
SECTION 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE BULLYING, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ORGANISATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

Present society holds the workplace to be a fundamental proponent of the daily lives of many individuals. It serves as a prominent dictator of experiences, mood and general health, forms the centre of much discussion, and its dominance presses on individual happiness or lack thereof. Its centrality therefore plays a major role in the elicitation of different behaviours and interactions amongst the individuals through which it functions (Patterson, West, Shackleton, Dawson, Lawthom, Maitlis, Robinson, & Wallace, 2005). This necessitates the unveiling of forces that drive both proactive and destructive behaviours in order to promote the former, and discourage the latter. Behaviour as a fundamental constituent of successful organisational functioning thus engenders the importance of the current research wherein the effects of negative behaviour is emphasized: within the last decade, bullying has been acknowledged as a topic worthy of scrutiny and discussion. A number of large-scale studies across a range of industry sectors have identified the damaging effects of bullying for individuals, the most concerning of which include a drastic decrease in both physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as general self-worth (Einarsen 1999; Quine 2002; Zapf & Einarsen 2003; Dick & Raynor 2004; Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Individual effects have furthermore been shown to impact organisational functioning in the form of decreased productivity, increased turnover and intention to leave (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Augmented levels of stress have also been demonstrated to stem from experiences of workplace bullying, and in extreme situations may even lead to burnout (Einarsen, 1999; Sperry & Duffy, 2009).

The workplace has become a playground for bullying behaviour given the ease with which it can be justified. The natural hierarchy around which most organisations are structured provides further opportunity to bully. In addition, the power that legitimacy fosters may be abused in many instances of supervisor-subordinate or manager-employee relationships. Bullying, although not often detected, is rife within organisations of today, especially in instances of drastic change, restructuring or downsizing that may perpetuate elevated levels of general tension (Einarsen, 1999). It is evident therefore that bullying is a prominent stressor within the workplace that requires attention and intervention.

Various studies have examined a diverse range of coping mechanisms (avoidance, assertiveness, seeking help, problem solving, distancing, and quitting one's job) that are used by individuals subjected to bullying, and the buffering effect that these forms of coping may elicit (Olafsson et al. 2004; as cited in Upton, 2010; Andreou, 2001; Rayner, 1997; Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994). It appears however, that minimal consideration has been given to the notion of social support as a form of coping with bullying. Social support

has consistently been shown to be predominant moderator of the negative effects associated with stressors, therefore it can be inferred that a similar effect may be evident where bullying itself is the stressor (Turner, 1981; Winefield, 1992; Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2004; Sheldon, 2007;).

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Based on the explanation provided above, the following research thus endeavoured to provide evidence for the health benefits of social support that may exist in the relationships between experiences of workplace bullying, and organisational outcome variables such as, intention to leave and psychological wellbeing. To elaborate, the present research set out to investigate whether perceptions of bullying directly impacted upon psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, whether the source of social support experienced by a victim subjected to workplace bullying significantly reduced the impact thereof on individual and organisational outcomes, whether the various sources of social support assessed exhibited an association with psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, and finally whether social support and perceptions of bullying were in any manner associated.

A thorough description of the analysis variables selected for observation and the theoretical framework around which the current research was based is provided in the sections to follow:

BULLYING: A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although victimisation is an occurrence that has filtered through human behaviour for centuries, true acknowledgement of bullying as a workplace phenomenon has only been accounted for over the last twenty years (Agervold, 2007). Research within the field of bullying emerged with German-born physician and psychiatrist Heniz Leymann's groundbreaking studies on school-yard bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). Leymann's pioneering work pertaining to the realm of bullying behaviour was later expanded into the workplace, and thus gave rise to the Norwegian term 'mobbing'. A few years after Leymann's initial studies began, Einarsen and Bjorkquist from Norway and Finland, conducted extensive research on mobbing and work harassment (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Swedish and Norwegian psychologists continued to investigate the notion of workplace mobbing in the mid 1980's, and placed emphasis upon the extent, causes and consequences arising from such behaviour within a workplace environment (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). By the early 1990's, international coverage of workplace bullying as a research-worthy topic was achieved with British journalist Andrea Adams, who in 1990 released a series of BBC broadcasts regarding bullying in the workplace, therefore bringing the issue to public attention (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Interest in the topic filtered across the borders of America, Australia, Europe and South Africa, sparking off the evocation of abundant research in this field. Numerous countries within these continents including

Sweden, Finland, Belgium and France, have further developed legislation to prohibit the practice of any form of victimising behaviour, in aim of combating workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al, 2007).

Prior to this evocation of public interest, Carol Brodsky, an American psychiatrist interviewed over one thousand persons filing worker's compensation claims. This led to the publication of her book entitled *The Harassed Worker* (1976), which served to be one of the earliest examinations of workplace harassment (Cox, 1991). Initially Brodsky's work received little attention; however, following Adam's public broadcasts in the 1990's, an interest in her studies was revived. Studies on nurses and medical students' experiences of abuse also paved the way towards further research in harassment and bullying (Cox, 1991; Leibowitz & Baldwin, 1990; Sheenan, Sheehan, White,). Increased workplace violence and hostile behaviour in the United States of America sparked off much needed research in the fields of aggression and harassment, which led to an even greater interest in adult bullying in the workplace (Sheenan et al., 1990). In Scandinavia, Bosnia, Germany and Sweden, researchers went so far as to suggest a link between genocide and bullying (Goldstein, & Pevehouse, 1997).

Given its Norwegian origin, bullying is derived from the word 'mobbing', the meaning of which became problematic due to dual usage of the word in everyday Norwegian speech where mobbing may be indicative of innocent teasing, or may be used as a synonym for the more emotionally loaded notion of harassment (Agervold, 2007). Evident in this dichotomy of meaning is the possibility of misinterpretation in research where ambiguity is frowned upon. Nevertheless, use of the Norwegian term "mobbing" (bullying in English) continues to pervade literature pertaining to this topic (Agervold, 2007). It is for this very reason that a definition of bullying for the purposes of the present research is necessary.

TOWARDS A SUMMATIVE DEFINITION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING:

Provided above is a description of the Norwegian origin of the term bullying, namely mobbing, and the ambiguity that permeates its meaning. Numerous meanings have consequently been provided for workplace bullying by various theorists (Agervold, 2007). The following section will explore these different notions of bullying and will subsequently suggest the most conclusive and appropriate translation for the purposes of the present research.

Organisational sources have described bullying as aggressive behaviour arising from a deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological harm to another individual (Randall, 1997). It has been suggested that bullying involves degradation, humiliation, intimidation and unfavourable treatment (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). The term bullying has further been expanded to include definitions pertaining to the legal and harassment (racial or sexual harassment) perspectives. Moreover, Einarsen et al., (1994, as cited in Rayner & Hoel 1997)

suggest the importance of workplace culture in determining the definition of workplace bullying in terms of those behaviours that are considered acceptable within a given work environment.

Based on various studies conducted among 138 Norwegian victims of bullying, Einarsen and colleagues discovered that victims experienced four main transgressions: Social ostracism and isolation, Organisational exclusion, Accusations of poorly executed work, and Hurtful teasing/"so called" jokes and ridicule. Additional research conducted by Einarsen and Raknes (1997) indicated that 88% out of a sample of 450 industrial workers who experienced systematic and continuous bullying reported lowered mental and physical health as compared to those who experienced low to no bullying. It has therefore further been specified that the *prolonged experience* of bullying may threaten both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of an individual, and should consequently be considered as a prime factor in bullying (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). McCarthy, Sheehan and Kearns (1995) suggest that restructuring, downsizing and other forms of drastic change can also serve as major catalysts for workplace bullying opportunities. To illustrate, in instances of downsizing, workload pressures and job insecurity are likely to increase, while alternative employment prospects may be limited. The manifestation of heightened aggression and persecutory behaviours amongst managers and staff may thus be evoked (Smith 1997).

Einarsen et al., (1994, as cited in Einarsen 2000) highlight the importance of perception as a significant determinant of the experience of bullying – that is, the individual experiencing the bullying must perceive that he or she is substantially inferior to the bully in question. Brodsky (1976) specifies that the difference between subjective and objective bullying lies in perception, in that *subjectivity* refers specifically to situations in which the victim, through his/her own perception, experiences subjection to systematic aggression; *objective bullying* on the other hand refers to the existence of external verification from colleagues or documentation that bullying is taking place, and is entirely independent of the victim's perceptions. From an organisational perspective, there are however certain complexities surrounding the notion of objectivity (Einarsen, 1999). To elaborate, colleagues or other individuals that may or may not have witnessed a bullying incident are not able to provide an entirely objective assessment of a situation given that every individual possesses their own subjective interpretation of that particular work environment (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Furthermore, such witnesses are not necessarily familiar with all the details of the relationship that exists between the two parties in question, nor are they guaranteed to be aware of the impact that the bullying may have on the targeted individual (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Additionally, depending on the organisational climate in which the bullying is taking place, the opinion of bystanders may or may not be swayed towards the belief that the targeted individual 'deserves' such mistreatment (O'Moore & Lynch, 2007). Contrastingly, bystanders may not wish to draw attention to themselves in fear of the political repercussions that may arise from involvement in an incidence of bullying and may therefore display

avoidance or indifference towards the situation. However, even though the victim's viewpoint may not be supported, whether due to opposition from colleagues in favour of the bully, or due to avoidance and indifference by co-workers, this does not change the fact that the individual is experiencing suffering due to his/her perceived subjection to mistreatment (Agervold, 2007). Subjective perception and the consequent experiences of the target should therefore hold significant and considerable weight, and should be appropriately addressed by the organisation (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Agervold, 2007).

The most comprehensive definition to date rests in the various descriptions provided by Einarsen and colleagues: According to Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen and Hellesoy (1994; as cited in Einarsen, 2000) bullying refers to events that involve the systematic and continuous subjection of an individual or individuals to prolonged negative treatment against which such individual/s feel entirely defenceless. Isolated incidences for Einarsen et al., (1994, as cited in Einarsen, 2000) are not considered to constitute a true situation of bullying. The events must therefore be regular and extensive in occurrence, reaching at least once a week for a period of six months, and must be directed at the same individual/s by the same bullies (Leymann, 1990).

To sum up, the descriptions provided above propose that in order for a situation to be categorised as one that constitutes bullying, the following factors must be present alongside the experience of one or more of the following transgressions: An actual or perceived imbalance of relative strength between victim and bully must be present, either due to knowledge, experience, position or support, whereby the victim must feel incapable of defending himself/herself; subjective emotion of the victim should clearly indicate feelings of inferiority and powerlessness; perceptions of the victim relating to his or her experiences of bullying are to hold considerable weight, unless it is discovered that such a situation is improbable based on insurmountable proof; the situation must occur repeatedly against the same individual/individuals; the duration of the acts must amount to at least once a week for a period of six months. Furthermore, the victim should be subject to one or more of the following actions: Social ostracism and isolation, Organisational exclusion, Accusations of poorly executed work, Hurtful teasing/jokes and ridicule, and/or Physical or sexual violence.

Agervold (2007, p 165) provides a concise definition for the various components of workplace bullying discussed above. The strength of Agervold's (2007) definition lies in his inclusion of both objectively identifiable activities that need to be recognized as bullying, and subjective elements which indicate the person's perception of being bullied:

"Bullying is a social interaction in which the sender uses verbal and/or non-verbal communication regularly, weekly and for a period of at least six months that is characterised by negative and aggressive elements directed towards the personality and self-esteem of the receiver. A person perceives or feels that s/he is being

bullied when s/ he regularly, weekly and for a period of at least six months, experiences such verbal and non-verbal communication as intentionally negative and as constituting a threat to his/her self-esteem and personality (p.165)."

For the purposes of the current research the operational criterion provided by Einarsen and Raknes (1997), summarised succinctly by Agervold, (2007), constitutes the most comprehensive and appropriate description of a true act of bullying, therefore in subsequent mention of a workplace bullying situation, it is to this particular definition that the researcher shall refer. Important to note however is the researcher's exclusion of sexual harassment as part of the behaviours that comprise bullying: substantive literature and research exists on sexual harassment as a topic in its own right, and while it has been considered to constitute a certain facet of bullying by some, it is not an essential constituent of bullying-like behaviour, given that these two factors differ in terms of prevalence and the severity of consequence. The manifestation of sexual harassment is less prevalent when compared to the pervasiveness of workplace bullying; however the consequences for sexual harassment are likely to be far more severe for both parties involved than would be the case in a bullying situation (Einarsen, 2000). While the following research acknowledges the possibility that more subtle forms of sexual harassment can comprise facets of workplace bullying, such a construct is beyond the scope of the present study, given the additional elements present in sexual harassment that do not explicitly feature in instances of workplace bullying: these include the ethical implications that the inclusion of sexual harassment may bring forth, the specific sensitivity with which such a situation would need to be handled, and the possible need for clinical intervention (Leymann, 1990).

MULTIFACETED DIFFERENCES IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Einarsen (1999) explicated the difference between different forms of bullying: A differentiation between direct and indirect bullying was thus developed: *direct bullying* constitutes those behaviours that target the victim directly; this includes teasing, mocking, rebuking, or threatening the individual or undermining such an individual's professional work (Einarsen, 1999). *Indirect bullying* comprises more subtle forms of aggressive behaviour; this refers to ostracism, social isolation, withholding important work-related information (omissions), slander and vicious rumour spreading (Einarsen, 1999). Differentiations between work-related and person-related acts have also been developed: *Person-related* acts refer to targeting the individual himself/herself and may include rumour spreading, slander, jokes, neglecting opinions, and unwanted sexual advances (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003b). *Work-related* bullying on the other hand amounts to actions that render work-related tasks impossible to execute for the targeted individual, or instances in which tasks are denied (Einarsen, et al., 2003b). Bullying can also be classified according to physical or verbal transgressions that characterise different behaviours: *Verbal bullying* constitutes ridiculing, teasing, threatening, rumour spreading, denigration, sexual innuendos directed at the victim and unjustified criticism,

while *physical bullying* refers to explicit acts of violence and harassment, including both harmful physical non-sexual transgressions as well as sexual advances or harassment (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003b).

Personality and Individual Differences: Although not observed as key variables within the current study, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that many personal factors may contribute to the enactment or experience of bullying behaviour, both for the perpetrator and the victim. Individual differences may act as moderating factors in determining why certain individuals, more so than others, experience health impairments and escalated stress reactions after being exposed to episodes of bullying behaviour. Fully comprehending the workings of such a phenomenon is thus essential for the development of successful methods of intervention (Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, and Einarsen, 2007). In order to grasp a thorough understanding of the interacting elements that result in bullying, it is necessary to encompass both environment and person-oriented hypotheses. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2003), organisational issues are important determinants to be considered when explaining bullying in the workplace, however no theory would be succinct without placing attention on individual perceptions and personality, both of which contribute to the commencement, intensification and resulting consequences of the bullying process (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003)

The Victim: Personality in particular has been shown to be an increasingly important determinant of chronic victimization (Seigne, Coyne, Randall, & Parker, 2007). Utilizing the 'Big Five' traits of personality, which include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and culture, Seigne, et al., (2007) identified that the key traits that aggravate or isolate others, are those that result in victimization. Particularly, individuals exhibiting submissive, conscientious and reserved behaviour, and who are incapable of executing effective coping strategies, are more likely to become prey to bullying (Seigne, et al., 2007). Other potential victims are those who score high on conscientiousness, and tend to be highly organised, moralistic, and adhere rigidly to rules (Seigne, et al., 2007). The display of such a '*perfectionistic*' style in the workplace may aggravate colleagues, which in turn may lead to bullying. Such victims, as described by Seigne, et al., (2007) are considered provocative, in that their personality acts as a catalyst in stimulating bullying behaviour in others, providing some explanation as to why certain individuals are more prone to becoming victims of bullying than others (Seigne, et al., 2007). This links to Einarsen's concept of dispute-related bullying described above, which involves provocation in work-related conflicts that lead to a bullying situation. The elicitation of certain negative responses by the victim meshed together with the bully's personal disposition may trigger certain behaviours in both the bully and the victim, which may result in destructive encounters (Einarsen, 1999).

The Perpetrator: Much attention has been allocated to the personality of the perpetrator, prominent traits of which include aggressiveness, being sadistic and bigoted, abrasive, abusive, hostile, violent, authoritarian and power-driven (Seigne, et al., 2007). Baron (1989) proposed that persons involved in regular conflict tend to be aggressive, competitive, highly-driven and exhibit a sense of time urgency, all of which indicate Type A behavioural characteristics. Type A individuals are thus prone to exhibit aggression and hostility in the work environment towards those who they perceive to be receptive targets (Friedman & Rosenbaum, 1974, as cited in Seigne et al., 2007). Moreover, bullies also tend to be more prone to losing their temper rapidly and impulsively, are more verbally aggressive in that they are able to utilize speech that will cause maximum psychological harm, and are more likely to engage in open disagreement (Seigne et al., 2007). Bullies also tend towards escalated levels of moodiness, antagonism, stubbornness, negativity, assertiveness and competitiveness (Seigne et al., 2007). Managers who engage in bullying behaviours tend to be egocentric, autocratic and aggressive in their style of leadership, are associated with positions of power, and are driven to reach their goals regardless of personal costs (Seigne et al., 2007). However Einarsen, Rakner and Mattheisen, (1994b, as cited in Zapf & Einarsen, 2003) have argued that a lack of leadership ability and intentional abuse of power may also result in bullying behaviour. Over and above this, it has been suggested that individuals who participate in episodes of bullying tend to have low emotional intelligence in that they are unable to successfully extract and decode social information from their surrounding environment, which promotes ignorance as to the effects of their destructive behaviours on others (Seigne et al., 2007). In research conducted by Seigne et al., (2007), it was discovered that bullies feel their aggression towards others to be justified in that such behaviour serves as a protection against the potential threats of other employees, and thus is seen to be a form of successfully competitive behaviour by such perpetrators. These conclusive findings suggest that personality traits are an important predictor of potential bullying behaviour (Seigne et al., 2007).

WORK ENVIRONMENT AS A DETERMINANT OF BULLYING

Certain work environments may also contribute to the extent of bullying exhibited within a given organisation (Seigne, Coyne, Randall, & Parker, 2007). Work environments such as military establishments, prisons, police stations, fire stations, nursing and public service sectors tend towards an atmosphere conducive to bullying behaviour, due to the hierarchical and authoritarian structures on which such organisations are centred (Seigne et al., 2007). Extensive episodes of bullying have also been associated with organisations subject to continuous change: Many individuals are incapable of adapting to organisational changes and thus engage in bullying-like behaviour as a coping mechanism to enforce or manage change-related impacts (Seigne et al., 2007).

BULLYING AS A STRESSOR: THE HAZARDOUS EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Research into the impact of workplace bullying has elucidated important concerns regarding the degree to which experiences of bullying may affect the individuals exposed to such a stressor, particularly in instances of prolonged victimisation (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Namie (2003, as cited in Sperry & Duffy, 2009) provides a discussion surrounding post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and generalized anxiety disorder reportedly present in victims of bullying. At its most extreme, workplace bullying has been linked to suicide. Leymann (1996, as cited in Sperry & Duffy, 2009) provides that fifteen percent of completed suicides were backed by the presence of workplace bullying in the six months prior to suicide.

