligations outlined in South African laws such as the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution, the Child Care Act, the Domestic Violence Act, and the South African Schools Act (Mampane, 2018). The concept of in loco parentis enhances the pedagogical relationship between teachers and learners (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). Additionally, parents delegate to teachers the authority

to enforce discipline and ensure the safety of learners under their care- these principles are universally regarded as fundamental to teachers' professionalism (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). However, the recent increase parent-enacted TTBH incidents may pose a significant challenge to the traditional understanding of loco parentis. As mentioned, many teachers noted that while they are expected to parent learners, this is all well and good, until such a time as the parent disagrees with the discipline applied (refer to sub-theme 4.3.2 *"Ill-disciplined or Lying Children"*).

Additionally, Participant 3 acknowledges that interactions with parents are a regular and expected part of her role, stating that, "*I do think there's part of my job is dealing with the unhappy parent".*

### 4.6.8 Conclusion of Theme

These narratives reveal that lower quintile schools often face the brunt of socio-economic disparities, leaving teachers to grapple with demanding teaching conditions. As previously stated, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified socio-economic disparities, particularly affecting the upward social mobility of low-income communities and has widened the gap between no-fee-paying schools and fee-paying schools, with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds consistently performing at lower levels (Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Reddy et al., 2020 as cited in Soudien et al., 2022). This educational and socio-economic divide has created an environment where parent-enacted TTBH can emerge. Frustrated parents, grappling with perceived disparities in the education system, may direct blame towards teachers as unintended victims. Systemic inequalities, compounded by disparities in educational opportunities, create a volatile setting where some parents resort to TTBH as a means to express dissatisfaction or exert pressure on teachers and the educational system. In higher quintile and private schools different job demands and job resources are apparent but overarching all is the demand on teachers, by parents, that their children 'succeed' so that they are able to benefit from scarce post-schooling opportunities. The pressure of in loco parentis also seems to prevail across all school types, however, the way in which it is responded to by parents when they are 'not happy with the parenting' differs somewhat across school types.

## 4.7 Theme Six: Current School Interventions

The research also aimed to serve as a starting point for research into the development of effective development of interventions to reduce parent-enacted TTBH. The discussion among participants revealed a notable absence of explicit policies addressing the issue of parent-enacted TTBH.

Participants expressed uncertainty and a lack of awareness regarding existing policies and procedures, pointing towards a potential gap in the school's framework for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for teachers. This lack of policy is evident in many organisations today, particularly in South Africa where nearly 31.1 percent of the workforce has been bullied in the past (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). Despite the widespread occurrence of bullying in South Africa, there is a notable absence of explicit legal protection for employees against bullying in the country's legislation (Calitz, 2022). The term "bullying" is not explicitly addressed in any statutory laws. Considering the constitutional rights of individuals who experience bullying, such as the right to equality (section 9), the right to dignity (section 10), freedom and security of the person (section 12), and the right to fair labor practices (section 23), it becomes crucial to establish legal protection for victims in South African law (Calitz, 2022).

Historically, victims of bullying faced challenges in seeking legal recourse, often relying on the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA)- victims have primarily relied on section 6(3) of the EEA, which states that "harassment of an employee is a form of unfair discrimination and is prohibited on anyone, or a combination of grounds of unfair discrimination listed in section 6(1)" (Calitz, 2022). However, victims' attempts were frequently unsuccessful as they struggled to demonstrate that the bullying occurred based on a prohibited ground (Calitz, 2022). In response to this gap in protection, the 'Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace' ("Harassment Code"), has been introduced (Calitz, 2022). The Harassment Code address the "prevention, elimination, and management of all forms of harassment in the workplace" by providing guidelines to employers, employees, and applicants for employment on preventing and eliminating harassment as a form of unfair discrimination (Calitz, 2022). The Harassment Code also addresses the development of human resources policies, procedures, and practices related to harassment and outlines appropriate measures to deal with and prevent its recurrence (Van Wyk & van Heerden, 2022).

The introduction of the Harassment Code underscores the need for employers to review their existing policies and procedures addressing workplace bullying and harassment to ensure compliance with the code's guidelines; with failure to meet these obligations may lead to liability for employers (Van Wyk & van Heerden, 2022).

Both Participants 2 and 5 acknowledged the school's existing bullying policy concerning children but expressed uncertainty about the existence of a specific policy protecting teachers from parent-enacted TTBH, which raises concerns about the well-being and support mechanisms available to teachers facing challenges in their interactions with parents.

Participant 4 confirmed that there was no documented policy in place but emphasized an informal understanding that is communicated verbally: *"there's nothing in black and white. So there's nothing written down but (it's) just the understanding and it's communicated to us often, you know that if…anyone is giving you a problem, you go to (the principal) ask (the principal) for help. Ask, you know, get help and don't try do things on your own".* However, as noted in previous themes, not all schools had a strong management structure, where such support was available.

Participant 5, highlighted an attempt to manage potential conflicts and disruptions in the school environment, stating, *"as a school we try to ensure that parents don't visit like anytime during the course of the day, we only allow them to visit outside notional time. And at the same time, we also try to ensure that when meetings are held, the teacher must hold the meeting in the presence of the HOD, so they minimize confrontation".* This proactive measure not only demonstrates a commitment to effective communication with parents but also underscores the importance of creating a conducive learning environment that prioritizes the needs of both teachers and learners. Again, the experiences noted by some teachers, as described above, starkly contrasts to other teachers' experiences (refer to sub-theme 4.2.2 *"Targeting the Teacher with Verbal or Physical Intimidation"* and sub-theme 4.3.5 *"Lack of Safety Climate or Lack of Supportive Management"*) where parents were free to invade school property at any time and management did not limit such actions.