It has been notably suggested that the physiological and psychological deterioration associated with prolonged experiences of workplace bullying stems directly from the experienced impact that the act of bullying itself has on both individual identity and sense of self, and on interpersonal and social relationships with others (Sperry & Duffy, 2009; Einarsen, 1999). This proposition holds inevitable truth given the immense centrality of work within most cultures and societies of today. An individual's career and social standing are among some of the most important defining factors that comprise self-identity (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Therefore, it can be confidently assumed that a strike within one's work domain in the form of bullying may negatively impact one's sense of identity, which in turn may affect general wellbeing (Einarsen, 1999). It has been proposed further that individuals who place a higher degree of personal investment into their work may be more vulnerable to the experience of negative effects in the presence of bullying (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Given the emphasis placed on temporality in the definition of workplace bullying, an abundance of concerns may emerge within the victimised individual, which in turn may spur on the manifestation of physiological and psychological ramifications (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Fear and anxiety surrounding considerations that begin to surface, such as future employability if the need to leave the organisation arises, potential of being fired for reporting bullying in the face of denial by the perpetrator, finance and health insurance concerns, loss of personal and professional status, reduced self-confidence, and social isolation serve as catalysts in the emergence of physical and psychological health problems (Hockley, 2003; Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Additional anxiety may be experienced regarding expenses and funding in instances where medical treatment and/or counselling become necessary (Hockley, 2003). Psychological trauma may also result in the form of numbness, inability to concentrate and social withdrawal (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Social isolation and exclusion from communication loops also characterise acts of bullying, which may intensify victims' feelings of aloneness (Hansen, Hough, Persson, Karlson, Garde & Orbaek, 2006). Prolonged social exclusion may result in the victim being looked upon as "the other" by colleagues aside from the key perpetrator, which in turn may trigger the collapse of peer relationships, and may spur on rejection from social networks (Hansen, et al., 2006). Where bullying occurs in bureaucratic organisations, a common bystander response is to maximise social distance from the victim (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). While it may be

easily assumed that co-workers privy to injustice would stand by the victim and aid him/her in retribution, this does not necessarily always hold true: Co-workers who witness the pain, isolation and shame experienced by the victim choose to avoid rather than confront the same fate at all costs, and thus are far more likely to remain completely removed from the situation; alternatively witnesses may choose to side with the perpetrator, especially in hostile work environments that may support the actions of the perpetrator (Hansen, et al., 2006; Sperry & Duffy, 2009). This non-exhaustive illustration of the numerous interlinked factors that permeate the bullying-wellbeing relationship aptly depicts the detrimental impact that workplace bullying may trigger off. Bullying therefore constitutes a vicious cycle of elements that attack the victim from different aspects, and eventually lead to his/her progressive demise (Hockley, 2003; Hansen, et al., 2006; Sperry & Duffy, 2009). In light of the above discussion it is important to note that while the following research has undertaken to observe both work centred and external sources in order to acknowledge supervisors and colleagues as potential sources of support, it is recognised that such sources of support may be negligible. Supervisors may well be sources of bullying rather than support, and colleagues may often be reluctant to offer support for the reasons outlined above. However, in instances where such work sources of support do exist, it is proposed that these sources may significantly appease the negative effects of workplace bullying, in that these sources are directly privy to the situation and can therefore directly intervene in relieving the circumstances for victims.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

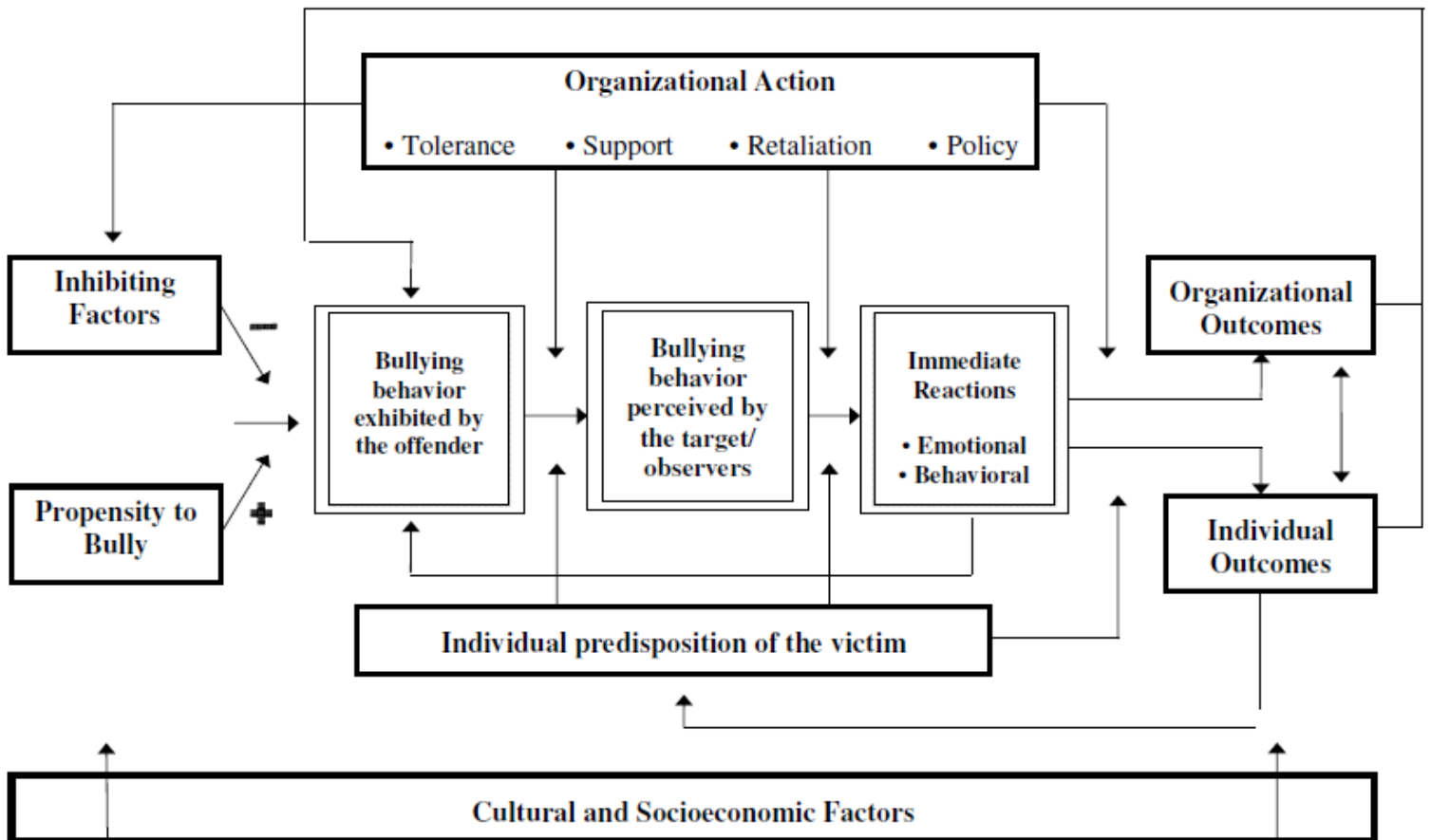
Einarsen's (2000) Conceptual Framework for the Study and Management of Bullying at Work : Based on extensive observations and studies regarding the nature of bullying in the workplace, Einarsen (2000) formulated a theoretical framework consisting of all the possible variables that are salient in the presence of workplace bullying(see Figure 1, p. 13). Einarsen's (2000) constructed model is based implicitly on the transactional model proposed by Cox and Mackay (1978), and functions as a comprehensive basis of guidelines each of which can be aptly deemed a theoretical catalyst from which future research within the field of workplace bullying should stem (Einarsen, 2000). What is particularly important in this model is the establishment of a clear differentiation between "the nature and causes of bullying behaviour as is exhibited by the alleged offender" from "the nature and causes of the perceptions made by the victim of these behaviours" (Einarsen, 2000, p.11). Discrepancies between subjective perceptions and interpretations of conflicting contenders are often involved in negative confrontations where provocation or offensive behaviour by one individual towards another is present. Einarsen (2000) refers to studies of sexual harassment which illustrate that a mildly offensive incident for one individual might be considered by another individual as harmful enough to issue a formal complaint. The model therefore explicates this discrepancy by differentiating between perceived exposures to bullying behaviour from the reactions that these kinds of behaviours provoke.

Einarsen's (2000) framework model highlights that while victim characteristics may not dictate the actual act of bullying by the perpetrator, such characteristics remain pertinent in determining the degree of vulnerability exhibited by the victim in the face of ongoing victimisation. The model also illustrates that organisational attempts to encourage intolerance towards bullying are essential in inhibiting bullying behaviour (Einarsen, 2000). In addition to this, the model demonstrates the importance of effective support systems for victims as a key factor in victim perceptions of and reactions to situations of bullying (Einarsen, 2000). Furthermore, the model argues that "attention to organisational response patterns - towards bullying - and other contextual issues within the organisation are essential in understanding the various aspects of bullying at work" (Einarsen, 2000, p. 12). The latter fraction of the model centres on subjective elements relating particularly to reactions exhibited by the individual. This elucidates the differences in subjectively assigning meaning to an incident that transpires within different individuals (Einarsen, 2000). In illuminating individual differences the model furthermore recognises the importance of developing strategies and programs within an organisation that consider perceptions of and reactions to bullying in a serious light, by drawing parallels between these factors and employees' experiences pertaining to the work environment (Einarsen, 2000).

As it is beyond the scope of the present research to consider all aspects of Einarsen's framework, the model has been modified accordingly. Figure 2 shows a modified version of Einarsen's Conceptual Framework for the Study and Management of Bullying at Work (illustrated on p. 14), which is appropriate for use in the present study (Einarsen et al., 2003). The adapted model places emphasis on the subjectivity of the bullying experience, focusing mainly on individual elements. In this model, 'victim' perceptions of bullying are expected to be moderated by perceived social support available to the 'victim' and this interaction in turn is proposed to positively influence the reactions of the victim (behavioural and emotional) to experiences or incidences of bullying, based on measurable outcomes pertaining to individual and organisational outcomes (psychological wellbeing and intention to leave respectively). Given the context of the present study, focus will therefore be placed on the main-effect and moderating relationships that exist between the first three factors depicted in the diagram: *Perceptions of Bullying Behaviour by the Victim*, *Perceived Social Support*, and *Reactions by the Victim (behavioural/emotional)* pertaining to the measureable experience of *Individual and Organisational Outcomes*, namely psychological wellbeing and intention to leave (Einarsen, 2000). It is important to note that in terms of measurement, the present study will measure *perceptions* of workplace bullying (as opposed to assessing 'actual' workplace bullying) alongside the extent to which the perceptions thereof are moderated by perceived social support, and/or produce main effects on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave.

Cox and Mackay's (1978) Transactional Model: Implicit in this modified model is the Transactional Model developed by Cox and Mackay (1978, as cited in Cox & Mackay, 1985) where Stage 1 depicts the Stressor/Demand, and Stage 2 represents the individual's cognitive appraisal of the demand. At this stage the individual acknowledges the presence of the stressor, that is, the individual perceives the stressor and appraises his/her ability to manage/cope with the stressor. If the individual perceives an imbalance, that is, if the individual perceives the stressor demand to be too great and/or perceives his/her ability to cope with the demand to be inadequate then stress will be experienced and this stress will impact on the individual's psychological and physiological well being (Cox & Mackay 1978, as cited in Cox & Mackay, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Numerous factors such as social support may intervene between acknowledgement of the stressor and the individual's appraisal of his or her ability to cope with the stressor (Cox & Mackay, 1978, as cited in Cox & Mackay, 1985). For the purpose of this study, Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Transactional Model will be assessed, placing social support in the position of a variable that may alter an individual's appraisal of the actual demand situation (in this instance workplace bullying), and consequently their ability to cope in the presence of the proposed stressor. The transactional model is the most widely used model in the study and analysis of stress-strain relationships thereby justifying the use of its framework within the context of the present study (Goh, Sawang, & Oei, 2010).

FIGURE 1: EINARSEN'S TRANSACTIONAL MODEL: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY AND MANAGEMENT OF BULLYING AT WORK



Source: Einarsen (2000).

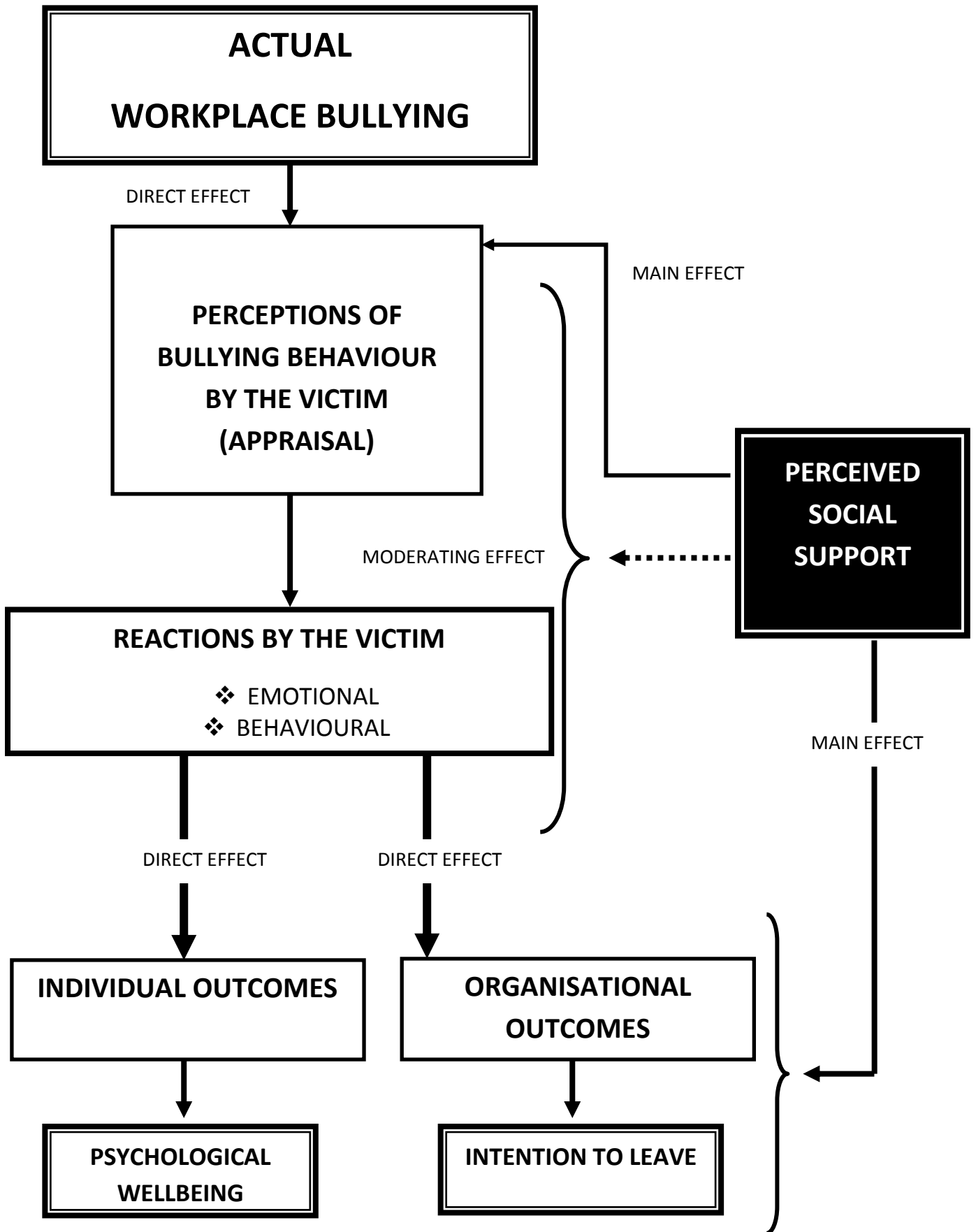


FIGURE 2: MODIFIED VERSION OF EINARSEN'S *ET AL.*, (2003) 'A TRANSACTIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY AND MANAGEMENT OF BULLYING AT WORK'

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is a multi-dimensional construct that has been expanded over the years to include numerous elements, many of which have been operationalised through various measures (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). Based on the manner in which social support has been previously researched it appears that this particular construct is context specific in its functions. Social support has been established as a major construct operating within the stressor-strain relationship (Lirio, et al., 2007). It has been suggested that the various categories within social support are effective or non-effective based on the type of adaptational demands a specific stressor necessitates. Congruence between the source of social support available and the nature of the adaptational demands fostered by the stressor in question therefore determines whether the available support will be effective in moderating the negative effects experienced from a stressor or not (Lirio et al., 2007).

As with many constructs that feature within the realm of organisational behaviour, an extensive array of conceptual definitions exist for social support. One of the earliest definitions of this concept is provided by Calpan (1974, as cited by Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985, p. 4) who conceptualises the composition of social support systems to include “continuing social aggregates that provide individuals with opportunities for feedback about themselves and for validations of their expectations of others”. Cobb (1976, as cited by Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985) suggests social support to be “information leading the subject to believe that he/she is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation” (p. 4). House (1981) contributes further by proposing social support to include an interpersonal transaction that incorporates emotional concern such as “empathy, love or liking,” “instrumental aid including goods and services”, “information pertaining to the environment” and “appraisal based on information that is relevant to self-evaluation” (p.42). While a divergence exists with regard to defining social support, the definitions above find common ground in the multidimensionality that seems to characterise this construct (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). Consequently, social support was conceptualised in a more general sense for the purpose of the present research, and was not limited to one specific type of support (see below p. 15-16).

Although person-environment transactions that are considered stressful do not necessarily always lead to strain, when a situation is appraised as stressful, individuals will typically engage in coping activities of some sort to avert the effects thereof (Cox & McKay, 1985; Lirio, et al., 2007). Seeking and receiving social support is considered a prominent form of coping, and is most often the first coping activity in which individuals engage (Lirio, et al., 2007). Empirically derived evidence provides that the communication of trust, reassurance, love, empathy and care are key facilitators in coping with stressful events (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). Different types of social support have also been presented in research, the most common of which

include, emotional support, esteem support, belonging support, network support, appraisal support, tangible support, instrumental support and informational support (House, 1981). Emotional support in particular has been evidenced to indirectly buffer the negative effects of stress by reinforcing an individual's sense of mastery and boosting self-esteem (Lirio, et al., 2007). A strong sense of self will in turn enable the individual to activate other coping resources that will facilitate the resolution of stressful environmental challenges (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). In contextualising social support within the literature of bullying, differences in the type of social support available are inevitably relevant, in that certain types of social support may be more effective in dealing with bullying than others (Einarsen, 1999). To elaborate, informational social support through the provision of guidance, suggestions, or useful information to assist in problem solving; and appraisal support through the transmission of information in the form of affirmation, feedback and constructive judgement based on data that is germane to self-evaluation, or advice and directives communicated directly or via social comparison, may boost the individual's ability to deal effectively with the bullying (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985; Einarsen, 1999). Instrumental support (in the form of assistance or direct intervention) on behalf of the victim based on status and ability to influence may provide the individual with the means by which to retard the escalation of bullying events (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985; Einarsen, 1999). Appraisal support based on self-evaluation through social comparison, may enhance the individual's self-esteem which in turn may boost that individual's ability to mobilise effective coping resources (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). As specified above, for the purpose of the current research, social support was not exclusively limited to any one type of support; however it has been argued that in spite of the existence of numerous types of social support, emotional support appears to form the foundation from which most of these support variations extend, and was consequently considered as such within the present research (Burlleson, 2003).

In addition -while the type of social support that is active and its associated variance in strength in relation to other types of social support is of considerable importance - it was beyond the scope of the current research to differentiate between the type and strength of social support that may be acting as a moderator in the bullying-wellbeing relationship. Rather, the present study was concerned specifically with whether social support as an overriding type functions as a buffer in the stressor-strain relationship of bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. Attention was consequently placed on the *actual* source of support (the person from whom social support is obtained) that employees select, while simultaneously taking into account the dominance of emotional support as an underpinning factor common to all other support types (Burlleson, 2003). A distinction between work and non-work sources of social support was however acknowledged for reasons that shall be presented below (see p. 17-18).

SOURCES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

A) PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS AND COLLEAGUES

An abundance of literature that discusses workplace bullying and perceived organisational support has demonstrated that organisational support moderates the effects of workplace bullying on factors such as individual wellbeing, organisational commitment and intention to leave (Quine, 2001; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). According to Djurkovic, *et al.*, (2004), the manner in which employees perceive treatment from the organisation determines to what degree they anthropomorphise the organisation. Depending on the treatment perceived, employees will either assign positive or negative human-like characteristics to the organisation in which they work, and based on this assignment, will determine the extent to which the organisation values their work contributions, health and wellbeing (Djurkovic, *et al.*, 2004). Organisational reward such as pay, recognition, promotions, job security, autonomy and training provided to employees are also used as benchmarks in assessing the degree to which employees feel valued within the organisation (Djurkovic, *et al.*, 2004). Feelings of appreciation and value in turn tend to boost overall perceptions of support. Fairness and justice have furthermore been shown to increase perceptions of organisational support (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). For example, organisational support within the teaching domain has proven to buffer against or compensate for the hazardous impact of low-work-value congruence, in such a way that teachers who perceive high organisational support reported satisfaction with their careers, even in the presence of a low congruence between their own values and those of the organisation (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004). Additional evidence provided by Keashly (2001, as cited in Djurkovic, *et al.*, 2004) demonstrates the importance of social support from colleagues, supervisors and management in assisting employees to cope with experiences of work –related abuse. The implementation of workplace policies has further been considered a source of instrumental support in providing a means to go about confronting a difficult situation in the workplace (Erdogan, *et al.*, 2004). Djurkovic, *et al.*, (2004) provide evidence for the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between perceptions of bullying and intention to leave, to the extent that a non-significant relationship between experiences of workplace bullying and intention to leave exist in instances where employees perceived their organisations to be supportive. Djurkovic *et al.*, (2004) also direct attention to the importance of leadership by explaining that leaders mould organisational culture through appropriate channels of behaviour and responses in different situations, and that it is a leader’s duty to create an environment where personal consideration is emphasised and work effort is valued (Djurkovic, *et al.*, 2004). It is additionally explicated that leaders need to be aware of the subtle actions that constitute bullying and that they themselves do not succumb to such destructive behaviour. Leading by example is therefore a prime factor in enforcing a supportive work environment that condones positive rather than negative behaviour (Djurkovic, *et al.*, 2004).

While consideration of organisational social support from supervisors and colleagues will be taken for the purposes of the present study, given that in certain instances they may be the chosen sources of support for an employee, it is acknowledged that these individuals are very often the vessel through which workplace bullying is projected (Zapf, 1999). Furthermore it has been suggested that bullying may weaken the social climate, social support and information-transfer within the organisation, therefore presenting conflicting evidence for the notion of organisational social support as a moderator of stressors experienced within a given company (Zapf, 1999; Djurkovic et al., 2004). In addition to this, social groups that exist within the organisation may perpetuate rather than inhibit workplace bullying activity, especially in organisations where conformity is heavily loaded as the key to acceptance (Zapf, 1999). Therefore those who do not conform to group norms will immediately be excluded from the group and consequently their susceptibility to bullying will be higher than those who submit to conformity (Zapf, 1999). In support of this, research conducted by Zapf (1999) has established that individuals who perceive bullying to be a result of flaws in the social system housed within an organisation tend to report low levels of social support and communication from colleagues, which provides reason to be cognisant of instances in which support would not act as a moderator within the current research. The present study is therefore concerned with both workplace support from supervisors and colleagues, and external sources of social support from family and friends in which employees may confide, thus enabling a comparison between these various sources of support.

B) FRIENDS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Early research analyses have illustrated that social support provided by family and friends is fundamentally different in nature (Antonucci, 1985). Friends and family are judged according to different criteria that will vary between individuals; therefore the effectiveness of support provided by these social sources will be determined according to these criteria (Antonucci, 1985). Family social support for instance is expected and is almost obligatory in nature and therefore may not be allocated much attention. However, where family support is not received when needed most, a negative impact on the recipient will result due to the perception that an obligation has not been met (Antonucci, 1985). Friends on the other hand have no expectations of support attached to them, therefore in general, when support is received from friends it is highly valued (Antonucci, 1985). Perceived reciprocity between spouse and family members has been demonstrated to be particularly high, especially with regards to confiding and care in times of distress (Antonucci, 1985). Additionally, research conducted by Wood and Robertson (1978) provides evidence for the high predictive value of social support received from friends on general wellbeing. Contemporary evidence suggests that social support from friends and family appears to buffer the detrimental effects of strained interactions (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Likewise, it can be similarly deduced that friends and family support may function to alleviate the negative impact of perceived bullying on individual and organisational wellbeing. Therefore, friends and family, in addition to supervisors and colleagues were deemed as key

sources of social support, and were consequently selected as sub-constructs of social support as a moderator in the current research.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE APPRAISAL OF STRESSFUL EVENTS

Given the subjective nature of social support as an experience that occurs on a personal level, attention must be placed on perceived social support rather than social support as an objective factor, characterised by set circumstances or interactional processes. Researchers such as Turner et al., (1983., as cited by Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985) and Lazarus and Launier (1978, as cited by Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985) place much weight on cognitive appraisal processes as the main conduit through which social support impacts stress and the type of coping invoked. Empirical literature provides additional weight for the importance of appraisal in illustrating a link between perceptions of social support and the corresponding impact that these perceptions have on health and wellbeing (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). The overall subjective perception that an individual possesses for a certain experience is determined by the manner in which the experience is appraised. This in turn facilitates decisions pertaining to the type of coping response an individual chooses to invoke in the face of a stressor. That stress may be experienced or resultant negative psychological, physiological or behavioural setbacks manifest, is not generalisable to all individuals exposed to that particular objective social or occupational condition, given the influence that individual perception can have on the consequential reactions of such encounters (House, 1981). Perception is thus an essential role player in determining the impact that social support may or may not have in the stressor-strain relationship (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985).

The conceptualisation of stress as a process is consequently important to consider in understanding the manner in which social support may alleviate the manifestation of negative health related impacts associated with stress: In order for stress to occur, this requires that a certain objective social or occupational condition in the environment becomes for an individual, a stressor, to the point that its regular presence or occurrence creates the perception of stress in an individual (House, 1981). Conditions are “usually perceived as stressful when the demands placed on individuals exceed their abilities or when they are unable to fulfil strong needs or values” (McGrath, 1970). In essence, this means that an individual’s needs or abilities are incongruent with their social environment in significant and consequential ways (House, 1981). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have proposed sound theory that deciphers the significance of appraisal. According to Lazarus’s (1984) orientation, if the confrontation of a stress-inducing situation arises, in which an individual is required to adapt in a manner that pressures or exceeds that individual’s adaptational capabilities, then psychological stress will be experienced (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). The appraisal of an event comprises both event and resource appraisal whereby the individual assesses the degree of harm, loss and challenge that the situation presents, and evaluates the style of coping adopted respectively (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). This cognitive

evaluation is weighted with reference to the support resources that the individual believes are available. Social support is one such factor that may function to “alter initial perceptions of objective social stimuli”, p.37). Therefore, in the face of a situation that has been initially appraised as stressful, if an individual evaluates that appropriate sources of social support are available to him or her, the initially stressful situation may be re-appraised in a more positive light, which in turn minimises the experience of strain ((House, 1981; Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985; Cox & McKay, 1985). Therefore social support may buffer potentially stressful objective situations (such as bullying) by initially causing people to perceive the situation as less threatening or stressful and hence may reduce the manifestation of negative physiological, psychological and behavioural consequences attached to prolonged experiences of stress (House, 1981). Where a situation is originally perceived as stressful, social support may still function to reduce or eliminate the tendency of perceived stress to lead to responses productive of disease by mobilising efforts at coping and defence (House, 1981, p.38).

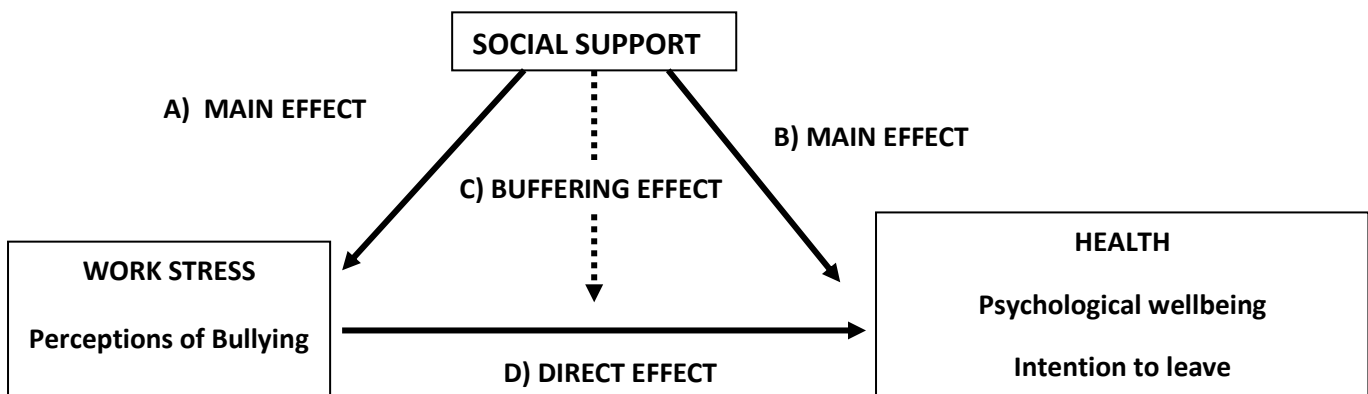
“Where efforts at coping and defence fail to reduce the objective stressors or the perception of stress, social support may alleviate the impact of such perceptions on short-term physiological, psychological or behavioural responses that may produce more enduring [poor] health or disease outcomes. Without altering the perception of stress per se, social support may reduce the importance of the perception to the individual, and hence the degree of reaction to it” (House, 1981, p38).

To illustrate with reference to bullying as a perceived stressor, where a bullied ‘victim’ seeks emotional support from another individual who is able to reinforce the ‘victim’s’ sense of mastery and boost self-esteem, the ‘victim’ will then be more able to activate other coping resources that will facilitate the resolution of the negative event. The bullied individual will in turn be more likely to reappraise the situation as less stressful, and consequently the experience of negative strain symptoms associated with bullying will be minimised (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). While the reappraisal of an event itself does not alter the nature of the stressor, it functions instead as a filter through which emotional reactions to an initially stressful event are reduced (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). To elaborate more explicitly, in stressful situations, individuals are often overwhelmed by an emotional response to the stressor which may cause energy and morale to diminish rapidly. Thus attempts in dealing with the situation proactively are overthrown by emotional and wasteful reaction (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). Social support, however acts as a buffer by keeping an individual’s affect under control, thereby allowing the individual to effectively direct energy and attention on the tasks necessary to deal with the situation in question (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985; House, 1981).

THE MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT: MAIN EFFECTS AND MODERATING EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT WITHIN THE STRESSOR-STRAIN RELATIONSHIP

Social support has been evidenced to be a threefold mechanism by which stress and work related problems can be effectively alleviated. Social support has the capacity to “directly reduce levels of occupational stress in a variety of ways and hence indirectly improve health” (p.31). Support from supervisors and colleagues for instance, can help reduce interpersonal pressures and tensions (which may emerge due to experiences of bullying in the workplace); in addition, “the experience of social support can satisfy work-related motivations for affiliation, approval and accurate appraisal of the self and environment” which promotes satisfaction in workers with the self and their work (House, 1981, p.31). Therefore social support may alleviate the impact of stress appraisal by providing a solution to the problem, by reducing the perceived importance of the problem, or by providing a distraction from the problem, thereby reducing the degree of reaction to it (House, 1981). In so doing, social support further acts to tranquilise the neuroendocrine system so that individuals are less reactive to perceived stress or facilitates healthful behaviours such as exercise, personal hygiene, proper nutrition, and rest, which in turn may increase an individual’s ability to tolerate or resist psychosocial stress and chemical or biological threats to health (House, 1981). House (1981, p.31) provides an illustration of the potential effects of social support on work stress, which aptly depicts the manner in which social support reduces the negative impact of stress.

FIGURE 3: POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON WORK-STRESS AND HEALTH



Source: House (1981, p.31)

Figure 3 exhibited above represents a simplified version of the functions of social support as depicted in the modified version of Einarsen et al’s., (2003) transactional model (figure 2) presented in earlier sections (p.14). This illustration depicts the three key ways in which social support can impact work stress and health. The effects that social support may have on both wellbeing and work stress (bullying) are regarded as main effects, given the directness of its impact on each of these constructs, while the impact that social support

may have on the relationship between wellbeing and work stress (bullying) is classified as a moderating effect. That is, a moderating effect identifies the potential that social support has to buffer the impact of occupational stress or other social stressors such as bullying on wellbeing (House, 1981). A descriptive account of the functions of each main effect and moderating effect within the bullying-social support-wellbeing relationship is provided below:

(A) MAIN EFFECT: *The Direct Effect of Social Support on Perceptions of Bullying*

Social support may directly reduce the levels of experienced occupational stress (bullying) in two ways: firstly, social support may “function to alter initial perceptions of objective stimuli” (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985, p.37). That is, regular, positive social interaction implied in social support may inspire confidence in the individual that others will meet their needs for support in the event of their being confronted with a stressful event such as bullying (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Therefore, where an actual stressor is present, individuals may either not perceive the stressor at all due to the generalised positive effect that social support may have on them, or may acknowledge the stressor however may not experience any reaction in response to it given their confidence in the supportive resources that they have to rely on. This main effect therefore operates by changing the amount of stress that individuals perceive in a situation (therefore, having an indirect effect on wellbeing) or by directly affecting health (Sarason, Pierce & Sarason, 1990, as cited in Bernstein, 1992).

(B) MAIN EFFECT: *The Direct Effect of Social Support on Individual and Organisational Outcomes (Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave)*

Social support may directly enhance health and wellbeing (increase psychological wellbeing and reduce intention to leave) irrespective of whether stress is being experienced or not, “because it meets important human needs for security, social contact, approval, belonging and affection” (House, 1981, p.31). Individuals who are surrounded by supportive networks and acknowledge or perceive the presence thereof are likely to experience higher levels of health and wellbeing (Cohen & Willis, 1985). In this instance, by virtue of the fact that an individual experiences elevated levels of wellbeing, he or she may either consequently not perceive stress even where an actual stressor is present or may purely experience the benefits of social support on wellbeing where stress is absent (Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2004).

(C) Moderating Effect: *The Moderating Effect of Social Support on the Relationship between Perceptions of Bullying and Wellbeing (Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave)*

Where social support functions as a moderator within a stressor-strain relationship, it acts to counteract the negative effects of stress on wellbeing in two different ways: with reference to the bracketed area indicated in figure 2 (p.14), social support could either induce the secondary appraisal (re-appraisal) of the event/s that

were initially perceived as stressful (Cobb, 1976), or social support could intervene between the experience of stress and the onset of symptomology by providing a “solution to the problem, reducing its perceived importance by tranquilising the neuroendocrine system such that individuals become less reactive to stress and/or by facilitating healthful behaviours” (Cohen & Willis, 1985, p.313). It has been additionally demonstrated that the availability of persons with whom an individual is able to discuss personal problems can reduce the intrusive thoughts that act to maintain chronic maladaptive responses to stressful events (Cohen et al., 2004). Thus, the moderating effect may operate through secondary appraisal, whereby the onset of detrimental psychological and/or physiological responses to perceptions of stressors is interrupted. Alternatively social support may operate by enhancing health-producing behavioural responses and/or health-threatening behavioural reactions to perceived stressors (McIntosh, 1991, as cited in Bernstein, 1992)

To sum up, social support may therefore buffer or eliminate the importance of stressful events, reduce or nullify the negative effects of stress on health and may additionally enhance the general and psychological health and wellbeing of individuals irrespective of the presence of stress (Hausser, Mojzisch, Niesel, & Schulz-Hardt, 2010).

EVIDENCE FOR THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support has been positively linked to higher levels of general physical and psychological health and wellbeing, organisational commitment, self-esteem, organisational citizenship behaviour, work morale, mood, and job satisfaction (Turner, 1981; Winefield, 1992; Sheldon, 2007; Djurkovic et al., 2004;). Inverse associations have been similarly illustrated for low levels of social support and high levels of intention to leave, depression, feelings of isolation, loneliness, morbidity and bullying (Turner, 1981; Winefield & Winefield, 1992; Sheldon, 2007; Djurkovic et al., 2004; Einsarsen, 2000; Blumenthal, Burg, Carney, Catellier, Cowan, Czajkowski, DeBusk, Hosking, Jaffe, Kaufmann, Mitchell, Norman, Powell, Raczynski, & Schneiderman, 2003). Various research conducted within different fields thus provides ample evidence to emphasise the positive effects of social support in relation to different stressors that may be experienced both in the workplace and in general life. Social support is therefore a well-developed, empirically supported construct worthy of further analysis within different contexts, and its inclusion within the present study is thus justified.

THE IMPACT OF BULLYING AS A STRESSOR ON INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES: PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Psychological wellbeing in essence refers to the general mental state of an individual (Ryff, 1989). Psychological wellbeing stems from the eudemonic perspective in psychology which postulates that wellbeing is derived from personal fulfilment and expressiveness, self-actualisation and self-determination (Vella-Brodrick & Page, 2009). According to Ryff (1989), psychological wellness depicts six distinct

dimensions: these include autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others (the direct antithesis of bullying relations), purpose in life and self-acceptance. Ryff and Keyes (1995) elaborate further that a mentally healthy individual should essentially possess both positive feelings and positive functioning. Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) have also described mental health to subsume subjective positive feelings (subjective wellbeing) and positive psychological functioning. Positive psychological functioning according to these theorists can be equated to physiological wellbeing, which encompasses the six key dimensions proposed by Ryff (1989). Psychological wellbeing pertaining directly to the workplace has been linked to high performance, low absenteeism and high organisational morale. Psychological wellbeing is therefore an essential asset to organisations given that the mental health of employees may impact organisational outcomes (Ryff, 1989). Stressful circumstances such as work or role overload, excessive demands from superiors and suppressive relationships (bullying) with colleagues, managers or supervisors may therefore directly and negatively impact employee psychological wellbeing (Vella-Brodrick & Page, 2009). Inevitably, the manifestation of such psychological symptoms is bound to impede employee performance in the workplace. It is important to note however, that only objective circumstances which are perceived as personally threatening may have negative psychological effects (Thoits, 1982).

In turn, social support has been illustrated to minimise the potential psychological symptoms in the face of a chronic stressor such as bullying (Thoits, 1982): Social support in the presence of a chronic stressor may help reduce perceived threats which in turn may assist in alleviating psychological distress that may otherwise manifest in the presence of the stressor (Antonucci, 1985). To illustrate, emotional support through kind words and deeds may function to positively alter self-perceptions of the distressed individual. "These altered self-perceptions are the mechanisms through which support operates to buffer or reduce symptoms" (Thoits, 1982, p141). Social support as an alleviator of psychological distress in the presence of a stressor thus functions to bolster "one or more aspects of the self that have been threatened by objective difficulties" such a bullying (Thoits, 1982, p.142).

THE IMPACT OF BULLYING AS A STRESSOR ON ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES: INTENTION TO LEAVE

Intention to leave, simply put, involves any thoughts or desires pertaining to wanting to leave one's current place of employment, or having the intention to search for alternative employment outside one's current place of Work (O-Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). A substantial amount of research-based evidence has illustrated a link between experiences of bullying at work and staff turnover. Studies conducted by Zapf and Gross (2001) propose that in the presence of a perpetual bullying stimulus, resignation is an eventual response. Tepper (2000) provides evidence that abusive supervision leads to high staff turnover. It has been further deciphered that 27% of bullied respondents in the United Kingdom relinquished their positions due to

perpetual bullying encounters (Rayner & Cooper, 1997). Turnover, in addition, creates major costs for the organisation in the form of labour disputes, recruiting and selecting employees, training and reorienting new recruits, and in certain instances hiring temps for the duration of that position's vacancy (Djurkovic, et al., 2004). Turnover costs incurred by the organisation may be further amplified if the individual who vacated the position held rare and irreplaceable skills (Weisberg, 1994). Thus, the current research aims to consider the possibility of an individual's intention to leave the organisation as an important organisational outcome to evaluate due to negative behaviour experienced at work.



SECTION 2

METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

The present chapter intends to cover the research design adopted in the present study, the procedure that was utilised in operationalising the research, the measuring instruments that were used to assess the variables under observation, and the data analyses that were utilised to assess the proposed relationships between these variables.

RESEARCH DESIGN: The present study utilised volunteers and explored specifically, the presence or absence of a relationship between the variables under observation. The design of this study was thus non-experimental in that there was no manipulation of the independent variable. The participants in the study consisted of white-collar employee volunteers from two large organisations within Gauteng alongside snowballed participants. Given that participation was volunteer-based, all willing and accessible snowballed and organisational individuals who were in possession of a laptop or computer with working internet had the opportunity to participate in the current study (Howell, 2004). Therefore, not all employees in the organisation samples had an equal chance of being recruited. The same held true for the snowballed sample, given that individuals contacted were limited to those to which the researcher has access to via email, and those individuals with whom the researcher's contacts could approach. Consequently, the sampling method used was non-probability sampling (Howell, 2004). Observations were made at one point in time and required that participants provide information on different feelings and intentions pertaining to wellbeing, social support, and working environment (Gravetter, & Forzano, 2009). This may have obliged respondents to recall present as well as past events; the design for the current study was therefore cross-sectional, and somewhat retrospective in nature. Due to the fact that the aim of the present study was to determine the existence of relationships and implicit directionality, rather than the establishment of true causality, a longitudinal design was considered unnecessary.

PROCEDURE: A volunteer-survey method using an internet based survey that had an encrypted link to ensure anonymity and confidentiality was employed in order to assess perceptions of bullying, social support, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. It is important to note that IP addresses were provided through this link; however these were automatically deleted to ensure that no respondents could be traced. A questionnaire comprising the three scales of measurement pertaining to the constructs of social support, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave as well as the negative acts questionnaire to assess victim perceptions of bullying (See Appendix 5-9) was sent out electronically via the HR department of the two organisations. The questionnaire consisted of 60 items and included all relevant cover forms concerning demographics, ethics and permission, and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. With the consent of the participating organisations, the questionnaire was distributed to all computer or laptop-using employees

via an electronic survey which was set up and run for two months. During this time, all responses were sent directly to the researcher through a direct internet link. This method was selected over the ordinary physical distribution of questionnaires so that employees felt more comfortable with responding, without fear of the possibility that their responses may be seen by the Human Resources Department or that their responses could be traced back to the employee him/herself. The electronic survey technique also allowed employees to complete the questionnaire at a time that was most suitable for them. Given the considerable size of the participating companies, it was estimated that at least 200 responses would be received, which would then allow for representative results.

As previously described, questionnaires were distributed via a specially set up, safe internet link provided by Survey Monkey. This electronic survey website ensures that access to the results of the electronic survey were only granted to the researcher; therefore no one was or will be able to gain access to the responses except the researcher conducting the actual study.

SAMPLE: Two organisations, one a consultancy and the other a hair care and cosmetic manufacturer were approached by the researcher and access for research was granted. The research rationale, purpose and intended methodology was communicated via email to the relevant HR professionals from both organisations: the email consisted of a participant information sheet, biographical inventory and the questionnaire intended for completion by employees, in order to enable the relevant HR professionals to make an informed decision regarding permission for access (see Appendix 1 - 9). A printout containing comprehensive answers to frequently asked questions was also provided to the HR professionals, to facilitate a full understanding of any queries that they may have had (see Appendix 3). On confirmation of access, a formal letter of consent was provided to the organisation to sign, following which arrangements were made to distribute the biographical inventory and questionnaires electronically within the organisations (see Appendix 4). Attached to each questionnaire was a letter of consent/participation information sheet for each potential participant (see Appendix 1).

In order to obtain a satisfactorily sized sample, snowballing was further adopted: the researcher disseminated the electronic survey to all working e-mail contacts, who then forwarded the survey to colleagues or remote contacts.

To ensure that the sample was representative, the compiled questionnaire incorporated a biographical inventory (see Appendix 5) which requested the biographical information of each participant. This included gender, race, and level of education, tenure, job title, job grade and home language spoken. An estimate of 200 volunteers across the two companies was deemed likely to yield representative results.

Representativeness here refers to the normal distribution of socio-demographic factors pertaining to a population of white collar workers who are computer literate, and who have access to a company computer or laptop with internet. Representativeness was assessed using descriptive statistics and frequency tables. T-tests and ANOVAs were further employed for the purpose of interpreting the degree to which individuals with various socio-demographic factors differed in perceptions of bullying, social support, wellbeing and intention to leave. This allowed the researcher to assess possible extraneous effects of these variables in the interpretation of the final results. According to the principles of the central limit theorem, a sample that is larger than thirty participants is most likely to be normally distributed, which suggests that the skewing of data due to outliers would be less of a concern. This was nonetheless assessed using distribution analysis and histograms to check for normality (Howell, 2008). In aim of counteracting the extraneous effects of employee similarities within an organisation due to continuous exposure to a specific organisational culture, more than one organisation was approached for participation, and snowball sampling was adopted to increase the range of organisational variance.

MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE: A biographical survey was included in the questionnaire in order to establish the distribution of the sample that was acquired, with particular reference to gender, age, race, marital status, number of children, level of education, home language, job grade and job title (see Appendix 5). This enabled a comprehensive analysis of the distribution of each of these biographical factors that could have influenced the degree to which the sample was normally distributed. This information was presented in the form of summary statistics and frequency distributions (see results p. 48-54).

PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING: NEGATIVE ACTS QUESTIONNAIRE (EINARSEN, 1994)

Victim perceptions of bullying was measured using the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ; see Appendix 6A) developed by Stale Einarsen in 1994 (Einarsen & Raknes, 1991). Adaptations of the original Norway-designed 21 item NAQ (derived from literature studies and interviews with victims of bullying at work) have brought this questionnaire up to date with global research on workplace bullying (Einarsen & Raknes, 1991). In its revised form, the NAQ consists of 22 items describing negative acts of a personal as well as of a work-related nature, which may be perceived as incidences of bullying if such actions persist (Einarsen & Raknes, 1991). Responses are based on a 5 point Likert-Type scale which ranges from (1) 'never', to (5) 'daily' (Mattheisen & Einarsen, 2007). Items are referred to in terms of behavioural encounters. Therefore, no overt reference to bullying is made in order to prevent participants from labelling themselves as a 'bullied victim' or from feeling reluctant to answer (Mattheisen & Einarsen, 2007). The items composing the questionnaire include statements such as "Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work", "Spreading of gossip and rumours about you" and "Being exposed to an unmanageable workload" based upon which participants

indicate how often they experience the situations mentioned. These twenty-two behavioural-type responses are then followed by a twenty-third item concerning a definition of negative acts, based on which participants must indicate whether or not they consider themselves as a recipient of the action described in the definition (Mattheisen & Einarsen, 2007). The definition provided in the questionnaire is presented as follows:

“A situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the recipient of negative acts has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. A once-off incident is not considered to be an experience of negative acts” (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009).