### 4.7.1 Conclusion of Theme

Overall, these narratives reveal that there is a lack of formal policies and procedures regarding parent-enacted TTBH. The informal communication mentioned by some participants indicates a

reliance on verbal guidance rather than a structured and documented approach, which raises concerns about the effectiveness of the current support system and calls for a more explicit and comprehensive policy framework to address parent-enacted TTBH. In the forthcoming theme, participants offer their perspectives and suggestions for school interventions.

## 4.8 Theme Seven: Teachers' Perspectives on School Interventions (In Relation to Research Question (6.))

Teachers bring a unique perspective that goes beyond theoretical frameworks. Their hands-on experience positions them as key stakeholders in the ongoing dialogue surrounding interventions, shedding light on the nuanced strategies that contribute to successful parent-enacted TTBH interventions.

### 4.8.1 Sub-Theme: Suggestions for Effective Interventions

Participants 4, 5, and 6 call for more structured processes to address TTBH incidents. For instance, Participant 4 highlighted the need for a platform for parents to voice their opinions, problems, or questions. Additionally, the participant mentioned that her school already has a system in place for communication between parents and school management but highlighted the need for a more inclusive communication structure where parents also have the chance to engage with the teachers directly, stating, *"(I would) give the parents a platform to…voice their feelings. And our school does allow it, we have (special meetings where) the parents get to come in and speak to… speak to management. They don't get to speak to (what) we call 'the people in the trenches' that (is) people working in the classrooms"*.

Participant 5 advocated for reporting problems to the principal, preventing physical altercations, and implementing consequences for parents who engage in such behaviour: *"if parents are having problems with the educators, they should report to the principal and when issues are being dealt with it should be in a formal setting whereby parents would be prevented from …manhandling the educators and in such incident where parents …(do) manhandle educators, there should be something done, a case opened and parents being punished because I think that is total disrespect"*.

Echoing these sentiments, Participant 6 advocated for a step-by-step process, starting with direct communication between the teacher and the parent. If a resolution is not achieved at this level,

Participant 6 recommended escalating the matter through the line of management, stating that, *"I think that they should be like a procedure. Obviously, if you have a problem, you contact the teacher first, inquiring about it…If you get no satisfaction, then you follow the line of management; then you go to HOD and then you go to principal".*

Participant 6 also emphasized the importance of the principal being informed about incidents from the very beginning, rather than only becoming aware when situations escalate. By advocating for the principal's immediate awareness, Participant 6 suggests a strategy to identify patterns of problematic behaviour, especially when parents consistently exhibit confrontational behaviour towards teachers, stating, *"sometimes principals don't know what goes on, (only) when it gets like extremely bad then the principal is made aware of it. So I think like the principal needs to be aware from the first step going forward. So if you find like a pattern and the parents keep on popping up with this kind of, you know, always there in your face bullying this teacher, then clearly you can see (a pattern)".* This approach is seen as a means to mitigate the challenges faced by teachers who often feel unsupported and constrained in their ability to address such issues directly with parents.

Thus, these narratives highlight the importance of collaborative and structured strategies to address the complex dynamics surrounding teacher-parent interactions and TTBH incidents in schools. In addition, most crucially, these narratives and the suggestions contained therein, indicate that the school's management need to be fully involved and 'hands on'; adopting a proactive and supportive management style, creating an environment that is psychosocially safe. By adopting a constructive leadership style focused on recognizing and encouraging employees, fostering growth and development, and supporting organisational needs, school management may act as role models for appropriate behaviour by managing conflicts effectively and taking swift action against parent-enacted TTBH incidents, sending a clear message that such behaviour is unacceptable (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Constructive leaders also cultivate a positive culture by creating trust, encouraging open communication, and providing support to their employees (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). On the other hand, destructive leadership styles, characterized by passiveness and misuse of power, act as catalysts for bullying behaviours (Fahie, 2014). Leaders with such styles may avoid confronting perpetrators, tacitly approving bullying, and contributing to WPB through the abuse of power (Fahie, 2014). Ultimately,

constructive leaders plays a crucial role in shaping workplace cultures and influencing the prevalence of bullying behaviours.

### 4.8.2 Sub-Theme: Desired Changes in Policies and Procedures

Teachers' perspectives on desired changes in policies and procedures serve as a starting point for refining interventions, highlighting areas where policy and procedure adjustments could foster more conducive learning environments.

Participant 5 expressed frustration and concern about the perceived imbalance in the protection and rights afforded to teachers compared to parents. The participant emphasized that parents have the right to escalate concerns directly to the DoE, allowing them to report teachers, and the department would respond. However, the participant raises a critical question, stating, *"what does the department do if the educator reports the parent? That is where the question (stands) now, because I am an educator who feels unprotected and I'm expected to perform. So if the government can do so much (to) protect the parent, what are they doing about the educators?".* This, according to Participant 5, is where the system seems to lack clarity and protection for teachers.