High NAQ scores suggest that a victim perceives high personal exposure to incidences of workplace bullying, while low individual scores on the NAQ indicate that perceived exposure to bullying is low (Einarsen et al., 2009). Evidence shows that the NAQ is high on internal consistency (as measured by Cronbach’s alpha), and contains items with acceptable face and construct validity. Studies conducted by Einarsen et al., (2009) have yielded results which indicate that the NAQ correlates negatively with measures on subjective health and wellbeing ($r = -0.31$ to $r = -0.52$), as well as with perceptions of the quality of psychosocial work environment, including job satisfaction, commitment and relationships with superiors and colleagues (Einarsen et al., 2009). Cronbach’s alpha for the reliability of the NAQ has been established at 0.90 (Einarsen et al., 2009). Factor analysis of the NAQ by Niedl (1995, as cited in Spiers, 1996) elicited the following factors: attacking the private person, social isolation, work-related measures, and physical violence. Einarsen and Raknes (1997) obtained three main factors, with reliability (Cronbach’s α) for each scale as follows: personal derogation (0.85), work-related harassment (0.57), and social exclusion (0.33). Two items on social control and one on physical abuse were also elicited through factor analysis. Einarsen and Raknes (1997) also provide evidence for validity in their findings, which illustrated strong correlations between self-reported scores on the NAQ and generally low scores (including those of non-victims) on work environment. Cronbach’s alpha correlation coefficient for the present study yielded a value of 0.91, indicating strong reliability for the NAQ instrument.

PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT: ADAPTED WORKPLACE SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE (CAPLAN, COBB, FRENCH, VAN HARRISON & PINNEAU, 1980) AND ADAPTED MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (ZIMET, DAHLEM, ZIMET, & FARLEY, 1988)

In measuring the perceived social support of respondents, adapted versions of the following two scales was utilised for the current study: *The Social support Scale* (Caplan et al., 1980; see Appendix 7A), which provides a general measure of organisational support, and *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (Zimet, et al., 1988; see Appendix 7B), which provides a general measure of support provided by friends and

family. For the purpose of the current research, the original versions of the abovementioned scales of measure and relevant reliabilities pertinent to each will be provided. However, a pilot study was conducted on modified versions of each of the scales mentioned above. This was considered necessary for the present study in order to enhance the relevance and applicability of social support to the context of perceived bullying in the workplace.

PROPERTIES OF THE ORIGINAL SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE AND THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Social Support Scale (Caplan, et al., 1980) is an eight-item scale, consisting of two subscales that are used to measure the degree to which respondents perceive support from organisational sources, namely supervisors and colleagues. Item-responses are rated on a four-point Likert-Type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86 and 0.79 have been established by Repeti and Cosmas (1991) for the supervisor support subscale and colleague support scale respectively. Lim (1996) provide a combined alpha of 0.80 for both subscales. Positive correlations with measures of overall job satisfaction and group cohesiveness have been demonstrated, which suggests high validity (Repeti & Cosmas, 1991). While the subscales of the Social Support Scale may be assessed separately, confirmatory Factor Analysis performed by Scheck, Kinicki, and Davy (1995) provide that combining the scales into a single measure fit the data most suitably.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, et al.,1988) is a twelve-item scale of measure consisting of three subscales, that is used to assess the degree to which respondents perceive social support from friends, family and significant others. Item responses are rated on a 7-point Likert Type scale ranging from 1 (very strongly agree) to 7 (very strongly disagree). Items include "I get the emotional help and support I need from my family", and "I can talk about my problems with my friends". The total Cronbach's coefficient alpha has been established by Zimet, et al., (1988) at 0.88, indicating strong internal reliability. For the friends, family and significant other subscales, reliability values of 0.85, 0.87 and 0.91 have been demonstrated respectively. These values illustrate good internal consistency for the scale as a whole as well as for the three subscales. Test-retest reliabilities for the three subscales have been established at 0.75 (friends), 0.85 (family) and 0.72 (significant other), with the overall scale showing a test-retest reliability value of 0.85. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support thus demonstrates a robust measure of social support (Zimet, et al., 1988).

PILOT STUDY

INVESTIGATING THE RELIABILITY OF THE REVISED VERSION OF THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE (CAPLAN, et al., 1980) AND THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FRIENDS AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE) (ZIMET et al., 1988)

For the purpose of the current research The Social Support Scale (Caplan et al., 1980) and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988) were revised and adapted to better suit the nature of the constructs under observation.

THE (WORKPLACE) SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE (Caplan et al., 1980)

During the amendment of the Social Support Scale, subject matter experts were consulted, following which particular items were reworded, certain words modified, and an additional four items included in order to more fully address social support in the workplace, particularly with reference to bullying. All changes are indicated in bold in figure 4 below.

FIGURE 4: ITEM CHANGES FOR THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE

ITEM	THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE	REVISED: COLLEAGUE AND SUPERVISOR SUPPORT SCALE
1	How much do your co-workers go out of their way to do things to make your work life easier?	How much do your colleagues go out of their way to do things for you that make your work life easier?
2	How easy is it to talk with your co-worker?	To what extent do you feel that you can comfortably and easily speak with your colleagues about any work-related problems you are facing?
3	How much can your co-workers be relied upon when things get tough at work?	How much can your colleagues be relied upon when things get tough at work?
4	How much are your co-workers willing to listen to your personal problems?	How much are your colleagues willing to listen to your personal problems?
5	<i>Additional question</i>	How understanding are your colleagues when you talk about personal problems with them?
6	<i>Additional question</i>	Overall, how much support do you feel that your colleagues provide you with when things get tough at work?
7	How easy is it to talk with your supervisor?	To what extent do you feel that you can comfortably and easily speak with your supervisor about any work-related problems you are facing?

8	How much can your supervisor be relied upon when things get tough at work?	How much can your supervisor be relied upon when things get tough at work?
9	How much is your supervisor willing to listen to your personal problems?	How much is your supervisor willing to listen to your personal problems?
10	<i>Additional question</i>	How understanding is your supervisor when you talk about personal problems with him/her?
11	How much does your supervisor go out of their way to do things that makes your work life easier?	How much does your supervisor go out of his/her way to do things that makes your work life easier?
12	<i>Additional question</i>	Overall, how much support do you feel your supervisor provides you with when things get tough at work?

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FRIENDS AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE) (ZIMET et al., 1988).

During the amendment of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Scale, once again subject matter experts were consulted, following which particular items were reworded, certain words modified, additional items included, and existing items removed in order to more fully address social support external to the workplace, particularly with reference to bullying. The revised version of the scale further included aspects of the Social support scale provided above, given the applicability and appropriateness of such items in addressing friends and family support. All changes are indicated in bold in figure 4 below.

FIGURE 5: ITEM CHANGES FOR THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

ITEM	THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT	REVISED: FRIENDS AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE
1	My family really tries to help me	How much does your family try and help you when you experience work-related problems?
2	I can talk about my problems with my family	How comfortable do you feel discussing your work-related problems with your family?
3	I get the emotional help and support I need from my family	How much help and support does your family provide you with when things get tough at work?
4	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	How much does your family go out of their way to do things for you when you experience problems at work?

5	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	How willing is your family to listen to your work-related problems?
6	My family is willing to help me make decisions	How willing is your family to help you make work-related decisions?
7	<i>Additional Question</i>	To what extent does your family show understanding towards you when you discuss work-related problems with them?
8	<i>Additional Question</i>	To what extent do you feel that your family provides you with helpful advice that you can use to solve work-related problems?
9	<i>Additional Question</i>	To what extent do you feel a sense of relief when you talk about your work-related problems with your family?
10	<i>Additional Question</i>	Overall, how much support do you feel your family provides you with when you experience work-related problems?
11	My friends really try to help me	How much do your friends try to help you when you experience work-related problems?
12	I can talk about my problems with my friends	How comfortable do you feel discussing your work-related problems with your friends?
13	I can count on my friends when things go wrong	How much help and support do your friends provide you with when things get tough at work?
14	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	How much do your friends go out of their way to do things for you when you experience problems at work?
15	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	How willing are your friends to listen to your work-related problems?
16	<i>Additional Question</i>	How willing are your friends to help you make work-related decisions?
17	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	To what extent do your friends show understanding towards you when you discuss work-related problems with them?
18	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	To what extent do you feel that your friends provide you with helpful advice that you can use to solve work-related problems?
19	<i>Additional Question</i>	To what extent do you feel a sense of relief when you talk about your work-related problems with your friends?
20	<i>Additional Question modified from the Social Support Scale Provided above</i>	Overall, how much support do your friends provide

	<i>Support Scale Provided above</i>	you with when you experience work-related problems?
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The following items were removed from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, given their lack of applicability to friends and family specifically.

- 1) There is a special person who is around when I am in need**
- 2) There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows**
- 5) I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me**
- 6) I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows**
- 10) There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings**

These were replaced instead by additional items that were deemed more appropriate for the research context, some of which were adapted from the Social support Scale used to assess colleague and supervisor support. The relevant similarities formulated for each of the revised scale versions was considered appropriate given the supplementary aim of the research to draw comparisons between the moderating effects of friends, family, supervisor and colleague social support.

A pilot study was therefore conducted to assess the reliability of the adapted versions of these two social support scales. A total sample of 42 Wits Plus students was utilised. All of these students attended night classes at the University and were in full time employment. Of the 42 participating individuals, 73.33% were male and 26.6% were female. The age of the participants ranged from 21-41, demonstrating an average age of 28.83. The majority of respondents were African (33.33%), following which 23.33% were Indian, and 16.66% were White. For the present sample a single trend dominance was evident (70%) while the remaining 30% of participants were married. Given the single majority, 76.66% of participants had no children, 16.67% had one child and 6.66% had either two or three children. With regard to the highest level of education obtained for the sample 43.33% had a matric, 33.33% held diplomas, 16.66% held University degrees and 6.66% held either honours or masters degrees. The most common home language spoken for the present sample was English (43.33%), followed by Zulu (20%), Tswana (13.33%), Sesotho (10%), Xhosa (3.33%) and other (10%) which comprised Ndebele, Tsonga and Arabic.

Based on the use of Cronbachs Alpha correlation coefficient analyses conducted using the statistical computational analysis system, Enterprise Guide 4 (SAS), both scales were found to be significantly reliable, with results yielded as follows: the overall alpha for the Social Support Scale (Caplan et al., 1980) was found to be 0.85, with the colleague support subscale providing an alpha of 0.82, and the supervisor

support subscale yielding an alpha of 0.94. For the The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988), an overall alpha of 0.92 was demonstrated, with the friends social support subscale yielding an alpha of 0.95 and the family social support scale generating an alpha of 0.85. Therefore both social support scales were deemed highly reliable, all revised and reworded items were retained and therefore the adapted versions of both social support scales were considered appropriate for use in the final questionnaire.

Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficients for the main sample analysis yielded the following respective values for the Colleague Social Support Subscale, Supervisor Support Subscale and the Workplace Social Support Scale Total: 0.92; 0.96; 0.94 respectively. For the Friends and Family Social Support Scale (The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support), Cronbach's alpha values were yielded as follows: 0.96 for the Friends Social Support Subscale, 0.97 for the Family Social Support Subscale, and 0.94, for the Friends and Family Social Support Scale Total. This exceeded the high reliability values demonstrated previously in the pilot study, thus confirming satisfactory reliability for the revised versions of the Workplace Social Support Scale and the Friends and Family Social Support Scale.

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING: GENERAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (GOLDBERG, 1972)

A measure of respondents' psychological wellbeing was ascertained through the use of the twelve-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972, see Appendix 8). Extensive utilization of the shortened-item version as a screening measure for general psychological health is evident in recent research (Ye, 2009, as cited in Upton, 2010). The 12-item general health questionnaire (GHQ) requires respondents' to rate their current psychological state on a four point Likert-type scale with response selections ranging from (1) *better than usual* to (4) *much worse than usual*. Items include, for example "Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing," and "Have you recently felt constantly under strain" (Goldberg, 1978). An item is only considered present if it is being experienced more than usual (Goldberg, Rickels, Downing & Hesbacher, 1976). In a comparative study conducted by Goldberg et al., (1976) the General Health Questionnaire was shown to correlate positively ($r= 0.78$) with the Lipman-Rickels Scale, a symptom distress checklist that also assesses the frequency of physical and psychological symptoms indicative of decreased psychological wellbeing. Goldberg (1978) emphasizes adequate test-retest reliability for this particular measure over a period of six months and provides further that it exhibits adequate split-half reliability. Bank's (1985) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of between 0.82 and 0.90, thereby supporting the reliability of the scale across samples. Cross-cultural reliability is furthermore provided by Bluen (1986, as cited in Bernstein, 1992) who reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.91 and 0.93 for the scale when used within the context of a South organisation. Cronbach's alpha for the present study was 0.90, thereby indicating high reliability for the GHQ instrument.

ORGANISATIONAL WELLBEING: TURNOVER INTENTIONS SCALE (O'DRISCOLL & BEEHR, 1994)

O'Driscoll and Beehr's (1994) Turnover Intentions Scale was used to assess participant's overall intention to leave the current organisation in which they are present (see Appendix 9). This succinct scale of measure consists of three items referring to employee feelings and intentions pertaining to their present job in relation to an alternative position that they may be interested in, or are able to obtain within another organisation. The first item is centered on thoughts about leaving their present place of employment and is measured on a six-point scale with response options ranging from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (6) *All the time*. The second item revolves around strategies and intentions to search for alternative employment in the following year and is measured on a six-point scale with response selections ranging from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (6) *Strongly agree*. The final item concerns the propensity of the individual to begin an active search for alternative employment outside of their present place of employment in the following year and is measured on a six-point scale with response options ranging from (1) *Very Unlikely* to (6) *Very Likely*.

O'Driscoll and Beehr (1994) demonstrate a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93, indicating high reliability for this three item measure. Reports from Riley (2006) have revealed reliability values of 0.91, which confirms that high reliability is evident across samples within different studies. For the current study, an alpha value of 0.91 was demonstrated thereby replicating former high reliability evidenced in previous studies.

ADDITIONAL MEASUREMENTS: SOURCES TO WHICH RESPONDENTS ATTRIBUTE THEIR EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING

As outlined previously (p.10-14), the theoretical framework that has been used to outline the conceptualisation of the current study is premised on Einarsen's (2000) Conceptual Framework for the Study and Management of Bullying at Work, which is formulated implicitly around the Transactional Model proposed by Cox and McKay (1978). In addition to this model, the Attribution theory formulated by Baron, (1990, as cited in Zapf 1999) has also added value to the development of the current study: according to Attribution theory, individuals are prone to diffusing blame to external environmental factors or individuals for the negative impact of a given action rather than impugning the situation to oneself (Zapf, 1999). Based on this theory, additional questions were asked of respondents. Firstly, an attempt was made to establish who the respondents (if bullied) attribute the bullying to. For example: supervisors, co-workers, subordinates or customers (see Appendix 6B).

The question pertaining to the above was phrased as follows: Who do you feel to be the main cause of you experiencing negative acts? (Respondents were able to select YES/NO based on whether or not they believed

such a person contributed to their experiences of bullying. More than one person could be selected as a source of bullying).

In addition to the above, an attempt was made to determine whether respondents attribute the bullying to their own characteristics such as race, gender, age, religion, ethnic group or whether respondents attribute any bullying experienced to the perpetrator him/herself (see Appendix 6B).

The question pertaining to the attribution process occurring amongst respondents was phrased as follows:

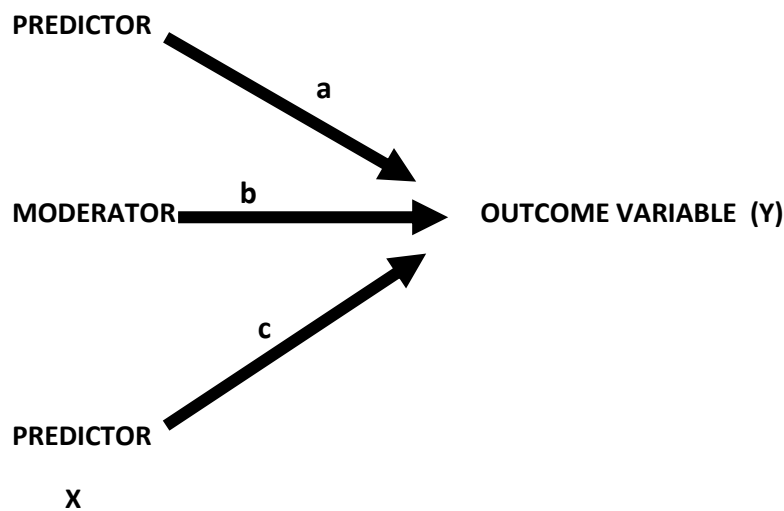
Which of the following factors do you think may have contributed to any or all of the experiences you reported in the questions answered above? (Respondents were able to select YES/NO based on whether or not they believed such a factor contributed to their experiences of bullying. More than one factor could be selected as a contributing element in bullying-related experiences).

These additional questions were placed after the negative acts questionnaire (Appendix 6A) in order to allow for respondents to answer in relation to their experiences of bullying as had been asked in the NAQ. These responses were analysed using frequency distributions, with greater frequencies for a particular person or factor indicating a higher contribution to negative bullying experiences. Respondents were prompted to answer according to whether or not they had experienced negative acts in the workplace over time. (See appendix 6B for the ordering and structuring of questions).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE: MULTIPLE MODERATED REGRESSION (MMR) ANALYSIS

The current research utilised moderated multiple regression to determine whether social support moderated the relationship that was proposed to exist between perceptions of bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave.

Before describing the components that comprise multiple moderated regression analysis, a brief definition of a moderator is necessary: A moderator can be essentially described as any *“qualitative or quantitative variable that may impact the strength and/or direction of a relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable”* (Barron & Kenny, 1986, p.1174). *“Specifically within a correlational analysis framework, a moderator is a third variable that affects the zero-order correlation between two other variables. “A moderator-interaction effect also would be said to occur if a relation is substantially reduced instead of being reversed, for example, if we find no difference under the private condition”* (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p.1174).The essential properties of a moderator have been aptly diagrammatised by Baron & Kenny (1986, p 1174) as follows:



MODERATOR

Source: Moderator Model: Baron & Kenny (1986), p 1174.

This diagram consists of three causal paths (**a**, **b**, and **c**) each of which flow into the outcome variable. The moderator hypothesis as defined above will hold true if the interaction path (**c**) is significant i.e.: that the predictor and moderator demonstrate an interaction. Significant main effects may also be present through path's **a** and **b**, however these are not directly important for the moderator hypothesis.

Over and above these basic requirements, it is advantageous if the moderator shows no correlation to either the predictor or outcome variable in order for the interaction term to be clearly distinguishable and interpretable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Another essential factor to consider in dealing with moderator variables is the equality present for both moderator and predictor variables in regard to their role as causal variables “*antecedent or exogenous to certain criterion effects*” (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p 1174). More simply put, moderator variables always function as independent variables.

THE PROPERTIES OF MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Moderated multiple regression (MMR) emerges from the basic principles of standardised multiple regression formulated by Saunders, 1956, as cited in Bernstein 1992). Standardised multiple regression enables the evaluation of the association between criterion (dependent) and independent (predictor) variables. The dependent variable in this relationship “is considered to be a function of a set of independent variables” (Cohen, 1978). The fundamental difference between simple and moderated multiple regression, is the inclusion of an interaction term for MMR (Irwin & McClelland, 2001). The basic statistical principle underlying MMR centres on the proposition that the relationship existing between an independent variable and dependent variable is determined by levels of a third variable, known to be the moderator (Cohen, 1978). The moderator relationship, regularly referred to as the interaction term, is fashioned through the inclusion of an additional independent variable known as a product term, which in essence amounts to the product of the values of the moderator variable and the values of the independent variable (Upton, 2010). Baron and

Kenny (1986) purport that moderation indicates that the causal relationship between two variables changes as a function of the moderator variable. Thus, MMR measures the “differential effect of the relationship between the independent variable on the dependent variable, as a function of the moderator, thus rendering the moderator as the third variable in the MMR equation” (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984, p. 200).

MMR allows for the inclusion of an interaction term, which permits information pertaining to both the main and moderating effects of a moderator in the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and in addition, does not rely on sub-grouping, thus is considered most appropriate for the present study (Zedeck, Cranny, Vale and Smith, 1971). While sub-grouping is sensitive to the presence of moderator effects, the problems inherent in this method render moderated multiple regression a more effective means to illustrate moderator effects (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984). Sub-grouping is heavily dependent on the separation of the data sample into subgroups of the moderator variable: for example, separating the data sample into high and low moderator variables. The relationship between the independent and dependent variable is illustrated in sub-grouping by means of contrasting the results yielded by each of the subgroups. Sub-groups of the sample are obtained via random group separation, which duplicates the probability of incorrect results (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984; Zedeck, et al., 1971; Cohen, 1978). Sub-grouping also involves the transformation of quantitative variables into categorical variables, which further tarnishes the information yielded by this statistical process. Additionally, only comparing data obtained from selected sub-groups minimises the statistical power of the test, and inappropriately discards data from sub-groups that are not selected for analysis. There is evidently much risk involved in the use of sub-grouping analysis, especially in its tendency to produce overestimated findings concerning moderator variables (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984).

In contrast to the difficulties inherent in the use of sub-grouping analysis, MMR operates to overcome these difficulties as follows: MMR generates abundant information pertaining to the main and interaction effects of the moderator variable; it incorporates prediction equations as with normal multiple regression for the total sample and thereby does not require sub-grouping; finally, MMR permits the analysis of non-linear variables (Zedeck, et al., 1971).

MMR’s resilience is apparent in its ability to detect moderating effects in the presence of strong main effects for both independent and moderator variables, where large error components concerning the dependent variables are evident, where the reliabilities are low for both independent and moderator variables, and where partial multicollinearity is present for the independent and moderator variables (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984).

Evident in the inherent strengths of the MMR method of analysis portrayed above, and given the aim of evaluating the moderating effect of social support within the bullying-wellbeing/intention to leave relationship pertaining to the present study, the utilisation of MMR was considered most appropriate.

THE UNDERLYING OPERATIONS OF MULTIPLE MODERATED REGRESSION

MMR analysis functions to perform the following: to test for significance, to establish the percentage of variance explained in each of the dependent variables as a function of the independent variable, to offer a comprehensive explanation of the dependent variable by way of including an interaction term, and to assess a specific independent variable with greater certainty, given the inclusion of a moderator variable (also referred to as an extraneous variable) to determine the potential altering properties of such a construct (Cleary & Kessler, 1982; Lewis-Beck, 1980).

“There are two central concepts that represent the interaction effect, namely, the main effect and the moderator effect. A main effect is said to occur when the effect of the independent variable is constant, despite the presence or absence of any other variables or moderating influences. A moderator effect, by contrast, refers to a variable that affects a second variable if the effect of the second variable depends upon the level of the first variable. Thus, the third variable (Z) is said to moderate the relationship between two other variables (X and Y) if the degree of relationship between X and Y is affected by the level of Z” (Finney, Mitchell, Cronkite & Moos, 1984; Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

Hierarchical analytical strategy inherent in MMR enables the assessment of an interaction effect through the use of a product term (Upton, 2010). However an accurate evaluation to determine the presence of a true interaction demands the *partialling out* of all variance associated with the main effects of the variables used to form the interaction (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984). This is achieved by MMR as follows: The effects of the independent variable (X) and the moderator variable (Y) are first assessed, and the main effects of X and Y are then automatically partialled out given that they are entered prior to the interaction term in the moderated multiple regression equation (Finney et al., 1984).

Standard F-tests and comparisons between derived values with critical F-values and degrees of freedom are used to test the significance of the interaction term. An overall F-test establishes the degree to which a single regression line fits the data: significance is depicted where two or more lines fit the data more accurately than a single regression line (Bedeian & Mossholder, 1994). In terms of the equation drawn, this will suggest that the regression of Y on X is dependent on the moderator variable (Z). The presence of a moderating effect is established at a 0.5 level of significance (Zedeck, et al., 1971,).

When applying MMR to the present study, separate regression equations were computed using the statistical computational analysis system, Enterprise Guide 4 (SAS), for each dependent variable, namely, psychological wellbeing, and intention to leave. More specifically, for each dependent variable analysis, the first step required entering the independent variable (perceptions of workplace bullying) followed by the moderator (social support) that is, the interaction term into the equation. For these separate analyses, the 0.05 level of significance was selected to determine the presence of significant effects. This cut-off point was considered acceptable according to Zedeck *et al.* (1971) given that MMR is regarded as a robust technique (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1984).

STATISTICAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION

In applying the computational analysis of MMR, the satisfaction of three assumptions is required:

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to the size or extent to which the independent variables are correlated. In accordance with the theoretical assumptions of Miles and Shevlin (2001) the existence of a correlation between independent and moderator variables that exceeds 0.80 ($r > 0.80$) provides evidence of multicollinearity. In order to assess the nature of the associative relationships that exist between the independent and moderator variables, Pearson correlation coefficients are computed. If no correlations greater than .80 are salient, it can then be assumed that multicollinearity does not exist (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

Measurement Error

While complete elimination of measurement error is impossible to achieve, it is still necessary to establish the degree to which measurement error is present in an MMR analysis, so as to ensure that the measurement of data and estimates yielded are accurately displayed (Upton, 2010). Determining the internal reliability of all instruments utilised in the present study will provide evidence for the degree to which measurement error is present (Upton, 2010). This is achieved through the use of Cronbach's alpha formula whereby coefficients greater than 0.60 will be regarded appropriate for use in the analysis (Kirn, et al., 1986, as cited in Bernstein, 1992).

Linearity

MMR permits the evaluation of non-linear variables, and thus requires the existence of a linear relationship between the independent and independent variables in use. Linear regression tests are thereby applied in order to establish whether or not linearity is present (Zedeck, et al., 1871). This is achieved through categorising Between-group sum of squares into the portion representing linearity, and the portion that

illustrates a deviation from linearity. The significance of the linear and non-linear variables is then determined through the observation of F-test values and degrees of freedom (Bluen, 1986, as cited in Bernstein, 1992).

Where a significant F-value is established, a deviation of linearity is said to exist. A specialised form of moderated regression entitled polynomial regression is applied in this instance to modify the variable, and in so doing, linearity is thereby adhered to (Irwin & McClelland, 2001). Polynomial regression allows for the inclusion of successive powers (products) in the regression model, which permits “the relationship between the independent and dependent variables to be moderated by the level of the same independent variable” (Irwin, & McClelland, p.105). The analysis is therefore performed hierarchically, by means of including a higher order polynomial to the equation as each successive step of the analysis. The highest order term that illustrates the most significant contribution to the previously explained variance of the dependent variable, substitutes the original non-linear variable in the regression equation (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

PEARSON’S PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION CO-EFFICIENT

Although correlations do not serve as the main source of statistical analysis for the present study, research question two outlined below required the use of Persons product moment correlation coefficient; a brief discussion thereof was therefore deemed necessary. According to Howell (2008) a correlation can be defined as the “relationship between variables” and the coefficient of this indicates “a measure” of such variable relationships. (p. 171). This statistical technique was used to determine whether or not a significant relationship exists between perceptions of bullying and perceived social support from colleagues, supervisors, friends and family. Correlation coefficients are based on a statistic called covariance, which can be defined as “any number that reflects the degree to which two variables vary together” (Howell, 2008, p 180). For example and with regard to the present study, this would be illustrated where high scores obtained for social support would co-vary inversely with high perceptions of bullying. In Pearson’s Product-Moment method for calculating the correlation coefficient, the covariance divided by the standard deviations obtained provides an estimate result of the correlation. The correlation coefficient obtained indicates a value on a scale that exists between -1.00 and + 1.00: the closer this value is to either of these given limits, the stronger the relationship between the variables in question (Howell, 2008). Howell (2008) postulates that when working with correlations, caution must be issued in deducing causal conclusions that decipher directionality given that correlations do not imply causation. While a relationship may exist between two variables, this is not to say that any one of those variables has in fact caused the other. This is because a correlation does not allow for the establishment of temporal precedence (i.e.: that variable x preceded variable y) (Howell, 2008). Studying relationships between variables does not require the use of random assignment or the manipulation of variables (no direction is established therefore independent and dependent variables cannot be defined, and consequently, manipulation of the independent variable is not possible), both of which serve to eliminate the possibility of alternative impacts for the obtained results; therefore, the fact that correlative analyses do

not permit manipulation of variables or random assignment provides yet another reason as to why correlations cannot indicate the presence of a causal relationship (Howell, 2008).

VARIABLE CLASSIFICATION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

The variables under analysis for the present study were categorised in line with the model of multiple moderated regression as follows: Independent Variable: Perceptions of Workplace Bullying; Moderator Variable: Perceived Social Support from Colleagues, Supervisors, Friends and Family (Perceived Social Support); Dependent Variable 1: Psychological Wellbeing; Dependent Variable 2: Intention to leave.

In light of previous research results, the following research questions and expected predictions for each were established for the current study:

1) DOES PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) MODERATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?

It was predicted here that social support would moderate the relationship between perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing/intention to leave in such a way that in the event of bullying being perceived, social support would moderate the impact of perceived bullying on the outcome variables of psychological well being and intention to leave: that is social support was expected to reduce the negative impact of bullying on these outcome variables.

Moderated multiple regression also examined direct effects. The direct impact of social support on perceptions of bullying was therefore also assessed. Therefore a sub question was formed:

2) DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) AND PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING?

It was predicted here, that higher levels of social support would be associated with lower perceptions of bullying as research has shown that having social support can reduce an individuals' negative appraisal of a stressful situation (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). Research has also shown that having supportive relationships can have a positive effect on well being even if no stress is being experienced (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, this research examined whether social support had a direct effect on the outcome variables, independent of the experience of stress.

3) DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?

It was hypothesized here, that higher levels of social support would be associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing and lower levels of intention to leave. An inverse correlation was thus expected for the relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing (given that low scores on the GHQ indicate higher psychological wellbeing, while high scores on the social support scales indicate higher levels of support) and an inverse

correlation was anticipated for the association between social support and intention to leave (where low scores on the Intention to leave scale indicate low intention to leave).

Lastly the direct relationship between stressor (IV) and strain (DV's) was examined, that is:

- 4) DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?** For this question, it was predicted that higher perceptions of bullying would be associated with lower levels of psychological wellbeing and higher levels of intention to leave. A positive correlation was therefore expected for the association between perceptions of bullying and intention to leave, and a positive correlation was presupposed for the relationship between perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing (given that high scores on the GHQ indicate lower psychological wellbeing).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All necessary measures were taken to ensure that the present study complied with all laws and standards that are applicable to research, both in terms of provincial and national laws and regulations, as well as in terms of professional standards governing the conduct of research, particularly those standards governing research with human participants (s. 9.8 of the Ethical Code of Professional Conduct; <http://ethics.psych.co.za>).

In complying with section 9.9 of the Ethical Code of Professional Conduct regarding institutional approval, informed consent to research was obtained from the participating organisations, *the School of Human and Community Development of the University of the Witwatersrand and from the University Ethics Committee* for clearance of research involving human subjects. The contributing companies received a letter explaining and describing all necessary aspects of the present research (see Appendix 2). The participating organisations also received an information sheet of “frequently asked questions, to which comprehensive answers were provided, in order to resolve any queries that could have arisen (see Appendix 3).

The information presented in the consent form for the organisation incorporated all ethically related measures that were taken to ensure that the study was ethically sound. This included the following: participation in the present study was voluntary (hence the use of volunteer sampling) and no employees were advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not to complete the questionnaire. All participants remained anonymous throughout the duration of the study as there were no identifying characteristics that may have led to the exposure of an individual participant’s identity: While questions were asked about personal circumstances, no identifying information such as name or I.D. number was asked for, and as such participants remained anonymous. Responses were not used for any purposes other than research. Participants were provided with this information, along with a general overview

describing the nature of the research (see Appendix 1). Informed consent from respondents was assumed by the completion of the questionnaires. However, participants were able to withdraw from the study until such time as they had submitted the questionnaires. Data was used solely for academic purposes. Obtained responses were safeguarded at all times as no access was allowed into the electronic data collection site other than by the researcher and her supervisor. Contact details of both the researcher and the supervisor involved in this study were provided on the coversheet of the questionnaire, should the selected companies or participants have had any further questions about any aspects involving the research and study procedure. The telephone number of a counselling facility/counselling call-centre (Lifeline) was also provided, in the event that employees who were experiencing negative acts in the workplace encountered any traumatic recall of these events after having answered the questionnaire.

Should the organisations so request the results of the study, data will be presented to the organisations in a written report that illustrates group trends, which would make it impossible to identify any particular respondent.

SECTION 3

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Response Rate: Given that an integrative sampling method using both purposeful volunteer and snowball sampling was adopted, an approximate total of 1000 employees within various known and unknown organisations including those approached by the researcher and numerous anonymous organisations were utilised for the purpose of this study. Of the individuals who either received the electronic survey directly or through snowballing, 261 responses were obtained (26.1%), of which 52 were *insufficiently* complete and unusable. Thus, based on the total number of complete responses used, the overall completed response rate amounted to 20.9% (209 usable questionnaires). Given that the sample was acquired using a volunteer sampling method, a low response rate was to be expected, however a sample of 209 proves large enough to provide sufficiently convincing evidence (Howell, 2008).

Gender: Based on the biographical information obtained, the frequency table for the biographical variable gender indicated that of the 209 respondents, 35.89% were male and 64.11% were female (see Table 1 below). Therefore females dominated the sample by 28.22%.

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION FOR GENDER

GENDER	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Male	75	35.89	75	35.89
Female	134	64.11	209	100.00

Age: Irrespective of the 19 respondents who chose not to fill in their age, the overall age of respondents ranged from 19 to 60 years of age (see Appendix 10: Table A1). The majority of respondents were located between the ages of 24-28 (18.95%). The least number of employees in the sample were revealed to be between 54-60 years of age (4.74%). Histograms for age reveal that the majority of respondents in the sample ranged between the ages of 25 to 43, with a mean age of 35.47 years (standard deviation =10.12) and a median age of 34.5 years (variance: 102.39) (see Table 2 below). A distribution analysis was conducted to determine whether or not age was normally distributed for the sample used. Evident in Appendix 10: Table A2, age was more or less normally distributed. Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients further yielded values between -1 and 1 (0.46 and -0.73 respectively) thus indicating satisfactorily normal distribution of age (see Appendix 10: Table 2).

TABLE 2: SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR AGE

Basic Statistical Measures			
Location		Variability	
Mean	35.46842	Std Deviation	10.11921
Median	34.50000	Variance	102.39847
Mode	35.00000	Range	41.00000
		Interquartile Range	15.00000

Race: Racial frequency distributions indicated that 12.44% of the respondents were African, 28.71 % Indian, 53.11% White, 4.31% Coloured, and Other , 1.44% (this included Asian and mixed race respondents) indicating a majority white response (see Table 3 below). This corresponds to research conducted in the field of race and discrimination, which reveals that the majority of white collar or higher level positions in organisations continue to be dominated by white individuals (Duckitt, & Mphuthing, 1998).

TABLE 3: FREQUENCY TABLE FOR RACE

RACE	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
African	26	12.44	26	12.44
Indian	60	28.71	86	41.15
Coloured	9	4.31	95	45.45
White	111	53.11	206	98.56
Other	3	1.44	209	100.00

Marital Status: Most employees in the sample indicated that they were married (53.37%), 33.17% indicated that they were single, 5.77% divorced, 10% co-habiting and the remaining 6% were widowed or separated (see Table 4 below).

TABLE 4: FREQUENCY TABLE FOR MARITAL STATUS

MARITAL STATUS	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Married	111	53.37	111	53.37
Single	69	33.17	180	86.54
Divorced	12	5.77	192	92.31
Widowed	2	0.96	194	93.27
Separated	4	1.92	198	95.19
Co-Habiting	10	4.81	208	100.00

Frequency Missing = 1

Number of Children: The majority of employees in the given sample had no children (37.38%), 16.50% had 1 child, 25.24% of employees had 2 children, 14.08% had 3 children and only 6.81 % had more than 4 children (see Table 5 below). The mean number of children possessed by participants was revealed to be 1.79 (standard deviation = 1.24).

TABLE 5: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN

NO OF CHILDREN	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	77	37.38	77	37.38
1	34	16.50	111	53.88
2	52	25.24	163	79.13
3	29	14.08	192	93.20
4	12	5.83	204	99.03
5	1	0.49	205	99.51
6	1	0.49	206	100.00

Frequency Missing= 3

Level of Education: Biographical distribution frequencies for level of education yielded a 29.81% majority of employees holding a Matric, 29.33% with a post-Matric diploma , 25.48% in possession of a university degree, 19% with a post-graduate honours degree, 10 % holding a post-graduate masters degree and only 3% in possession of qualifications less than Matric (see table 6 below). This indicates that the majority of respondents were in possession of tertiary education.

TABLE 6: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LEVEL OF EDUCATION

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Matric	62	29.81	62	29.81
Post-Matric Diploma	61	29.33	123	59.13
University Degree	53	25.48	176	84.62
Honours	19	9.13	195	93.75
Masters	10	4.81	205	98.56
Less than Matric	3	1.44	208	100.00

Frequency Missing = 1

Home Language: The most common home languages spoken by employees in this particular sample were English (66.99%), and Afrikaans (17.7-%). 8.61% of the respondents indicated that they spoke other languages such as Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana Venda, Sesotho and Sepedi, and 12% of the respondents spoke languages other than those specified (this included Portuguese, bilingual combinations, Chinese, Northern Sotho, Shangaan and Urdu) (see Table 7 below).

TABLE 7: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF HOME LANGUAGE

HOME LANGAUGE	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
English	140	66.99	140	66.99
Afrikaans	37	17.70	177	84.69
Zulu	2	0.96	179	85.65
Xhosa	3	1.44	182	87.08
Tswana	6	2.87	188	89.95
Venda	1	0.48	189	90.43
Sesotho	4	1.91	193	92.34
Sepedi	4	1.91	197	94.26
Other	12	5.74	209	100.00

Job Title: Of the 207 respondents that did respond to this question 28.5% indicated that they were managers, 7.73% assistant managers, 6.28% CEO's, 8.21% trainees, 15.94% executive assistants/secretaries, 5,31% sales representatives and 4.35% were either developers, engineers or promoters. An additional 23.67% were categorised as in possession of other occupations, where only one or two individuals within the sample indicated that profession: these ranged from teachers, administrators, technicians, supervisors, purchasing agents, team leaders, co-ordinators, analysts, HR practitioners and accountants (see table 8 below). Evident for the current sample is a vast distribution of job titles, which adds value to the degree of representativeness that the sample provides.

TABLE 8: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF JOB TITLE

JOB TITLE	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Manager	59	28.50	59	28.50
Assistant Manager	16	7.73	75	36.23
Executive Assistant	33	15.94	108	52.17
CEO	13	6.28	121	58.45
Trainee	17	8.21	138	66.67
Promoter	2	0.97	140	67.63
Engineer	4	1.93	144	69.57
Developer	3	1.45	147	71.01
Sales Representative	11	5.31	158	76.33
Other	49	23.67	207	100.00

Frequency Missing=2

THE IMPACT OF BIOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES ON ANALYSIS VARIABLES

According to Pedhazur & Schmelkin (1991), biographical variables which include gender, age, race, marital status, number of children, level of education, home language and job title may explain the nature of results obtained. To elaborate, differences in the levels of each of the aforementioned biographical variables may be significantly related to the analysis variables that have been selected for study. It is important therefore to consider these biographical variables in order to assess whether the impact (if any) of such variables may explain the results obtained in the main statistical analysis (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

For the purposes of the present study, t-tests and ANOVAs were run. Biographical variables served as independent variables, while the main analysis variables under study (Perceptions of Bullying, Friends and family Social Support, Workplace Social Support, Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave) were utilised as dependent variables. This allowed the researcher to establish whether or not biographical factors impacted upon the levels of the analysis variables yielded. It is important to note that although all biographical variables were compared to all analysis variables, results reported will only focus on statistically significant results obtained.

Both t-tests and ANOVAs were conducted for the purpose of accommodating the amount of classification levels that each of the biographical variables possess. A t-test was deemed appropriate to conduct an analysis on gender given the presence of only two classification levels (male or female). However, race, age, number of children, marital status, level of education, home language and job title, all possessed more than two classification levels; therefore it was most appropriate to run one-way ANOVAs in order to compare the biographical variables to the main analysis variables.

GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR PARAMETRIC T-TESTS AND ANOVAS

The assumptions of t-tests and ANOVAs include homogeneity of variance, normality, interval dependent variables and random independent sampling (Howell, 2008). Given that all biographical variables with the exception of age were nominal and all analysis variables (Perceptions of Bullying, Social Support, Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave) interval, the assumption of interval data for dependent variables was satisfied. While the use of volunteer and snowball sampling exposed the option for participation only to white-collar employees within the participating organisations and the various unknown organisations (through snowballing), all individuals to which the survey was distributed, were permitted an equal chance of participating in the study; therefore, while random independent sampling can never be truly satisfied (Howell, 2008), it was nonetheless assumed satisfactorily present for the current sample. Based on results obtained through the process of conducting Levene's test for homogeneity of variance, Kolmogorov Smirnov's test for normality, skewness and kurtosis coefficients, the analysis variables and age were found to be more or less homogeneous and normally distributed (see below). However it is expected that certain biographical variables are likely to demonstrate a non-normal distribution; nevertheless, the principle of the central limit theorem states that sample sizes greater than thirty can be assumed to be normally distributed, (where the acquired sample size was 209), therefore the assumption of normality was considered a non-issue for the purposes of the present research, and consequently parametric t-tests and ANOVAs were used to run the analysis (Howell, 2008).

RESULTS

In deciphering the remaining variables, majority comparisons conducted between biographical and analysis variables indicated non-significant relationships. Variable influence that did indicate a significant effect included level of education on intention to leave ($p=0.04$), job title on psychological wellbeing ($p=0.03$), and marital status on psychological wellbeing ($p=0.04$), (see Appendix 14: Table A1-A4). In terms of level of education and intention to leave, Tukey's experiment wise post hoc tests were conducted to assess differences within the classification levels of the independent variable. Results yielded a significant difference between individuals with Matric and individuals with a Masters degree. To elaborate, individuals with a Matric showed higher intention to leave ($m=13.6$) than individuals with a masters degree ($m=5.96$).

Attributable to these obtained differences is the possibility that individuals with a Masters degree hold positions that offer higher mental reward than those individuals in possession of a Matric, thereby elevating psychological wellbeing (De Witte, 1999). In addition, individuals with a Masters degree may command more respect and may furthermore experience augmented self-esteem and self-fulfilment given their 'degree status'; consequently these individuals may experience higher levels of overall psychological wellbeing (DeWitte, 1999). Individuals with a Matric may be limited in their opportunity to grow and develop within an organisation, given their limited level of education -particularly in South Africa, where tertiary education has become a necessity in the workplace (Wilson, 2008) - may experience job insecurity due to replacability and may consequently experience low motivation, which in turn may impact on levels of psychological wellbeing (De Witte, 1999). With regard to job title and psychological wellbeing, Tukey's experiment wise post hoc comparisons indicated significant differences between assistant managers and engineers. In particular, assistant managers (m=21) showed higher levels of psychological wellbeing than engineers (m=34), given that high scores on the GHQ are indicative of lower levels of psychological wellbeing. While literature suggests that differences in the level of psychological wellbeing may be accounted for by variation in levels of authority (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000), a link between position and authority could not be concretely concluded: job level was excluded as a question in the current study due to the use of purposive and snowball sampling, whereby a true comparison between the job levels of individuals was not possible (given that the numerous organisations in which respondents were employed may not necessarily have graded job titles in the same manner), and therefore true differences in the level of authority afforded by these positions could not be established (see p. 83-84 for further discussion).