Participant 5 also pleads for acknowledgment of teachers' rights as human beings highlighting the need for a comprehensive legal framework that safeguards the well-being and rights of teachers. In essence, the participant advocated for creating a balanced and just educational environment, where the protection of both parents and teachers is prioritized to foster a more harmonious and effective educational system. Echoing this sentiment was Participant 7 who stated that, *"by every means the principal owes it to you and the department owes it to you to protect you against any form of bullying and I think no sort of bullying is too small or irrelevant to talk about".*

Participant 7 also called for a school-specific 'constitution' to outline acceptable behaviour and reinforce the importance of prioritizing teachers' well-being, stating that, *"schools should have their own constitution of laws to say that 'this is allowed' and 'this is not allowed' and parents need to be able to you know, they must know that this is not (acceptable). We won't accept this because our teachers come first."*

Lastly, Participant 8 advocated for introduction of a policy requiring appointments and initial meetings with the principal aimed at creating a controlled environment for addressing concerns, reducing the potential for confrontations: *"parents are not allowed to just come in and out of the school yard. If there is a problem they must phone the school and make (an) appointment, and when they come see they must see the principal first then after that the teacher involved must be called"*

### 4.8.3 Conclusion of Theme

These narratives highlight the importance of collaborative and structured strategies to address the complex dynamics surrounding teacher-parent interactions and TTBH incidents. Ultimately, these perspectives serve as a starting point for refining educational interventions, ensuring a more holistic and sustainable approach to creating conducive learning environments.

# Chapter Five: Contributions, Implications, Recommendations and Limitations

## 5.1 Introduction

This research aimed to address the limited understanding of parent-enacted TTBH in South African schools. Using the JD-R model as a guiding framework, the research attempted to offer a detailed examination of the specific nature of parent-enacted bullying and harassment experienced by teachers, particularly in an environment characterized by high job demands and inadequate job resources.

Based on the above study and its findings, several contributions to this area of research were made. Which, in turn, suggested several possible implications, which are discussed below. Prior to this, the contributions of the study are discussed. However, it is important to note that the study was not without limitations. These limitations, are discussed along with recommendations for future research.

## 5.2 Contributions

As mentioned in the literature review the JD-R model is a framework for occupational stress that explains how specific job characteristics, i.e. job demands and job resources, can impact work-related well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Within this framework, bullying and harassment is considered a job demand. Therefore, this study's use of the JD-R model not only contributed to existing literature on WPB but also provided a contextual framework to better understand the nuances of parent-enacted TTBH in South African schools. The study explored the influence of socio-educational factors on parent-enacted TTBH, highlighting the connection between a school's socio-educational advantage and the incidence of bullying and harassing behaviours. This contribution underscores the impact of resource disparities on the prevalence of parent-enacted TTBH, especially in the South African context where limited resources may drive parents to employ bullying and harassing tactics for perceived post-schooling advantages. In addition, the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis has contributed to the literature on parent-enacted TTBH by detailing the potential dynamics between parents and teachers, shedding light on factors that may increase the likelihood of TTBH being enacted.

Moreover, the study contributed to the limited body of knowledge concerning the relationship between teachers' experiences of parent-enacted TTBH and the subsequent psychological and physiological consequences they may experience by examining teachers across a wide range of schools, including lower quintile, higher quintile, and private schools. By thoroughly exploring a wide range of school contexts and the effects of TTBH on teachers, the research highlighted the severity of parent-enacted TTBH and the need for mitigating measures. Notably, this research represents the first of its kind in South Africa. The findings of this study are anticipated to raise awareness about the pervasive impact of parent-enacted TTBH on teachers and, consequently, on the teaching and learning process, potentially creating a negative ripple effect on learners.

## 5.3 Implications and Recommendations

It is hoped that by raising awareness of the implications of parent-enacted TTBH, the DoE may act upon the levels of parent bullying and harassment experienced by teachers within schools. This is particularly important, as research has revealed that if there are no interventions in place to stop or prohibit parent-enacted TTBH from occurring, it flourishes. Similarly, by raising greater awareness within SGB's in private schools it is hoped that interventions will be encouraged.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

**Parent Education Initiatives:** Developing parent education programs that are specifically focused on increasing awareness of the effects of TTBH is imperative. These programs should aim to provide parents with insights into the potential consequences of negative behaviour towards teachers, emphasizing the negative effects on both teacher well-being and, consequently, the overall school environment. Furthermore, these programs should promote a collaborative approach between teachers and parents. These programs should aim to establish a respectful and supportive school community where everyone is actively involved in the success and well-being of the learners by promoting open lines of communication and a sense of cooperation between teachers and parents.

**Equitable Departmental Response:** The establishment of a comprehensive legal framework designed to protect the well-being and rights of teachers is crucial. Teachers, like any other professionals, deserve to work in an environment that safeguards their mental health,

professional integrity, and dignity. A legal framework should serve as a proactive measure to deter instances of parent-enacted TTBH, establishing clear guidelines and consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Such a framework should encompass provisions for due process, ensuring that teachers have the right to a fair and impartial investigation when faced with allegations. It should also outline the resources and support systems that are accessible to teachers who are the targets of bullying or harassment in order to promote an environment of accountability and respect within the educational system. By implementing a robust legal framework, the DoE and SGB's can send a clear message that teacher well-being is a priority and that any form of bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

**Establish Clear Communication Channels:** It is crucial to establish clear and open channels of communication between parents, teachers, and school management to enhance the overall effectiveness of the teacher-parent relationship and address concerns proactively. One recommendation is the implementation of a dedicated platform for parents within schools to pose questions, express their opinions, or share problems. Additionally, the introduction of a Grade Representatives System, by appointing representatives who act as intermediaries between teachers and parents, can further enhance communication. Lastly, formal reporting procedures to maintain a conducive and respectful learning environment are also recommended.