In terms of the differences illustrated between psychological wellbeing and job title, the possibility exists that the amount of autonomy, control and power one's job provides may further influence the level of psychological wellbeing of individuals (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999; Aquino, Grover, Bradfield, & Allen, 1999). To elaborate, individuals higher up within the organisational hierarchy, such as assistant managers or heads of department who possess control over a number of employees, and who hold disciplinary action, pay, promotion or compensation powers as part of their job description, may be less likely to experience low psychological wellbeing than individuals lower on the corporate ladder (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). In light of the current sample, engineers illustrated low levels of psychological wellbeing, which may be attributable to the intensity of manual or mental labour that such a job demands. This may be further accredited to findings which suggest that employees are less likely to engage in the victimisation of individuals in higher level positions, given that such behaviour may jeopardize factors such as pay or dismissal (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999; Aquino *et. al.*, 1999).

For marital status and psychological wellbeing, Tukey's experiment wise post hoc tests indicated a significant difference in psychological wellbeing between separated and single individuals and between separated and

divorced individuals. Mean comparisons indicated that individuals who are separated ($m=34$) demonstrated lower psychological wellbeing than individuals who are either single ($m=23.7$) or divorced ($m=22.8$). With regard to the difference in psychological wellbeing exhibited between divorced and separated individuals (in particular, that individuals who are separated experience lower psychological wellbeing than individuals who are divorced), experiences pertaining to the unspecified nature of relational standing coupled with the possible desire to continue relations with a partner from which an individual is recently separated may result in lower levels of psychological wellbeing than individuals for whom finality and mutuality through divorce is salient (Amato, 2000; Umberson, Chen, House, Hopkins, & Slaten, 1996). It is furthermore likely that individuals who are separated from their spouse are in the midst of conflict, which may result in lower levels of psychological wellbeing (Umberson et al., 1996).

RELIABILITY RESULTS FOR ANALYSIS VARIABLES SCALES OF MEASURE

Through the use of Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient analyses, alpha coefficients for each of the scales (and subscales for the Workplace Social Support Scale and the Friends and Family Social Support Scales) for the present study indicated high reliability (all alpha values indicated at above 0.7), as is evident in the table provided below. Minimal discrepancies between raw and standardised values of alpha were yielded for all five analysis variable scales, thus indicating strong reliability. In light of adapted versions of both social support scales, alpha values for the subscales and total Cronbach's alphas yielded values higher than those previously demonstrated in the pilot study (see p. 32-35). Consequently, given that results exhibited in the pilot study demonstrated high alpha values and subsequent results depicted below exhibited alpha values superior to those obtained previously, it can be confirmed that adapted versions of both the Workplace Social Support Scale and the Friends and Family Social Support Scale are highly reliable measures of support within the realm of both work-related and personal relations. Thus these adapted scales may be considered suitable for use in future studies, particularly those relating to bullying in the workplace.

TABLE 9: RELIABILITY MEASURES USING CHRONBACH'S COEFFICIENT ALPHA (>0.7)

Measuring Instruments	N of Items	Item Range		SD	Raw (α)	Standardised (α)
		Min	Max			
Negative Acts Questionnaire	23	1	5	0.85597	0.905375	0.908630
Colleague Social Support Subscale	6	1	5	5.00527	0.919211	0.919232
Supervisor Social Support Subscale	6	1	4	5.89547	0.955660	0.955908

Workplace Social Support Total Questionnaire	12	1	4	9.82064	0.944552	0.944251
Family Social Support Subscale	10	1	4	7.54974	0.966627	0.966627
Friends Social Support Subscale	10	1	4	8.46151	0.954577	0.955118
Friends and Family Social Support Questionnaire	20	1	4	12.75737	0.940578	0.955118
Psychological Wellbeing	12	1	4	6.94592	0.902998	0.903389
Intention to Leave	3	1	6	4.76947	0.910464	0.911693

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS PERTAINING TO SOURCES AND ATTRIBUTIONS OF PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Sources of Bullying: Participants were required to select the person or persons who were perceived to be the main cause of negative acts experienced in the workplace. More than one response per respondent was therefore possible. Based on frequency distributions obtained (Appendix 12: Table A1), supervisors were rated as the most frequent source of bullying (36.7%), followed by colleagues (20.97%), customers (9.36%) and other (4.12%). 23.23% of the respondents selected this particular item as not-applicable (participants were prompted to select this option if no bullying at work was experienced whatsoever). Although statistical verification of these particular item findings was beyond the scope of the current study, it appeared that bullying was attributed most frequently to supervisors. This is in line with previous research by Zapf (1999) which demonstrated similar attribution patterns, yielding supervisors to be the most dominant perceived source of workplace bullying. Future qualitative research probing the reasons for the attribution thereof will provide additional value to forthcoming literature on workplace bullying.

Factors to which Bullying Experiences are Frequently Attributed: Participants were further required to indicate the factor or factors to which they perceived as the most prevalent cause/s of negative workplace experiences. Given that more than one factor could be selected per respondent, multiple answers for this particular question were possible (see Appendix 12: Table A2). For the current sample, frequency distribution analyses yielded *office politics* to be the most dominant cause of workplace bullying (14.13%), followed by the *personality traits of others*, *work-related stress* and *job level* (12.81%; 12.69% and 12.02% respectively). 8.45% of the respondents attributed workplace bullying to be the result of *own behaviour*, 7.93% attributed bullying to *age* and 6.51% perceived bullying to be attributable to *gender*. 12.02% of sample participants felt race and ethnicity to be factors catalysing bullying behaviour, while 13.35% believed bullying to be attributable to either *religion*; *political beliefs*, *health*, *illness and disability*; *sexual orientation* and *union affiliation*.

Sources of Support: Participants were additionally required to rank supervisors, colleagues, family and friends, from most supportive to least supportive. If no support from that person was received then no rank was given. If respondents did not rely on anyone for support, respondents were to select *no one*. Both separate and comparative tables demonstrating percentages for each rank are illustrated in Appendix 12: Table A8. For the present sample, in comparison to other variable ranks, 18.78% of the respondents ranked *family member* first. The second most popular source of support was attributed to *friends*, with 6.62 % of the sample selecting these person/persons as first in rank. This was followed closely by *supervisors* with 6.26% of the respondents ranking their superior first. 3.94% of respondents ranked *colleagues* as most supportive and 1.6% did not rely on anyone for social support. 10.02% of the sample ranked colleagues as a secondary source of support, while 9.66% ranked friends in second place. 6.98% of the sample placed supervisors as a secondary source of support, while 6.26% selected family members as second in rank. With all ranks compared, *family member* was ranked as the most reliable source of support for the current sample. This is in line with research by Antonucci (1985), which provides that family members are perceived to demonstrate higher levels of social support than that perceived between friends, especially with regards to sympathy and care in times of distress.

SUMMARY STATISTICS AND NORMALITY DISCUSSION FOR ANALYSIS VARIABLES

Perceptions of Bullying

In light of the analysis variables, the mean score attained for *Perceptions of Bullying* was 38.03 (standard deviation 11.2), of which lowest and highest possible scores obtainable were 23 and 115 respectively (see Appendix 13: Table A1.1). This indicated that perceptions of bullying for the present sample were low given that the mean score achieved is nearest to the lowest possible score obtainable. The distribution analysis for perceptions of bullying indicated a positively skewed graph tending to the right; square root transformations were thus conducted in order to normalise variable data (see Appendix 13: Figure A1.1). Although no drastic changes were achieved through transformation, Skewness and Kurtosis values reduced from 1.05 and 0.96 to 0.72 and 0.11 respectively (see Appendix 13: Table A1.1 and A1.2), thereby falling within the -1 and +1 normality range recommended for these coefficients (Howell, 2008) . Furthermore, the distribution graph appeared more evenly distributed following the transformation process (see Appendix 13: Figure A1.2). The transformed NAQ data was thus utilised as representative of the results for the perceptions of bullying variable, and was thereby deemed suitable for use in subsequent parametric testing. In alignment with the low overall mean for perceptions of bullying, question twenty-three of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (which asks specifically whether participants have experienced negative acts at work over the last six months) revealed the majority of respondents to have indicated never having experienced bullying at work (43.54%). 33% of the sample responded “yes but only rarely”, 19.62% indicated having experienced bullying “now and then”, 2.39% of the participants admitted to being bullied “several times per week” and 1.44% indicated bullying to be an “almost daily” event (see Appendix 11: Table A2).

Colleague and Supervisor Social Support

The mean score yielded for *Supervisor and Colleague Social Support* was 31.76 with a standard deviation of 9.82. Highest and lowest possible scores obtainable amounted to 48 and 12 respectively. Workplace social support from colleagues and supervisors therefore appeared to be particularly high for the current sample as indicated by the mean scores yielded, which tend towards the upper end of the result range. Distribution analysis for Supervisor and Colleague Social Support appeared more or less normal. While the Skewness coefficient amounted to -1.16 (see Appendix 13: Table A2), which is slightly above the recommended normality range of -1 and +1, Kurtosis yielded a coefficient of 0.85, which falls within such a range (Howell, 2008). Furthermore, the distribution graph for supervisor and colleague social support appeared more or less normal (see Appendix 13: Figure A2), thus for the purposes of the current study, colleague and supervisor social support was considered satisfactorily normal for use in subsequent parametric testing.

Friends and Family Social Support

Of possible low and high total scores amounting to 20 and 80 respectively, the mean score obtained for *Friends and Family Social Support* reached 59.52, with a standard deviation of 12.76 (see Appendix 13: Table A3). This suggests that friends and family social support for the current sample was particularly high, given that the mean tends more towards the highest obtainable value. Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients for the variable in question fell well within the range of -1 and +1 (-0.56 and 0.14 respectively; see Appendix 13: Table A3) thereby confirming the distribution for friends and family social support to be satisfactorily normal for use in parametric tests (Howell, 2008). This was further supported by the distribution graph which demonstrated evenly distributed scores (see Appendix 13: Figure A3). Friends and family social support therefore satisfied normality requirements and was thereby deemed a suitable variable for use in parametric testing.

Psychological Wellbeing

Levels of psychological wellbeing averaged a mean of 24.62 (standard deviation = 6.95), where the lowest and highest obtainable scores were 12 and 48 respectively (see Appendix 13: Table A4). In this instance low scores indicated high psychological wellbeing, thus levels of psychological wellbeing for the present sample were therefore moderate given that the mean score attained lies more or less central to the sample distribution. Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients amounted to 0.97 and 1.19 respectively (see Appendix 13: Table A4). Although the value for Kurtosis fell slightly outside of the normality range between -1 and +1 (Howell, 2008), the Skewness coefficient yielded a value within the range required; furthermore, the distribution analysis graph demonstrated a more or less even distribution of scores across the range of results obtained. Psychological wellbeing was therefore considered suitable for use in subsequent parametric tests.

Intention to Leave

Levels of intention to leave for the current sample yielded a mean of 8.25 (standard deviation =4.78), where lowest and highest attainable scores were 3 and 18 respectively (see Appendix 13: table A5.1). Levels of intention to leave for the current sample were therefore more or less moderate, given that the mean value obtained for the variable in question was slightly below the midpoint of highest and lowest obtainable scores. An initial distribution analysis demonstrated slight positive skewness to the right, therefore a log transformation was performed which adjusted slightly for normality (see Appendix 13: Figure A, 5.1 and 5.2). Although no radical changes were achieved through transformation, skewness and kurtosis coefficients decreased from 0.84 and -0.95 to 0.54 and -0.47 respectively (see Appendix 13: Table 5.1 and 5.2). Log transformed intention to leave data was thereby retained for improved normality and was considered suitable for use in subsequent parametric testing.

MAIN ANALYSIS: MULTIPLE MODERATED REGRESSION

Relationship between Biographical Variables and Analysis Variables

According to Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) and Howell (2008), biographical variables such as gender, age, race, number of children, marital status, level of education, home language and job title within the organisation may be significantly related to the dependent variables, thus it is necessary to assess the potential relationship between these variables. The detection of such a relationship may necessitate the inclusion of these variables in the form of covariates if necessary. The assessment of the relationships between the biographical variables and the dependent variables was conducted through the use of correlation analysis. Correlative analyses were thereby selected to assess the nature of association between the biographical and dependent variables due to the functionality of a correlational strategy, that is, to identify and describe relationships between variables (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). No highly significant relationships were reported between the biographical variables and the dependent variables, and therefore moderated multiple regressions were performed without the inclusion of any of the aforementioned biographical variables as covariates.

ASSUMPTIONS FOR MULTIPLE MODERATED REGRESSION

In order to compute MMR, the fulfilment of three key assumptions was required:

Assumption 1: Absence of Multicollinearity

The degree to which multicollinearity was salient within the analysis variables of the present study was determined through the assessment of *collinearity diagnostics* provided in conjunction with the execution of MMR (see Appendix 14: Table A1). As formerly described, multicollinearity depicts the extent to which independent and moderator variables are correlated. Where the condition index yielded within the MMR

analysis exceeds 30, multicollinearity is assumed to exist (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). If the reverse is found true then multicollinearity can be concluded to be absent (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). With reference to this principle, the current data appeared to demonstrate condition indexes that exceeded the recommended mark, therefore indicating the presence of multicollinearity. However as described earlier (p.41), MMR is able to detect a moderating affect even in the presence of high multicollinearity; therefore the application of MMR remained suitable for use despite the presence of high multicollinearity in certain instances.

Multicollinearity may also be determined through the use of Pearson’s correlation coefficients to examine the strength of relationship existing between independent and moderator variables. According to Stevens (2002), when correlations between variables are too high (i.e. $r > .80$) the variables are then considered to be multicollinear. If no correlations greater than 0.80 are found to exist (See Table 2 below), then it can be assumed that multicollinearity is sufficiently low (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

TABLE 10: CORRELATION MATRIX FOR ANALYSIS VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Independent Variable							
1. Perceptions of Bullying		-0.21874 p=0.0015	0.04474 p=0.5200	-0.11542 p=0.0961	0.26638 p<.0001	0.03589 p=0.6059	0.03543 p=0.6105
Moderator Variables							
2.Workplace Social Support Total	-0.21874 p=0.0015		0.17970 p=0.0092	0.88232 p<.0001	0.91670 p<.0001	0.12871 p=0.0633	0.15609 p=0.0240
3. Friends and Family Social Support Total	0.04474 p=0.5200	0.17970 p=0.0092		0.21727 p=0.0016	0.10669 p=0.1242	0.76910 p<.0001	0.82147 p<.0001
4.Colleague Social Support	-0.11542 p=0.0961	0.88232 p<.0001	0.21727 p=0.0016		0.62076 p<.0001	0.16474 p=0.0171	0.18059 p=0.18059
5.Supervisor Social Support	0.26638 p<.0001	0.91670 p<.0001	0.10669 p=0.1242	0.62076 p<.0001		0.07454 p=0.2834	0.1066 p=0.1242
6.Family Social Support	0.03589 p=0.6059	0.12871 p=0.0633	0.76910 p<.0001	0.16474 p=0.0171	0.07454 p=0.2834		0.26733 p<.0001
7.Friends Social Support	0.03543 p=0.6105	0.15609 p=0.0240	0.82147 p<.0001	0.18059 p=0.18059	0.1066 p=0.1242	0.26733 p<.0001	

As evident in Table 2 above, the majority of correlations existing between the independent and moderator variables demonstrated values below 0.80. The correlations indicated in **bold** relate specifically to social support correlates and are expected to exhibit particularly high correlations, given that these variables are subsumed as subscales of the two main social support variables, namely Workplace Social Support and Friends And Family Social Support (i.e.: *'friends social support'* forms a subscale of *'friends and family social support total'* and *'colleague social support'* forms a subscale of *'workplace social support total'*). However, the main moderator variables did not demonstrate correlations exceeding 0.8 (*indicated in grey*) and therefore were contained within the recommended restriction for absence of multicollinearity.

Assumption 2: Measurement error

Assumption two required the assessment of measurement error, thus internal consistency reliability tests were conducted. Although it may be impossible to completely eliminate all measurement error (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991), an assessment of the extent to which measurement error does exist is nonetheless necessitated. Standardised alpha's used for all the scales in the present study are reported in Table 10 above (p.59). Closer inspection of this table shows that the internal consistency coefficients were satisfactory (above 0.7). Therefore, taking into account the reliability values obtained for the instruments used in the present study, the assumption of no error was considered to be fulfilled.

Assumption 3: Linearity and Homogeneity of Variance

According to assumption three, a test for linearity was conducted for the independent variable (perceptions of workplace bullying) and the moderator variables (four types of social support) with each of the two dependent variables. R-student and Predicted plots were assessed and compared in order to determine whether linearity was sufficiently present. According to Howell (2008), where r-student and predicted plots demonstrate plotted points that indicate non-linear trends in the form of u-shaped data, then linearity is assumed absent. In light of the data utilised for the present study, diagrammatic representations of linearity demonstrated plotted points that did not appear to deviate significantly from linearity (See Appendix 15: Table B 1-4 and C1-4). In addition, r-student and predicted plots were further utilised to assess the homogeneity of variance present between the aforementioned analysis variables. Howell (2008) proposes the presence of extreme scores in the form of outliers and influential points to potentially impact the significance or lack thereof obtained in the statistical analysis of such data. While outliers were evident, the removal thereof was deemed non-impactful: Removing outliers may have affected the significance or non-significance of results, and given the nature of the topic addressed, the removal of outliers may have lead the researcher to concluding on information that omits the presence of certain extreme scoring individuals. If for instance certain individuals were found to demonstrate extreme scores with regard to their perceptions of bullying in the workplace, then the removal of such individuals would have meant disregarding the fact that some individuals (even if very few) were experiencing

high perceptions of bullying. It was consequently deduced that the omission of certain data would not have been appropriate given the nature of the study; therefore outliers for the purpose of the present research were retained (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). The assumption of linearity and homogeneity of variance was consequently deemed to be sufficiently satisfied. As described above (p.59), the fulfilment of the three key assumptions was thereby satisfied, permitting thus the computation of Pearson's Correlation Coefficients and MMR presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: CORRELATION ANALYSIS (*P<0.05)

Independent Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Perceptions of Bullying	-	0.05166 p=0.4576	0.01936 p=0.7809	-0.21874 p=0.0015*	0.04474 p=0.5200	-0.11542 p=0.0961	-0.26638 p<.0001*	0.03589 p=0.6059	0.03543 p=0.6105
Dependent Variables									
2. Psychological Wellbeing	0.05166 p=0.4576	-	0.52815 p<.0001*	-0.15092 p=0.0292*	-0.13192 p=0.0569	-0.10123 p=0.1447	-0.16545 p=0.0167*	-0.15191 p=0.0281	-0.06335 p=0.3622
3. Intention to Leave	0.01936 p=0.7809	0.52815 p<.0001	-	-0.22750 p=0.0009*	-0.19165 p=0.0054*	-0.16539 p=0.0167*	-0.23854 p=0.0005*	-0.11799 p=0.0889	-0.18368 p=0.0078*
Moderator Variables									
4. Workplace Social Support Total	-0.21874 p=0.0015*	-0.15092 p=0.0292*	-0.22750 p=0.0009*	-	0.17970 p=0.0092*	0.88232 p<.0001*	0.91670 p<.0001*	0.12871 p=0.0633	0.15609 p=0.0240
5. Friends and Family Social Support Total	0.04474 p=0.5200	-0.13192 p=0.0569	-0.19165 p=0.0054*	0.17970 p=0.0092*	-	0.21727 p=0.0016*	0.10669 p=0.1242	0.76910 p<.0001*	0.82147 p<.0001*
6. Colleague Social Support	-0.11542 p=0.0961	-0.10123 p=0.1447	-0.16539 p=0.0167*	0.88232 p<.0001	0.21727 p=0.0016	-	0.62076 p<.0001*	0.16474 p=0.0171*	0.18059 p=0.18059
7. Supervisor Social Support	-0.26638 p<.0001*	-0.16545 p=0.0167*	-0.23854 p=0.0005*	0.91670 p<.0001*	0.10669 p=0.1242	0.62076 p<.0001*	-	0.07454 p=0.2834	0.1066 p=0.1242
8. Family Social Support	0.03589 p=0.6059	-0.15191 p=0.0281*	-0.11799 p=0.0889	0.12871 p=0.0633	0.76910 p<.0001*	0.16474 p=0.0171*	0.07454 p=0.2834	-	0.26733 p<.0001*
9. Friend Social Support	0.03543 p=0.6105	-0.06335 p=0.3622	-0.18368 p=0.0078*	0.15609 p=0.0240	0.82147 p<.0001*	0.18059 p=0.18059	0.1066 p=0.1242	0.26733 p<.0001*	-

As demonstrated in the table above (p.61), significant correlations were evident between numerous combinations of the independent, moderator and dependent variables.

Perceptions of Bullying was found to be significantly and inversely related to Supervisor Social Support and Workplace Social Support ($p < 0.01$ and $p = 0.0015$), suggesting that high levels of supervisor support and overall workplace support are associated with low perceptions of bullying, while high perceptions of bullying are associated with low levels of supervisor support and workplace support. However both inverse correlations indicate relatively weak correlational strength ($r = -0.3$ and $r = -0.27$).

Psychological Wellbeing demonstrated a significant positive association with intention to leave ($p < 0.0001$) and inverse relationships with supervisor support ($p = 0.03$) and workplace social support ($p = 0.017$). Given that low scores on the GHQ define higher levels of psychological health, while high scores dictate low psychological health, this suggests that high scores for psychological wellbeing are positively associated with high levels of intention to leave, that low scores obtained for psychological wellbeing are associated with low scores for intention to leave, and conversely that low levels of psychological wellbeing are associated with high scores of supervisor support and workplace support. It can therefore be concluded that poor psychological wellbeing is positively associated with high intention to leave, while good psychological wellbeing is associated with low intention to leave. The inverse nature of the correlations between psychological wellbeing, supervisor support and workplace social support further implies that good psychological wellbeing is associated with higher supervisor support and workplace support, while poor psychological health is associated with low supervisor support and workplace support. While psychological wellbeing and intention to leave illustrated a relationship of moderate strength ($r = 0.53$), the inverse relationships however indicated weak associations with psychological wellbeing ($r = -0.15$ for workplace social support and $r = -0.17$ for supervisor support) thus reducing the practical significance of these associations.