**Mental Health and Wellness Programs:** To counteract the physical and psychological consequences of parent-enacted TTBH, the DoE and SGB's should prioritize the establishment of comprehensive mental health initiatives tailored. These programs should encompass access to mental health resources, offering counselling services, and providing wellness programs aimed at equipping teachers with coping mechanisms. Fostering an environment that prioritizes mental health can empower teachers to navigate the emotional challenges associated with parent-enacted TTBH. This proactive approach not only addresses the immediate needs of teachers but also contributes to a more sustainable and healthier teaching profession.

**Policy Development and Enforcement:** The DoE and SGB's should initiate a comprehensive review and strengthen of existing school policies to explicitly encompass instances of parent-enacted TTBH. These revised policies should be communicated clearly to all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, to ensure a shared understanding of the standards expected within the school community. The consistent enforcement of these policies to create a

safer and more supportive environment for teachers is equally important. This entails establishing mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and addressing parent-enacted TTBH cases promptly.

**Management Training:** By providing comprehensive management training to school management, the DoE can empower them with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster a respectful and supportive environment for both teachers and parents. Training for management should include courses on how to resolve conflicts, foster respectful relationships within the school community, and effectively communicate. The DoE should also work towards the development of policies and procedures that specifically address parent-enacted TTBH. Training should guide school management in implementing and understanding explicit procedures and policies specifically tailored to address parent-enacted TTBH. This includes developing protocols for reporting incidents, investigating complaints, and implementing appropriate consequences.

Addressing parent-enacted TTBH demands a multi-faceted approach involving proactive interventions, clear policies, and a concerted effort to foster respectful collaboration between parents and teachers. It also involves ensuring that adequate management structures are in place to ensure policy compliance and to ensure the overall work environment is as psychosocially safe and secure as possible.

## 5.4 Limitations

Despite the contributions made by the data produced in the study, this research was not without its limitations. Limitations pertain to self-reporting, the nature of data collection, reflexivity, and the sample.

These limitations are elaborated upon below:

The data gathered in this study was obtained through self-reporting, which introduces the potential for social desirability bias- which occurs when participants, consciously or unconsciously, provide information that they believe would be viewed favorably by the researcher (Barriball & While, 1994). Despite this limitation, Qenani et al (2014) argue that exploring participants' experiences and perceptions is crucial as individuals' behaviours are often

influenced by their own perceptions, making it valuable to understand their subjective viewpoints.

Additionally, with regard to online interviews, some interviews were done without a camera, as preferred by some participants. The use of web cameras and the online interview introduces visual anonymity, often described as the 'smoked mirror' effect (James & Busher, 2016). This visual anonymity offers participants the option for pseudonymity and minimizes researcher-participant effects by eliminating physical characteristics (James & Busher, 2016). This setting makes it more comfortable to discuss sensitive topics, such as parent-enacted TTBH (James & Busher, 2016). However, it can eliminate a lot of cues, as mentioned when there was no camera, the researcher had to rely on tone of voice only and could not see facial expressions. In addition, in all online interviews, body language could not be fully observed. The absence of such cues could have lessened important analyses and observations in relation to the spoken interview data.

As mentioned, to mitigate these problems, creating the safest possible environment, where participants felt they could talk freely, establishing trust and defining the boundaries of the online interview was crucial (Sanders, 2005 as cited in James & Busher, 2016). Therefore, the researcher tried to create a safe and comfortable environment for participants by beginning the interview by introducing themself, sharing relevant background details, and articulating the study's purpose, fostering a personal connection with participants. The researcher also emphasized the confidentiality of participants' responses reassuring them and creating a safe space. Throughout the interview, the researcher actively listened to participants- acknowledging their responses, asking follow-up questions, and expressing genuine interest in their experiences in order to validate their contributions and reinforce a sense of being heard.

Another possible limitation related to reflexivity which the researcher was continually mindful of. The researcher recognized the potential impact of their personal values, expectations, and prior knowledge on the interpretation of findings. To mitigate this influence, the researcher consciously engaged in reflection and developed self-awareness regarding their values, expectations, and biases. The researcher made an effort to address this concern by maintaining a self-reflexive journal and engaging in ongoing critical discussions with their supervisor throughout the entire research process. The researcher believed that these proactive measures, to some extent, minimized potential biases.

Lastly, and crucially, the limitations of the sample must be noted. While the sample was fairly generalizable in terms of race and variation across types of schools, the sample was predominantly female. The participant sample consisted of 8 teachers (6 female and 2 male). The sample included participants who identified their race as Black (n = 2), White (n = 3), Coloured (n = 1), and Indian (n = 2). The sample further identified their schools as private (n = 3), lower quintile (n = 3), and higher quintile (n = 2). The findings of this study are therefore limited to this sample description.

In addition, all of the teachers had tenure, that is they had been working for 11- 40 years. Thus none of them were early career teachers. In fact, two of the teachers were in management positions and they were therefore well established in their careers. These findings contrast those of De Wet and Jacobs (2021) who reported that mid-career teachers experience lower risks of bullying. Our findings also support the findings of Billett et al (2020), who found that late-career teachers experienced higher rates of parent-enacted bullying and harassment.