Intention to leave evidenced inverse associations with workplace support ($p = 0.0009$), friends and family social support ($p = 0.0054$), colleague support ($p = 0.017$), supervisor support ($p = 0.0005$) and friends support ($p = 0.008$). This indicates that high intention to leave is related to low levels of workplace support, supervisor support, colleague support, friend support and friend and family social support, while low intention to leave is associated with high levels of these support variables. Correlation coefficients however indicate that these associative relationships are weak and therefore detract from the practical significance of these findings ($r = -0.23$ for workplace support; $r = -0.19$ for friends and family social support $r = -0.17$ for colleague support; $r = -0.24$ for supervisor support and $r = -0.18$ for friends support).

Workplace Social Support demonstrated significant associations with friends and family social support ($p = 0.0092$), colleague support ($p < 0.0001$) and supervisor support ($p < 0.0001$). Given that supervisor and

colleague support form subscales of workplace social support, significant strong positive associations are to be expected ($r=0.88$ for colleague support and $r=0.92$ for supervisor support). These correlations further suggest that high levels of workplace social support are associated with high levels of friends and family social support, implying thus that social support in one domain may parallel social support in another domain. To elaborate further, this additionally suggests that individuals who are able to mobilise social support in one arena are likely to mobilise support in other arenas. Factors such as personality may well explain why certain individuals have a greater disposition to establish and utilise larger support networks than others (Penney & Spector, 2005). The strength of this relationship is however weak ($r=0.18$) and therefore must be interpreted with caution.

Friends and Family Social support was found to be positively and significantly associated with colleague support ($p=0.0016$), family support ($p<0.0001$), and friend support. Colleague social support for the current sample is therefore positively associated with friends and family social support. This may hold true given that colleagues may also overlap as friends. However correlation coefficients indicated a weak relationship for colleague support and friends and family social support ($r=0.22$), thus the practical significance of this finding is not as promising. Given that friends support and family support are subsumed as subscales of the friends and family social support scale, strong positive associations between these subscales and friends and family social support are to be anticipated ($r=0.77$ for family support and $r=0.82$).

Colleague Social support illustrated positive associations with both family support ($p= <0.0001$) and supervisor support ($p=0.017$) while family support indicated relational significance with friend social support ($p<0.0001$). High levels of colleague social support was therefore positively related to high levels of family support, however this association is inherently weak as detriment by the correlation coefficient ($r=0.16$). As anticipated, supervisor and colleague support was moderate-to-strongly and positively associated, given their decent as subscales of the Workplace social support scale ($r=0.62$). The same principle holds true for friends support and family support given their origin from the same overarching Friends and Family Social Support Scale ($r=0.3$).

RESULTS OF THE MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Results pertaining to the moderated multiple regression (MMR) analysis are presented below. A summary of the MMR model for the independent variable, moderator variables and dependent variables are presented in Table 4 below. Thereafter, the results for each variable, namely, the independent variable of perceptions of workplace bullying, the moderator variables of colleague, supervisor, family and friends' social support; and the dependent variables of physiological wellbeing and intention to leave are revealed separately.

Subsequent to the presentation of the moderated multiple regression results, both significant and non-significant effects are addressed, following which limitations and theoretical implications for future research will be considered.

TABLE 12: SUMMARY OF THE MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE (PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING) AND MODERATOR VARIABLES ON THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES.

Dependent and Moderator Variables	Perceptions of Workplace Bullying		
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (df1; df2)	<i>p</i> -Value
Psychological Wellbeing			
Colleague Social Support	0.0283	1.99 (3;305)	0.1163
Supervisor Social Support	0.0445	3.18 (3;305)	0.0249*
Family Social Support	0.0269	1.89 (3;305)	0.1328
Friends Social Support	0.0071	0.49 (3;305)	0.6894
Intention to Leave			
Colleague Social Support	0.0738	5.44 (3;305)	0.0013*
Supervisor Social Support	0.0590	6.54 (3;305)	0.0003*
Family Social Support	0.0146	1.01 (3;305)	0.3886
Friends Social Support	0.0355	2.52 (3;305)	0.0594

**p*<0.05

Table 12 provided above indicates the significance of the entire regression model after the inclusion of the interaction effect deciphering thus, the amount of overall variance in the dependent variables accounted for by the independent and moderator variables. Moderating effects were therefore demonstrated for supervisor social support on both psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, while colleague support was found to moderate intention to leave. No moderating effects were evident for friends and family support on either of the dependent variables. An in depth description of all main effects, interaction effects and non-significant effects is presented in subsequent paragraphs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Colleague Support: Psychological wellbeing was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of colleague social support. An interaction term of bullying x colleague social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in the table below, no significant main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying. ($p=0.11$) or interaction effect ($p=0.06$) was yielded for psychological wellbeing (see Table 13 below). Colleague social support however appeared to demonstrate a significant inverse main effect result ($t=-2.04$; $p=0.04$) illustrating thus, that higher levels of colleague support predicts higher psychological wellbeing (*given that low scores on the GHQ indicate increasing levels of psychological wellbeing*). In observing the standardised estimates for both bullying and colleague support for psychological wellbeing, it is evident that higher levels of colleague support (-1.04) is a far stronger predictor of psychological wellbeing than is lower levels of workplace bullying (-0.39), thereby supporting the main-effect finding for colleague support and the no main effect finding for perceptions of bullying for psychological wellbeing. With regard to significance of the entire model, where colleague social support was included as a moderator, the model remained non-significant ($F=1.99$; $p=0.1163$) and the proportion of variance explained by the independent and moderator variables after the inclusion of the interaction term increased marginally from 0.11% to 0.28% (see Table 12). However, given the non-significance of the entire model, this increase in variance cannot be considered particularly meaningful. However, contrary to non-significance displayed for the moderator variable, the standardised estimate provided for this interaction construct (bullying X colleague) indicated the moderating effect to be strong (0.99) predictor of the variance in psychological wellbeing. There is much difficulty inherent in the detection of a moderating effect, therefore perhaps in the presence of a larger sample a significant moderator effect for colleague social support may have been detected, given the significant main effect yielded by colleague support on psychological wellbeing in the absence of workplace bullying.

TABLE 13: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND COLLEAGUE SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	-3.16933	1.95953	-1.62	0.1073	-0.39057
Colleague Support	1	-1.44414	0.70958	-2.04	0.0431*	-1.04066
Bullying × Colleague	1	0.21371	0.11468	1.86	0.0638	0.99983

Supervisor Support: Psychological wellbeing was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of supervisor social support. An interaction term of bullying x supervisor social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in the table below, no significant main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying ($p=0.08$) was yielded for psychological wellbeing (see Table 14 below). The

weak value indicated by the standardised estimate for workplace bullying (-0.29) supports this non-significant finding, in that workplace bullying is shown to be a weak predictor of the variance in psychological wellbeing. Supervisor social support however appeared to demonstrate a significant inverse main effect result ($t=-2.24$; $p=0.03$) illustrating thus, that higher levels of supervisor support predict “higher” psychological wellbeing (*given that low scores on the GHQ indicate increasing levels of psychological wellbeing*). The standardised estimate value for supervisor support indicated this variable to be a strong predictor of the variance in psychological wellbeing (-1.04), thereby enhancing the practical value of significance in this instance. Where supervisor support was included as an interaction term, a significant inverse moderating effect on psychological wellbeing became apparent ($p=0.046$), indicating thus that higher levels of workplace bullying in the presence of supervisor support has less of a negative impact on psychological wellbeing. The standardised estimate for the moderating effect of supervisor support on psychological wellbeing additionally indicated that supervisor support is a strong predictor of the variance in psychological wellbeing (-0.86), thus enhancing the practical value of this significant moderator effect. In light of total model significance where supervisor social support was included as an interaction term, the model transformed from non-significant to significant ($F=3.18$; $p=0.0249$), reiterating thus the presence of significant effects in the form of both main and moderating effects as described above (see Table 12). Thus, while perceptions of bullying on its own appeared to have no significant main effect on psychological wellbeing, when present alongside supervisor social support, a significant effect became salient, with the proportion of variance explained in psychological wellbeing increasing from 0,27% to 0.44%.

TABLE 14: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND SUPERVISOR SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	2.43255	1.42598	1.71	0.0895	-0.29977
Supervisor Support	1	-1.23330	0.55001	-2.24	0.0260*	-1.04679
Bullying × Supervisor	1	-0.16594	0.08666	-1.91	0.0469*	0.86461

Family Support: Psychological wellbeing was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of family social support. An interaction term of bullying x family social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in the table below, no significant main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying. ($p=0.62$) and family social support ($p=0.96$) or interaction effect ($p=0.74$) was yielded for psychological wellbeing (see Table 15 below). Therefore no main effects or interaction effect were apparent for workplace bullying and family social support on psychological wellbeing. In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, family and bullying X family support for psychological wellbeing, it is evident that the

independent variables (0.17; 0.026) and the moderator variable (-0.22) were very weak predictors of the variance in psychological wellbeing thereby supporting the no main-effect and no-moderating effect findings for family support and perceptions of bullying on psychological wellbeing. In light of total model significance where family social support was included as a moderator, the model remained non-significant ($F=1.89$; $p=0.1328$), thus reiterating no moderator effect of family support on psychological wellbeing in the presence of workplace bullying (see Table 12). The proportion of variance explained after the inclusion of the interaction effect remained virtually unchanged (0.26% to 0.27% respectively), therefore reiterating further the absence of any moderation effect on psychological wellbeing.

TABLE 15: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	1.39186	2.80124	0.50	0.6198	0.17152
Family Support	1	0.02416	0.49460	0.05	0.9611	0.02626
Bullying × Family	1	-0.02771	0.08199	-0.34	0.7357	-0.21812

Friend Support: Psychological wellbeing was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of friend social support. An interaction term of bullying x friend social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in table 16 below, no significant main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying. ($p=0.69$) and family social support ($p=0.94$) or interaction effect ($p=0.84$) was yielded for psychological wellbeing (see Table 16 below). Therefore no main effects or interaction effect were apparent for workplace bullying and friends social support on psychological wellbeing. In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, friends and bullying X friends support for psychological wellbeing, it is evident that the independent variables (0.1; 0.04) and the moderator variable (-0.12) were very weak predictors of the variance in psychological wellbeing thereby supporting the no main-effect and no-moderating effect findings for friend support and perceptions of bullying on psychological wellbeing. In light of total model significance where friends social support was included as a moderator, the model remained non-significant ($F=0.49$; $p=0.6894$), reiterating thus no moderator effect of friend support on psychological wellbeing in the presence of workplace bullying (see Table 12). The proportion of variance explained after the inclusion of the interaction effect remained virtually unchanged (0.069 to 0.07 respectively), therefore indicating no moderation effect on psychological wellbeing.

TABLE 16: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FRIENDS SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	0.84057	2.05557	0.41	0.6830	0.10359
Friends Support	1	0.03337	0.43059	0.08	0.9383	0.04065
Bullying × Friends	1	-0.01429	0.07012	-0.20	0.8388	-0.11939

INTENTION TO LEAVE

Colleague Support: Intention to leave was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of colleague social support. An interaction term of bullying x colleague social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in table 10 below, a significant inverse main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying. (p=0.03) and a significant positive effect for colleague support (p=0.009) were yielded, indicating thus that both perceptions of bullying and colleague social support predict the degree of variance explained in intention to leave (see Table 17 below): Therefore higher levels of bullying predict higher levels of intention to leave, while higher levels of colleague support predict lower levels of intention to leave. Additionally a significant inverse interaction effect (p=0.03) was demonstrated for intention to leave illustrating thus that colleague support interacts with perceptions of bullying for intention to leave, such that where bullying and colleague support are higher, intention to leave is lower. In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, colleague and bullying X colleague support for intention to leave, it is evident that both the independent variables (0.95; 0.92) and the moderator variable (-0.8) strongly predicted the variance in intention to leave thereby supporting the main and moderating effect findings for colleague support and perceptions of bullying on intention to leave. With regard to significance of the entire model, where colleague social support was included as a moderator, the model remained significant (F=5.44; p=0.0013) and the proportion of variance explained by independent and moderator variables after the inclusion of the interaction term increased substantially from 0.53% to 0.74% (see Table 12).

TABLE 17: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND COLLEAGUE SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	5.45330	2.48943	2.19	0.0296*	-0.94568
Colleague Support	1	-1.24588	0.47093	-2.65	0.0088*	-0.92303
Bullying × Colleague	1	-0.16193	0.07505	-2.16	0.0321*	0.80239

Supervisor Support: Intention to leave was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of supervisor social support. An interaction term of bullying x supervisor social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in table 11 below, significant main effects for perceptions of workplace bullying (positive effect; $p=0.01$) and supervisor support (inverse effect; $p=0.03$) were yielded for intention to leave (see Table 18 below): Higher levels of bullying for the current sample therefore predicted higher levels of intention to leave, while higher levels of supervisor support predicted lower levels of intention to leave. Further inverse significance was illustrated by the addition of an interaction effect on intention to leave ($p=0.001$), suggesting thus that higher levels of bullying in conjunction with higher levels of social support indicate lower levels of intention to leave. In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, supervisor and bullying X supervisor support for intention to leave, it is evident that both the independent variables (-0.84; 1.11) and the moderator variable (-1.39) strongly predicted the variance in intention to leave thereby supporting the main and moderating effect findings for supervisor support and perceptions of bullying on intention to leave. In light of total model significance where supervisor social support was included as a moderator, the model remained significant ($F=6.54$; $p=0.0003$), therefore indicating the presence of a moderator effect for supervisor support on intention to leave in the presence of workplace bullying. The proportion of variance explained in intention to leave increased from 0.59 % to 0.87%, therefore a substantial moderation effect of supervisor support on intention to leave was confirmed to exist where workplace bullying was present (see Table 12).

TABLE 18: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND SUPERVISOR SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	5.24348	2.02867	2.58	0.0104	-0.44392
Supervisor Support	1	-2.38111	0.78247	-3.04	0.0026*	1.11289
Bullying × Supervisor	1	-0.31090	0.12329	-2.52	0.0124*	-1.38843

Family Support: Intention to leave was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of family social support. An interaction term of bullying x family social support was conducted thereafter. As evident in the table below, no significant main effect for perceptions of workplace bullying. ($p=0.11$) and family social support ($p=0.94$) or interaction effect ($p=0.88$) was yielded for psychological wellbeing (see Table 19 below). Therefore no main effects or interaction effect was yielded for workplace bullying and family social support on intention to leave. In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, family and bullying X family support for intention to leave, it is evident that both the independent variables (0.02; -0.12) and the moderator variable (0.02) were weak predictors of the variance

in intention to leave thereby supporting the no-main effect and no-moderating effect findings for family support and perceptions of bullying on intention to leave. In light of total model significance where social support was included as a moderator, the model remained non-significant ($F=1.01$; $p=0.3886$), therefore indicating that no moderation effect for supervisor support on intention to leave in the presence of workplace bullying was present for the current sample. The proportion of variance explained after the inclusion of the interaction effect remained virtually unchanged (0.145% to 0.146% respectively), therefore reiterating no moderation effect on psychological wellbeing (see Table 12).

TABLE 19: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Variable	Parameter Estimates					Standardized Estimate
	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	
Bullying	1	0.88851	4.10320	0.22	0.8288	0.02362
Family Support	1	-0.05022	0.72447	-0.07	0.9448	-0.11883
Bullying × Family	1	-0.01821	0.12009	-0.15	0.8797	0.02360

Friend Support: Intention to leave was regressed onto the independent variable of workplace bullying and the moderator variable of friend social support. An interaction term of bullying x friend social support was conducted thereafter. No significant main effects for perceptions of workplace bullying. ($p=0.57$) and family social support ($p=0.90$) or interaction effect ($p=0.63$) was yielded for intention to leave on inclusion of the interaction variable (see Table 20 below). Therefore no main effect or interaction effect was yielded for workplace bullying and friends social support on intention to leave. . In observing the standardised estimates for bullying, friend and bullying X friend support for intention to leave, it is evident that both the independent variables (0.14; 0.06) and the moderator variable (-0.28) were weak predictors of the variance in intention to leave thereby supporting the no-main effect and no-moderating effect findings for friends support and perceptions of bullying on intention to leave. However a noteworthy discovery included the realisation that in the linear regression model, friend support did appear to demonstrate an inverse main effect on intention to leave in the absence of the interaction variable (despite the non-significance of the overall model) suggesting thus that higher levels of friend support may predict lower levels of intention to leave (see Table 21 below). However, the standardised estimate for friend support on intention to leave indicated friend support to be a weak predictor of intention to leave (0.06). In light of total model significance where friends social support was included as a moderator, the model remained non-significant ($F=2.52$; $p=0.0594$), indicating thus no moderator effect of friend support on intention to leave in the presence of workplace bullying. The proportion of variance explained after the inclusion of the interaction

effect remained virtually unchanged (0.34% to 0.36% respectively), therefore reiterating no moderation effect on intention to leave (see Table 12).

TABLE 20: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FRIEND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	1.67602	2.94903	0.57	0.5704	0.14189
Friend Support	1	0.07528	0.61774	0.12	0.9031	0.06300
Bullying × Friend	1	-0.04861	0.10060	-0.48	0.6295	-0.27910

TABLE 21: LINEAR REGRESSION FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FRIEND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Linear Regression: Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	0.30591	0.80919	0.38	0.7058	0.02590
Friend Support	1	-0.22058	0.08186	-2.69	0.0076	-0.18460

Although the purpose of the current study aimed to separately assess the four types of social support, given the surprising lack of significance for friend and family social support yielded in the results described above, the researcher consequently resolved to decipher further, whether the presence of a moderation effect would occur when the friend and family subscales were assessed as one variable. According to Zimet et al., (1988), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (subsequently renamed the “Friends and Family Social Support Scale after piloted adaptation) may be statistically analysed as a single scale or may be assessed in terms of its component subscales (friend support scale and family support scale). As such, both intention to leave and psychological wellbeing were regressed onto the independent variable of perceptions of bullying and the moderating variable of friends and family social support total. An interaction term of bullying x friends and family social support was conducted thereafter, the inclusion of which yielded a significant model ($F=2.87$; $p=0.0376$). A significant inverse interaction effect was evident for perceptions of workplace bullying and friends and family social support ($p=0.04$; see Table 23 below). In observing the standardised estimate for the friends and family moderator variable, a value of 0.52 indicated that friends and family support when combined is a moderate predictor of the variance in intention to leave. This suggests that where higher levels of friends and family support are salient together and perceptions of bullying are higher, then intention to leave tends to be lower, confirming thus, the presence of a moderating affect of friends and family support on the relationship between perceptions of bullying and intention to

leave. The proportion of variance explained after the inclusion of the interaction effect was augmented significantly with the inclusion of the interaction effect (0.37% to 0.45% respectively), therefore indicating a significant moderation effect on intention to leave.

TABLE 22: LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FRIENDS AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE (PRIOR TO THE INCLUSION OF AN INTERACTION EFFECT)

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Bullying	1	0.33060	0.80819	0.41	0.6829	0.02799
Friends & Family Total	1	-0.15288	0.05423	-2.82	0.0053	-0.19291

TABLE 23: MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR WORKPLACE BULLYING AND FRIENDS AND FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT ON INTENTION TO LEAVE

Parameter Estimates						
Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t	Standardized Estimate
Perceptions of Bullying	1	3.71705	4.47012	0.83	0.4066	0.31469
Friends and Family Total	1	0.17405	0.42788	0.41	0.06846	0.21961
Bullying × Friends & Family Total	1	-0.05487	0.7123	-0.77	0.0442*	-0.51549

SUMMARY OF MODERATED MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS

The previous section presented the results of phase two of the study. Statistical analyses were conducted once the assumptions underlying the statistical technique of moderated multiple regression were fulfilled.

The following significant results were revealed though an MMR analysis:

- A significant **inverse main effect** for **perceptions of workplace bullying** was yielded for **intention to leave**, where colleague and supervisor support were present, indicating thus that perceptions of bullying predicted the degree of variance explained in intention to leave for the current sample. Therefore higher levels of bullying were found to predict higher levels of intention to leave.
- A significant **inverse main effect** for **colleague support** was yielded for **psychological wellbeing**, such that higher levels of colleague support predicted “good” psychological wellbeing (given that low scores on the GHQ indicate increasing levels of psychological wellbeing).
- **Colleague support** also demonstrated a significant **inverse main effect** on **intention to leave**, therefore indicating that higher levels of colleague support predicted lower levels of intention to leave.

- Where **colleague social support** was included as a moderator, a significant inverse **moderating effect** was found between perceptions of bullying and **intention to leave**, indicating thus that higher levels of colleague support in the presence of higher perceptions of bullying moderated the variance in lower intention to leave experienced.
- **Supervisor social support** demonstrated a significant **inverse main effect** result for **psychological wellbeing** illustrating thus, that higher levels of supervisor support predicted “good” psychological wellbeing (*given that low scores on the GHQ indicate increasing levels of psychological wellbeing*).
- A **moderating effect** was present where supervisor social support was included as a moderator in the presence of bullying and **psychological wellbeing**. Thus, while perceptions of bullying on its own appeared to have no significant main effect on psychological wellbeing, when present alongside supervisor social support, a significant effect became salient.
- A significant **inverse main effect** was demonstrated for **supervisor support** on **intention to leave**, such that higher supervisor support predicted lower intention to leave.
- **Supervisor support** was also found to **moderate** the relationship between perceptions of bullying and **intention to leave**, such that higher supervisor support in the presence of workplace bullying moderated the amount of variance explained in intention to leave for the current sample.
- In conducting MMR on the combined subscales of **friends and family social support**, a significant **inverse main effect** was detected for perceptions of bullying and friends and family social support on **intention to leave**.