## 5.5 Future Research Recommendations

To establish a more comprehensive understanding of teachers experiences through the lens of the JD-R model, future research could conduct a comprehensive study by comparing the experiences of teachers facing parent bullying and harassment across different educational settings, such as public vs. private schools and urban vs. rural. This comparative analysis aims to reveal contextual factors influencing the prevalence and nature of parent-enacted TTBH. Additionally, integrating quantitative measures into the research design, offers a more comprehensive understanding of the impact and prevalence of parent-enacted bullying and harassment on teachers. This combined approach ensures a nuanced exploration of the parent-enacted TTBH in South African schools while providing quantitative data to enhance the overall depth of the study.

It may also be worthwhile to include the perspectives of parents in future research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in parent-enacted TTBH. By directly engaging with parents, researchers can gain insights into the underlying factors, perceptions, and motivations that contribute to instances of parent-enacted TTBH. This approach goes beyond teachers' experiences alone, by shedding light on the root causes of parent-enacted TTBH. By incorporating the perspectives of both teachers and parents, researchers can generate a more

nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that give rise to bullying and harassment incidents. This holistic approach can also contribute to the development of targeted, culturally sensitive interventions and preventive measures that address the root causes of parent-enacted TTBH, fostering more productive and healthier teacher-parent relationships.

It may also be worthwhile to explore the intersectionality in parent-enacted TTBH experiences among teachers. This involves a detailed examination of how multiple factors, such as socio-economic background, race, and race, intersect and influence the dynamics of parent-enacted TTBH. This approach recognizes that teachers experience bullying and harassment within a complex web of interconnected social categories and interventions. An intersectional analysis of teachers' experiences of parent bullying and harassment recognizes the complexity of social structures and identity, providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse challenges faced by teachers.

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the influence of school leadership and culture on teachers' experiences of parent-enacted bullying and harassment. However, it is a pivotal aspect in understanding the organisational dynamics that alleviate or contribute to the impact of parent-enacted TTBH. By defining the school culture, researchers can identify the core factors that influence how parents and teachers collaborate, interact, and communicate. Leadership styles within the school are particularly crucial, as they contribute to the development and maintenance of the school culture. Investigating how school management addresses instances of parent-enacted TTBH provides insights into whether the school fosters a respectful and supportive environment for teachers. Such insights are vital for developing targeted training programs, policies, and interventions that promote resilient, supportive, and inclusive school environments for teachers.

Lastly, in examining the long-term impact of parent-enacted TTBH, conducting a longitudinal study is crucial for understanding the sustained impact of these experiences on various aspects of teachers' personal and professional lives. This insight is vital for developing evidence-based policies, interventions, and support systems aimed at promoting the retention and well-being of teachers.

## 5.6 Conclusion

From the literature review and the findings of the present study, it becomes clear that parent-enacted TTBH is a major job demand and hazard for teachers in terms of their mental and physical well-being, and their desire to stay in the profession. The unique economic and socio-political challenges within the South African schooling context, coupled with the inadequacies in resource allocation through the quintile system, create an environment conducive to teacher burnout and stress (Montgomery et al., 2005; Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). The disparities between fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools further exacerbate these challenges, impacting both the experiences of teachers and the quality of education learners receive. This context also contributes to the emergence of TTBH as frustrated parents may direct blame towards teachers for perceived disparities in the education system.

The lack of recognition of parent-enacted TTBH has persisted, disrupting the lives of teachers within South Africa. The issue remains largely unacknowledged leading to ongoing challenges with serious consequences for teachers and schools. Parent-enacted TTBH remains an urgent area of research and policy formation that requires more empirical data and subsequent policy changes in South African schools. The findings of this study support the body of literature on TTBH and highlights the need for more research in the field that examines teacher outcomes as well as the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions to make sure that, in the long run, TTBH is managed for the good of all parties involved- parents, teachers, learners, the provision of high-quality education, and the establishment of safe and healthy school environments.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Schedule

**BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERVIEWER TO THE INTERVIEWEE BEFORE QUESTIONING BEGINS**

***The paragraph below will be spoken through with the interviewee prior to the interview. It will be spoken through in a language that is understandable and accessible to the teacher but in essence the concepts below will be explained.**

This study aims to examine South African teachers experiences of being bullied by parents and will be guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, in which bullying by parents will be seen as one of the many demands or stresses faced by South African teachers. Job demands may include situations such as high work pressure, poor environmental conditions, for example: working in a crowded class room, being subjected to load shedding, lack of water and toilet facilities, working in buildings that are not up to standard and that are poorly maintained, increased workloads, etc.

In the context of this study, parent bullying will be referred to as *TTBH,* defined as a communication process that involves a real or perceived power imbalance where "a teacher is subjected, by one or more [parents], to interaction that he or she perceives as insulting, upsetting or intimidating" this may be verbal, nonverbal or physical in nature, it may be premeditated or opportunistic, be a single instance or recurring and or of short or long duration. For instance, parents may challenge teachers abilities or professionalism, become verbally or physically aggressive, or spread rumors and insult teachers. *(If required the interviewer will explain this definition in more simple terms).*

Resources, such as autonomy, that is the freedom to do work in your own way, and supervisor, which is principal or head of department and/or co-worker/co-teacher support, will also be explored as means by which you as teachers cope with such demands. Outcomes of your experience of these demands, more specifically the demand of parent bullying, on how this made you feel mentally and physically will be asked about.

**START OF THE INTERVIEW AND ITS QUESTIONS:**

**(Aim: To ask general questions on job demands and job resources experienced by the teacher/interviewee)**

1. What are the general job demands you face as a teacher?
2. What resources has the school put into place to help you not just deal with the usual demands of teaching, but more specifically bullying by parents?

**(Aim: To gain an understanding of how the interviewee perceives/understands the concept of bullying and TTBH)**

3. What is your understanding of what it means to be bullied at work?
4. What is your understanding of teacher targeted bullying and harassment?

**(Aim: To understand the personal experiences of TTBH of the teacher/interviewee)**

5. Over the past 6 months, have you experienced bullying/harassing behaviours from a parent?
6. If yes, what was your experience of being bullied (who bullied you, how/ what did he / she / they do?)

**(Aim: To understand experiences of TTBH and the impact on the teacher health and ability to work)**

7. How has the impact of bullying and harassment by parents affected you? Explain specifically what effect this has had on you mentally and physically (probing questions below):
    a) How did this make you feel from an emotional point of view?
    b) How did this bullying affect you personally?
    c) Did bullying affect your ability to carry out your work? (how did it affect you?)
    d) Did you suffer any forms of physical illness such as fatigue, headaches, back pain etc. as a result of being bullied in this way?
8. Will this experience leave you likely to leave your job?

**(Aim to ask how teachers cope personally – what support structures does the school offer for the teacher personally and in general, does the teacher/interviewee have their own coping strategies in place?)**

9. Did you have any support structures in the school and/or outside of the school to help you cope with this bullying by parents? Probe into the responses – See Probes below:
    a) How do you personally cope? Probe friends, family support, colleague support counselling, etc.
10. Do you feel that bullying and harassment of teachers by parents is an issue for your school?
11. Do you feel bullying and harassment of teachers by parents is an issue in general?
12. When a teacher feels bullied or harassed at your school is any action generally taken?
13. In what way is action taken and by whom?
14. Do you feel when action is taken, that the response is effective?

**(Aim: Report on the perceived reasons why participants think bullying happens in schools and what could or should be done about it. explore whether there are policies and procedures in place.)**

15. Why do you think parent bullying occurs or is allowed to occur in your school?
16. Are you aware of any policies at your school tackling teacher targeted bullying and harassment by parents? (If yes, how effective is the policy at tackling teacher targeted bullying and harassment parents?)
17. Do you think schools should have a policy to tackle teacher targeted bullying and harassment parents?
18. If there is no policy, what do you think this policy should include?
19. How should schools manage TTBH?
20. If there is a policy and you feel it is not entirely effective, what do you feel should be added in the policy?
21. What do you think are the ideal interventions to stop TTBH at its source?

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet for Principals

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

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

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Noelle Moodley, and I am presently completing my Master's degree in Industrial/Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand under the supervision of Professor Colleen Bernstein. As part of the requirements for my degree, my area of research is designed to explore the experiences of teachers that have been bullied by parents. The study will further explore the resources offered by school as well as the personal resources of teachers used to cope with the demand of parent-enacted bullying. Outcomes of the experience of these demands, more specifically the demand of parent bullying on teachers well-being will also be examined

To carry out this research project, I would like to invite the teachers at your school to participate in this study, which will involve an interview with teachers who volunteer to be part of the study. The interview should take approximately one hour to complete. The interview will take place at a time and venue suitable for the teacher. Hard copies of a Participant Information Sheet, which details the study, will be printed, and provided to all teachers in the school.

Please note the following regarding the individual interview

Participating in the interview process is completely voluntary and teachers will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing or not choosing to partake in the interview. Due to the face-to-face nature of the interview, anonymity cannot be guaranteed as in the case with the online survey, however, confidentiality will be assured, as there will be no identifying information present in the write up of any written report and any journal article or any conference presentation that may ensue.

While questions will be asked about teacher's personal circumstances and quotes will be used in the write up of the report, no identifying information, such as the name of the school the teacher works at, or the real names of teachers will be mentioned. Pseudonyms will be used in place of the real names of teachers in all written reports including the transcripts. In addition, the interview data (audio recordings and transcripts) will be safely stored away in a secure password-protected computer in the research supervisor's office, that only the supervisor and researcher will have access to. Any hard copies of any interview data will be stored away in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office. Informed consent will also be obtained by the completion of signed consent forms. Teachers will be able to withdraw from the interview at any point and will not be forced to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer. Findings for the interview will be reported under general themes therefore not enabling the identification of any single teacher's response. The school will receive a copy of the findings of the report obtained upon request. Should any teacher wish to receive feedback this will also be made available upon request.

*It must be emphasised that the well-being of all teachers who volunteer to partake in the study is of utmost importance. Therefore, while no harm is expected to be experienced by any teacher that volunteers to partake in the interview, should any teacher feel that they may need counselling after participating in the study, counselling will be arranged free of charge. This counselling will be provided through the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand. Please contact the supervisor or researcher should you need any contact details and/or further information regarding the research. The contact number of Paballo Lepota at the Emthonjeni Centre is 011 7174513, if you feel the need for more information regarding the counselling that will be provided. The researchers contact details are listed below.*

Further, it must be emphasised that responses from the interviews will not be used for any purposes, other than academic research, journals, and conference proceedings. Allowing teachers at your school to be invited to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on demands, resources, workplace bullying, burnout and work engagement within the schooling context.

Additionally, the findings of this research study could assist in the long term by encouraging government institutions to improve environmental conditions within schools and thereby protect

teachers from environments in which workplace bullying and its negative outcomes are induced. The research study is an independent study, which will be conducted under the supervision of an Industrial Psychologist at Wits University

Please note that data collection will only commence once two conditions are met. Firstly, data collection will only commence once the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee provides ethics clearance for the study and secondly, once the Gauteng Department of Education allows us to access your school. Note that the GDE will only allow us access if you as the principal are willing to agree to the project. Your response to this letter is therefore to be used as an indication to the GDE of your willingness to allow us access to the teaches at your respective school. It is also important to note that while the GDE grants the permission to conduct the study, information on findings from any single school will not be provided to the GDE. A number of schools will be involved in the project so only general overall findings will be presented in the final report.

Please do formally respond to this letter (on a school letterhead) indicating your willingness or not, to grant the researcher access into your school. Please contact the me or my supervisor should you have any questions.

Kind Regards

**Researcher**: Noelle Moodley
**Email**: 1862501@students.wits.ac.za
**Cell Number**: 063 695 0336

**Supervisor**: Prof Colleen Bernstein
**Email**: Colleen.Bernstein@wits.ac.za
**Cell Number**: 082 770 9200
**Office Number:** 011 717 4538

**Paballo Lepota**: 011 717 4513

Appendix C: Permission Letters From Principals



# FLORIDALAAN PRIMARY SCHOOL


4 Florida Avenue
Eldorado Park
Ext. 7
1812
Phone: 011 342 1014

P.O. Box 72
Kliptown
1812
E-mail: 120139.florida@gmail.com


03 February 2023

**Dear Professor Bernstein**

We hereby confirm that we will participate in the research study program on bullying in the workplace. Kindly forward the details of the next step to us so we may liaise with our staff and inform them timeously of our first meeting.

Thank you.

Yours in education,

SRS Alexander
(Deputy Principal – Teacher Development)

22nd March 2023

School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witswaterand

**Attention: Professor Colleen Berstein**

Dear Professor Berstein

**re: ACCESS TO SCHOOL**

The School Management Team and staff is willing to participate in your research. We hereby grant the team access into our school.

We agree that this research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on stress, workplace bullying, mental and physical wellbeing, and job turnover within the schooling context.

Additionally, the findings of the research study could assist in the long term by encouring the GDE to improve environmental conditions within the schools and thereby protect educators from environments in which the workplace bullying and the negative outcomes are induced.

Our educators have been invited to participate in this study

Looking forward to meeting you soon.

Yours sincerely
**DELARADO PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**MR. DAVID**
**PRINCIPAL**

FUTURA SCHOOL SKOOL

FOR SPECIFIC LEARNING-DISABLED LEARNERS
VIR SPESIFIEK LEERGESTREMDE LEERDERS

50 Leipoldstraat/Street, Ridgeway Hills /Ext 1
P.O. Box/Posbus 90945, Berteham, 2013
Tel: (011) 433-3248
(Fax) 086 610 8504 or (011) 453 - 3254
E-mail: futuraschool@absamail.co.za

School of Human and Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Professor Colleen Bernstein

Email: Colleen.Bernstein@wits.ac.za

Re : Access letter to school

**The school management and staff is willing to participate in your research and willing to grant the team access into our school.**

We agree, that this research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on stress, workplace bullying, mental and physical wellbeing, and job turnover within the schooling context.

Additionally, the findings of this research study could assist in the long term by encouraging the GDE to improve environmental conditions within schools and thereby protect educators from environments in which workplace bullying and its negative outcomes are induced.

Our educators have been invited to participate in this study .

Looking forward to meeting you soon .

Respectfully ,

E.Batchelor
( Principal )

FUTURA SKOOL
(011) 433-3248
2023 -03- 14
FUTURA SCHOOL

LANCEA VALE SECONDARY SCHOOL
MILNERTON STREET, EXT. 4, ELDORADO PARK 1811
P.O. BOX 93, ELDORADO PARK 1813, TEL: (011) 342-1096 FAX: (011) 945-5521

Email: lanceavalesecondaryschool@gmail.com

31st January 2023

Good day Madam/ Sir,

The principal and staff herewith agree to participate in the research study and grant you access into our school.

Yours in Education

Ms. K. Griffiths
Acting Principal

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANCEA VALE SECONDARY SCHOOL
31-01-2023
P. O. BOX 93, ELDORADO PARK 1813
TEL: 011 342 1096 FAX: 011 945 552?
GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MCK SPECIAL SCHOOL
MORALITY, COURAGE, KNOWLEDGE
REGISTERED WITH THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, JOHANNESBURG SOUTH DISTRICT D11 EMIS No.: 700110254
13 Delphinus Avenue, Ext. 9, Lenasia • P.O. Box 404, Lenasia 1820 • Tel: (011) 852 7827 • E-mail: admin@mck.org.za

**For Attention: Ms. T. Batchelor, Professor Berstein**
**Witwatersrand University**
**Johannesburg**

6th March 2023

Good Day

RE: Research - ***Forms of instances of Abuses (Schools)***

This letter serves to confirm that permission is granted for the above study.

The above school is an LSEN (Learners with Special Needs), and would also serve as a good source of data from the LSEN perspective.

Thank you.

M.Batchelor
(principal)
principl@mck.org.za/ Michelle.Batchelor@gdeschools.co.za
0825616691

Milnerton Primary
Milnerton Street
Eldorado Park
Extention 4
PO Box 162
Kliptown 1812
Tel: (011) 342 2780
Fax: (011) 342 3130
milnertonprimary@webmail.co.za

Milnerton Primêr
Milnertonstraat
Eldoradopark
Uitbreiding 4
Posbus 162
Kliptown 1812
Tel: (011) 342 2780
Faks: (011) 342 3130
milnertonprimary@webmail.co.za

Good Day Toni

Thank you for approaching Milnerton Primary School to form part of your research project. We would be honored to participate in this process.

"Leave no Child Behind"

Mrs Holt
Principal

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet for Teachers

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

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

Dear Sir / Madam

**Invitation for your participation in a research project!**

My name is Noelle Moodley, and I am presently completing my Master's degree in Industrial/Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand under the supervision of Professor Colleen Bernstein. As part of the requirements for my degree, my area of research is designed to explore the experiences of teachers that have been bullied by parents. The study will further explore the resources offered by school as well as the personal resources of teachers used to cope with the demand of parent-enacted bullying. Outcomes of the experience of these demands, more specifically the demand of parent bullying on teachers well-being will also be examined. Thus, if you are a teacher in Gauteng that has experienced workplace bullying from a parent, I would like to invite you to please participate in my study.

Participation in this study would involve an interview that should take approximately one hour to complete. Please note that participating in the interview process is completely voluntary and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing or not choosing to partake in the interview. Due to the face-to-face nature of the interview, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, confidentiality will be guaranteed in the recording of the transcripts and in the write up of any written report and any journal article or any conference presentation that may ensue. This is because while questions will be asked about your personal circumstances and quotes will be used in the write up of the report, no identifying information, such as your name or the name of your school will be mentioned. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your name and the name of the school in all written reports including the transcripts. In this regard, all identifying information will be completely sanitised and removed once your recordings are transcribed. Additionally, all electronic interview data (audio recordings and transcripts) will be safely stored away in a secure password-protected computer that only the supervisor and researcher will have

access to. Any hard copies of any interview data will also be safely stored away in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office.

The interview will take place at a time and venue most suitable for you. Your informed consent to participate in this study will be obtained by the completion of signed consent forms. You will, however, be able to withdraw from the interview at any point and will not be forced to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. Should you wish to have a copy of the findings before the submission of the report to the University, it will be made available upon request. It is important to note that these findings will be reported under general themes and therefore will not enable the identification of your individual response.

*It must be emphasised that your well-being is of utmost importance. Therefore, while no harm is expected to be experienced by any teacher that volunteers to complete the interview, should you feel that you need counselling after participating in the study, counselling will be arranged free of charge. This counselling will be provided through the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand. Please contact the supervisor or researcher should you need any contact details and/or further information regarding the research. The contact number of Paballo Lepota at the Emthonjeni Centre is 011 7174513 if you feel the need for counselling. The researchers contact details are listed below.*

Please note that responses obtained from the interview will not be used for any purposes, other than academic research. Volunteering to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated as it will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on demands, resources, workplace bullying, burnout and work engagement within the schooling context. Additionally, the findings of this research study could assist in the long term by encouraging government institutions to improve environmental conditions within schools and thereby protect teachers like yourself, from workplace bullying and its negative outcomes.

The research study is an independent study, which will be conducted under the supervision of an Industrial Psychologist at Wits University.

If you wish to be interviewed, please contact the researchers at the contact details below and an interview time will be set up at a time and place convenient to you.

Kind Regards

**Researcher**: Noelle Moodley

**Email**: 1862501@students.wits.ac.za

**Cell Number**: 063 695 0336

**Paballo Lepota**: 011 717 4513

**Supervisor**: Prof Colleen Bernstein

**Email:** Colleen.Bernstein@wits.ac.za

**Cell Number**: 082 770 9200

**Office Number:** 011 717 4538

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

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

I hereby confirm that:

- I have been briefed on the research that Noelle Moodley and Professor Colleen Bernstein are conducting on bullying of Teachers by parents in schools in Gauteng.
- I understand what participation in this study entails.
- I understand that I am volunteering to participate in the study and that there is no penalty for withdrawing or refusing to participate.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded
- I understand that I can refrain from answering any question I am not comfortable with and there is no penalty for refusing to address these questions
- I understand that at any point in time during the interview I can choose to end the interview if I wish to do so and that there will be no penalty for doing so.
- I understand that any information that I share will be held in the strictest confidence by the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that no identifying information for example my name or the school that I work for will be recorded on the interview transcription
- I understand that the findings of this research may be used in academic publications, conference proceedings, and secondary analysis but that my identity will be completely sanitized and nowhere will my name of any other identifying information be revealed
- I understand that if I agree to participate that I need to sign this form as proof of my acceptance
- I understand the conditions and accept to participate in this study voluntarily

**Optional clauses:**

□ I hereby consent to being audio recorded

□ I hereby request a copy of the research report

Signed by _____ on_____ at _____

Signature _____