SECTION 4:

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to investigate whether perceptions of bullying directly impacted upon psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, whether the source of social support experienced by a victim subjected to workplace bullying significantly reduced the impact thereof on individual and organisational outcomes, whether the various sources of social support assessed exhibited an association with psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, and finally whether social support and perceptions of bullying where in any manner associated. It was proposed that perceptions of bullying would be inversely related to psychological wellbeing, and positively related to intention to leave. It was similarly predicted that social support would be inversely related to perceptions of bullying and intention to leave, but positively related to psychological wellbeing. Additionally, it was envisaged that social support would moderate the relationship between perceptions of bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, such that where workplace bullying was perceived, the potentially negative outcomes thereof would be ameliorated in the presence of some form of social support. Furthermore, it was supposed that friends and family support would be more likely to demonstrate a moderating effect, given that colleagues and supervisors may encompass the very individuals inflicting the bullying (Zapf, 1999). It was simultaneously acknowledged that where such work sources of support do exist, it is proposed that these sources may significantly appease the negative effects of workplace bullying, in that these sources are directly privy to the situation and can therefore directly intervene in relieving the circumstances for victims. Four research questions and associated hypotheses were formulated within which the aforementioned effects were assessed.

As described earlier, the following research questions were drafted for statistical address:

- 1) DOES PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) MODERATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?** It was predicted here that social support would moderate the relationship between perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing/intention to leave in such a way that in the event of bullying being perceived, social support would moderate the impact of this perceived bullying on the outcome variables of psychological wellbeing and intention to leave: that is social support was expected to reduce the negative impact of bullying on these outcome variables.

In light of research question one, perceived social support from both colleagues and supervisors moderated the relationship between perceptions of bullying and intention to leave, however supervisor support on its own was found to additionally moderate psychological wellbeing. Friends and family social support did not demonstrate any moderating effects for intention to leave or psychological wellbeing. Therefore, supervisor support appeared to maintain the predicted hypothesis for both dependent variables, and colleague support for intention to leave. Thus, friends and family social support did not uphold the proposed hypothesis. However, when combined, friends and family social support was able to demonstrate a significant inverse

interaction effect on intention to leave in the presence of workplace bullying; however the same did not occur for psychological wellbeing.

Moderated multiple regression also examined direct effects; therefore the direct impact of social support on the perceptions of bullying was also assessed. Therefore a sub question was formed:

- 2) DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) AND PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING?** It was predicted here, that higher levels of social support would be associated with lower perceptions of bullying as research has shown that having social support can reduce an individuals' negative appraisal of a stressful situation (Djurkovic et al., 2004).

Perceptions of bullying demonstrated an inverse association with supervisor support, suggesting thus that higher levels of supervisor support are associated with lower perceptions of bullying, and simultaneously that higher perceptions of bullying are associated with lower levels of supervisor support. Perceptions of bullying did not reveal an association with colleague, friends and family support. Therefore, differences in the degree of bullying perceived appeared unrelated to differences in the degree of colleague, friends and family support experienced for the present sample. Consequently supervisor support was the only form of social support to fulfil the hypothesised result; while colleague, friends and family support did not appear to maintain this hypothesis.

Research has also shown that having supportive relationships can have a positive effect on well being even if no stress is being experienced (Djurkovic et al., 2004). Therefore, the research examined whether social support had a direct effect on the outcome variables, independent of the experience of stress.

- 3) DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY) AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?** It was hypothesised here, that higher levels of social support would be associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing but with lower levels of intention to leave. Inverse correlations were thus expected for the relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing (given that low scores on the GHQ indicate higher psychological wellbeing) and a positive correlation was pre-empted for the association between social support and intention to leave (given that high scores on the GHQ indicate lower psychological wellbeing).

In light of research question three, both colleague and supervisor support appeared to demonstrate inverse main effects for psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. Friends and family social support did not exhibit any significant main effects for intention to leave or psychological wellbeing in the presence of an interaction. Therefore both forms of workplace social support verified the abovementioned hypothesis, while friends and family support showed no support for hypothesis three.

Lastly the direct relationship between stressor (IV) and strain (DV's) was examined, that is:

- 4) **DOES A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP EXIST BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING/INTENTION TO LEAVE?** For this question, it was predicted that higher perceptions of bullying would be associated with lower levels of psychological wellbeing and higher levels of intention to leave. A positive correlation was therefore expected for the association between perceptions of bullying and intention to leave, and a positive correlation was presupposed for the relationship between perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing (given that high scores on the GHQ indicate lower psychological wellbeing).

In light of research question four, perceptions of bullying predicted the degree of variance explained in intention to leave. Therefore higher levels of bullying were found to predict higher levels of intention to leave. However, perceptions of bullying did not appear to have any effect on psychological wellbeing for the current sample. Support for hypothesis four was therefore only exhibited for perceptions of bullying and intention to leave. Perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing failed to illustrate any support for hypothesis four.

The findings outlined above will be explored in more detail in the following section.

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING IN THE PRESENT SAMPLE: FREQUENCIES, CORRELATIONS AND MAIN EFFECTS

With reference to Appendix 12: Table A2, the frequency of overall reported bullying pertaining to the current sample appeared low: 43% of the respondents comprising the present sample indicated never having experienced workplace bullying, 33% of the sample responded “yes but only rarely”, 19.62% indicated having experienced bullying “now and then”, 2.39% of the participants admitted to being bullied “several times per week” and 1.44% indicated bullying to be an “almost daily” event. Additionally, perceptions of bullying for the current sample yielded a main effect on intention to leave, however surprisingly it did not demonstrate any effect on psychological wellbeing for the current sample. In light of the current sample’s experiences, psychological wellbeing was yielded to be moderate, while perceptions of bullying were found to be low. Following suit, no main effect for perceptions of bullying on psychological wellbeing was demonstrated. As discussed previously, individuals in possession of tertiary education (for which the current sample demonstrated a majority of 54.48%) may command more respect and may furthermore experience augmented self-esteem and self-fulfilment given their degree status; consequently these individuals may experience higher levels of overall psychological wellbeing, thus reducing the potential impact of negative experiences in the workplace (DeWitte, 1999).

With regard to intention to leave and as described in earlier sections, where workplace bullying is salient, intention to leave becomes more prevalent, the follow-through of which is enacted in the presence of prolonged bullying experiences (Einarsen, 1999). This may be accounted for by the biological defence mechanism of *flight*

which may increase a victim's desire to evade further bullying, by fleeing the organisation (Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenewald, Gurung, & Updegraff, 2000). Where the victim is particularly vulnerable and confrontation appears overwhelming, avoidance and escape become the most plausible options for the victim; organisational abandonment therefore becomes the most attractive means of evasion, thus escalating the victim's intention to leave (Djurkovic, et al., 2004).

While at face value it may be accepted that bullying was in fact low for the participating sample, it may likewise be inferred that respondents may have concealed the degree of actual perceived bullying experienced in fear of stereotypes tied to being labelled a 'victim' of bullying (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003): Results yielded may be the product of individual fear of admittance to or confrontation of the fact that one is the target of a workplace bullying situation (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003). Self-admittance forges the primary pathway along which the need for professional assistance is recognised (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Therefore, the primary step in confronting an instance of bullying would be to acknowledge that one is in fact a 'victim' (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Labelling the self as a 'victim' however, may negatively impact upon self-esteem in that professing to victimisation, even internally to the self, may amount to acknowledging something that may likewise be interpreted as a personal weakness (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). The word 'victim' holds strong connotations of vulnerability and meekness. Therefore in instances of responding to questionnaires that focus specifically on negative acts experienced by the self, respondents - particularly those who are actual victims in a bullying situation - may shy away from confronting their true emotions towards and perceptions of such events (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Depending on the individual, the psychological consequences of admittance may include subsequent feelings of weakness, worthlessness, and the lingering impression that one does not have the resilience required to survive in their respective organisation (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Consequently, in order to circumvent the repercussions of such feelings, respondents may answer to bullying related questions in such a way that reaffirms their 'non-victim status' even if perhaps the reverse is true.

Victimised respondents may further engage in perception-shifting by reappraising negative situations in aim of reducing associated feelings of inferiority (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003; Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Augmented trepidation may further aggravate the tendency to engage in self-degradation whereby victimised individuals become convinced that their own behaviour marks the source of negative attention thus triggering repeated incidences of bullying (Hunter *et.al.* 2004). Ordinarily, self-blame and the resultant decrease in esteem thereof is likely to reduce psychological wellbeing (Hunter *et al.*, 2004); contrarily, in attributing the initiation of bullying to their personal behaviour, 'victimised' individuals assert cause to the perpetuation of negative reactions, which may ironically result in perceived reclamation of control and power over the event. This in turn retracts the perception of the victim as a helpless entity - unable to control the nature of actions experienced or behavioural responses attracted to the self - and is replaced instead by the belief that the victim has 'caused' the bullying behaviour (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003). In so doing, the negative psychological effects that may ordinarily result from bullying

experiences may be reduced through the reappraisal process of being able to *cause* and thus control the bullying event (Hunter et.al. 2004). Alternatively, if a bullied individual is of the opinion that his/her own behaviour is acceptable and rather it is the bully who has difficulty in dealing with his/her (the 'victim's') conduct (for example the bully may feel threatened by the behaviour of the 'victim'), then the experience of being bullied may not induce any significant impact on wellbeing, given that the problem is attributed to the perpetrator rather than to the 'victim'. Consequently, this may further account for the no-main-effect finding for perceptions of bullying on psychological wellbeing (Hunter et.al. 2004).

In drawing parallels between psychoanalytic theory and the present findings, it becomes apparent that low perceptions of bullying reported may also be explained by the Kleinian notion of projective identification (White, 2004). This phenomenon is defined "as the process by which specific impulses, aspects of the self or internal objects are imagined to be located in some object external to oneself" (Rycroft, 1968, as cited in White, 2004, p 274). Projection of aspects of the self is preceded by denial through which internal emotions private to the self are superimposed on another (Rycroft, 1968, as cited in White, 2004). While projective identification is commonly associated with behaviours displayed by the perpetrator of bullying (such as aggression or violence against another individual that stem from the perpetrator's need to displace inner anxieties onto others), this same principle may also account for the target's fear of admitting victim status to the self and others (White, 2004). Individuals who are privy to negative acts in the workplace may further engage in *denial* (refusal to acknowledge) or *repression* (pushing unwanted impulses into the unconscious) in order to avoid confrontation with the reality of being victim to a bullying situation (White, 2004). Victims may additionally adopt the defence mechanism of *reaction formation* through which an *image of opposites* is projected, creating thus, the impression that 'all is fine'. In so doing, the victim successfully conceals the true nature of his or her internal turmoil, and thereby guards against appearing vulnerable in the eyes of colleagues (White, 2004). Individuals in the present sample who may have engaged in these self-preservation tactics described above may have further reported higher psychological health in order to perpetuate the image of *fineness*. While this cannot be conclusively confirmed, psychoanalytic processes pose a strong argument for the reasons pertaining to circumventing confrontation in situations that require confessing to being a victim and the associated stigma of weakness thereof (White, 2004).

This non-significant finding could further be attributable to the organisation's culture. Where a suppressive and controlling culture is cultivated within an organisation, employees who work within the perpetual confines of such an environment may all be subject to the same or similar negative conditions and treatment; therefore when engaging in self-other comparisons, employees may conclude that colleague experiences parallel personal encounters of their own. Exposure to an act of bullying is therefore interpreted as no different to the treatment received by fellow employees (Jennifer et. al., 2003). Consequently, employees operating within hostile environments may internalise these norms and as a result may buy-in to the notion of hostility as forming part of

the status quo - a system not to be questioned (Jennifer et. al., 2003). In comparing the self to a referent group, an individual will persistently evaluate situations in light of the justness and fairness of the circumstances thereof, and will accordingly engage in value judgements rooted in the conclusions drawn from such comparisons (Jennifer et. al., 2003). Therefore if an employee experiences victimisation, and thus compares him/herself to other employees within the organisation - only to find that all employees are being subjected to the same treatment- that employee may then shift his or her perception of victimisation and may thus sublimate the prevalence of bullying in fear of the impact that questioning the status quo may have on organisational acceptance (Hunter et.al. 2004). An indifference to bullying may further manifest, alongside the perception that management is harsh given that the same type of treatment is perceived to be distributed *by everyone, to everyone*. This is particularly so because bullying is considered a 'rare' event, the exposure to which is uncommon (Hunter et.al. 2004). In extended support for the importance of self-other comparisons, Festinger's (1962) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals are motivated to alter their attitudes and perceptions of workplace bullying if fellow employees are observed to be tolerating the 'so-called' bullying. Altering perceptions and attitudes requires the reappraisal of such an event which may consequently reduce the impact of bullying experiences on psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, sensations around being part of a larger group of bullied individuals may reduce the persecutory feelings associated with victimisation given that other individuals are also subjected to such degradation, thereby reducing the potential negative effects of bullying ordinarily experienced (Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999). This provides additional justification for the finding of no-main-effect for perceptions of bullying and psychological wellbeing in the current study.

Although an exploration of the influence of organisational culture on workplace bullying was beyond the scope of the present study, further research drawing on parallel disciplines in Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour, on the role of organisational culture and the motivational drivers underpinning employee attitudes towards workplace bullying, would further enhance the understanding of factors buttressing the enactment and toleration thereof. The present findings additionally give rise to the importance of extending research on workplace bullying to encompass group workplace bullying that consists of different dynamic processes and shared experiences to that of individual workplace bullying (Hoel, et al., 1999).

Furthermore, it is important to take cognisance of Agervold's (2007, p.165) definition of bullying as comprising perpetual negative workplace experiences occurring "for a period of at least six months that is characterised by negative and aggressive elements directed towards the personality and self-esteem of the receiver" (as opposed to a once off event). Respondents were accordingly required to distinguish between *continuous* and *intermittent* negative acts as required by the NAQ (Einarsen, 1999). Therefore respondents affected by intermittent yet severe acts of bullying are likely to have indicated not having experiencing bullying or at most accounting for it now and then, given that their experiences of bullying did not fit within the confines of the theoretical definition specified above. It may subsequently be argued that the NAQ is limiting in its constraint to bullying as having to

be experienced over a period of at least six months. Once off or occasional events that are severe may perhaps be more psychologically damaging than perpetual bullying, given desensitisation to the repetition of negative action that may occur for the target, particularly where resilience is high.

Additionally limiting in the retrieval of bullying data is the selection of the time facet during which the construct *perceptions of bullying* was obtained. According to Beehr and Newman (1978), the time or duration of a stressful event (such as bullying) may be a crucial factor in determining the consequences thereof. To elaborate, occasional stress manifest within a person's work environment is not likely to impact severely upon psychological wellbeing. However, prolonged stress - particularly during a period of general heightened tension - could be detrimental to the individual and/or the organisation (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Einarsen, 2000). Thus, it is important to select the correct (prioritised) time course or facet to enhance knowledge pertaining to the causation of a stressful event, thereby enabling the provision of more accurate data in longitudinal studies (Leventhal & Tomarken, 1987). Beehr and Newman (1978) provide that elements of the negative consequences produced by stress require time to exhibit their effects. As previously discussed, prolonged stress results in an intensification of negative consequences; following suit, workplace bullying is characterised to occur over varying (usually long-term) periods; that is, prolonged periods of stress upon the individual (Einarsen et al., 2003b). As such, any causal links that exist between stress and the consequences thereof depend upon the passage of time, therefore justifying the importance and benefit of longitudinal designs (Beehr & Newman, 1978). Given the use of cross-sectional design in the current study, the meticulous selection of time facets was not possible, thus presenting the possibility that perceptions of bullying data obtained for the current sample may have been incomplete (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Plausible here is the probability that the measurement of perceptions of bullying for certain individuals was obtained ex post facto (after the occurrence of any social support moderating effect), thereby providing further explanation for low scores obtained for perceptions of bullying in the current sample (Cohen & Willis, 1985). To elaborate, individuals who had been previously subjected to workplace bullying may have already experienced the positive effects of social support as a moderator on their psychological wellbeing and intention to leave at the time of completing the NAQ; therefore, these individuals may have already reappraised the bullying as less stressful, thereby accounting for the low scores obtained for this construct and reduced impact of social support on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Cohen & Willis, 1985). The selection of time facets will be further explored in a discussion of limitations present in the current study (see p. 106-108)

DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO SOURCES OF BULLYING AND THE FACTORS TO WHICH BULLYING IS MOST REGULARLY ATTRIBUTED

Sources of Bullying: As described earlier (pg. 55), participants were required to select the person or persons who were perceived to be the main cause of negative acts experienced in the workplace. Accordingly, supervisors were rated as the most frequent source of bullying (36.7%) for the present sample, followed by

colleagues (20.97%), customers (9.36) and other (4.12%). 23.23% of the respondents selected this particular item to be not-applicable given that no bullying had been personally experienced. Although statistical verification of these particular item findings was beyond the scope of the current study, based on frequency counts yielded it appears that bullying was attributed most frequently to supervisors for the present sample. This is in line with previous research by Zapf (1999) which demonstrated similar attribution patterns, yielding supervisors to be the most dominant perceived source of workplace bullying. However the findings presented for MMR, illustrate that supervisor support appeared to moderate the relationship between perceptions of bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, such that perceptions of bullying imposed less of an impact on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave in the presence of supervisor support. As formerly described (p.10), the co-existence of these findings is plausible: while supervisors may be perceived as the most prevalent source of workplace bullying, they may likewise be capable of reducing perceived bullying when they are a source of support given the authority inherent within their position (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Additionally, the power and influence with which supervisors monitor employees may simultaneously serve to subordinate employee experiences of bullying by promoting problem-focussed coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, as cited in Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). To elaborate, supervisors are endowed with the power to target the problem at its very source, thereby alleviating perceived bullying by assisting the employee in dealing with the problem directly. Where power in the form of a supervisor is supportive of the victim, emotion-focussed coping may further be induced indirectly through reappraisal of the bullying as less threatening, given that protection from a supervisor is manifest (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The juxtaposing variations of power-use inherent within higher organisational positions is therefore unveiled in the co-existence of severe destruction and parallel assistance that such power is capable of inducing (O' Donnell, McGuire, & Cross, 2006). This suggests the possibility of a relationship between social support, power and bullying which would be beneficial for address in future research.

It is important to note that the current study did not decipher whether sample respondents reported to more than one supervisor, which is likely, given the hierarchical structure commonly implemented within many large organisations. Therefore, supervisors as a simultaneous source of bullying and support may be accounted for by those employees who are being bullied by one supervisor and who concurrently seek support from another supervisor. From a statistical standpoint, the moderating effect demonstrated for supervisor support may have stemmed from those respondents not subjected to bullying from their supervisors. Although supervisors were rated as the most frequent source of bullying (36.7%) when compared to other sources of bullying, the remaining 63.3% of the respondents who either did not experience bullying at all or who reported other individuals as the key source of bullying are likely to be those accounting for the moderating effect of supervisor support in the present sample (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

In sum, these findings suggest that although the likelihood of supervisors as a key source of bullying is high given the power differentials inherent in supervisor-subordinate relationships, where supervisors are evidenced not to be the chief source of bullying (and rather the main source of support), supervisors may in fact be the most powerful source of support due to the power intrinsic to such a position (O'Donnell et al., 2006), which affords protection from and the resolution of bullying-related dilemmas or conflicts (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Factors to which bullying is most regularly attributed: With regard to the factors to which bullying is most regularly attributed, *office politics* appeared to be the most dominant cause of workplace bullying for those individuals experiencing bullying in the present sample, followed by *traits of others* and *job level*. In line with previous research using the NAQ (Einarsen et al., 2003) the most prominent attribution factors to emerge in the present study pertain specifically to elements external to the self and/or internal to the organisation. These outcomes support the theoretical notion that bullying behaviour results directly from poorly managed conflict (Einarsen, 1999).

Office Politics: Office politics includes activities such as gossip, denigration, or pretence aimed at maligning one's person, which falls within those activities associated with bullying (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Additionally, office politics is often perceived as a precursor for being ordered to work below one's level of competence (Pettigrew, 1973); given that 54.48% of the study sample reported to be in possession of tertiary education it is therefore likely that for highly-educated employees, receiving tasks below that employees' level of competence is likely to result in the perception of office politics (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). To elaborate, the force associated with obligations to perform under-stimulating tasks may consequently be appraised as a form of office politics inflicted by bullying, therefore providing justification for office politics as a dominant source of bullying for the high academic status of the current sample (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003).

Job Level: Literature proposes that job level as a factor perpetuating bullying is inevitable, given the power differentials associated with hierarchical status in any given organisation. Aquino & Bradfield, (2000) discovered that hierarchical status may affect perceptions of victimisation. To elaborate, Aquino & Bradfield, (2000) revealed that perceptions of victimisation were higher for low-status employees than for high status employees. Therefore, in light of the current research, this suggests that employees occupying lower positions may have been more likely to perceive bullying given the minimal power and authority that such positions afford. Conversely, individuals holding higher organisational status may have been less likely to perceive bullying given the considerable amount of power that such positions provide: these individuals may be shielded from victimisation (even if these individuals conduct themselves in a manner that may elicit aggressive responses from others) and are resultantly less likely to perceive bullying (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000). Individuals are especially safeguarded when hierarchical position affords them control over pay,

promotion, disciplinary action and dismissal: in this instance employees and colleagues are less likely to aggress against them even when provoked, due to fear of reprisal (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000).

As illustrated earlier (p.51), a significant portion of the respondents held what can be assumed as high-status positions (42.51% of the samples were managers, assistant managers or CEO's); furthermore post-hoc comparisons indicated significant differences in intention to leave between assistant managers and engineers. In particular, assistant managers showed higher levels of psychological wellbeing than engineers. Post-hoc comparisons for perceptions of bullying and job title indicated a significant difference in perceptions of bullying between managers and assistants, specialists and managers and between specialists and heads of department. While literature suggests that differences in the level of psychological wellbeing and perceptions of bullying may be accounted for by variation in levels of authority afforded by various job positions (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000), a link between position and authority could not be concretely concluded: Job level was excluded as a question in the current study due to the use of purposive and snowball sampling, whereby a true comparison between the job levels of individuals was not possible (given that the numerous organisations in which respondents were employed may not necessarily grade job titles in the same manner), and therefore true differences in the level of authority afforded by these positions could not be established. Therefore while the nature of job descriptions belonging to respondents and the associated power attached to these positions could be suggested as having buffered general perceptions of bullying to a significant extent. This cannot be conclusively deciphered.

These findings necessitate further, the importance of considering workplace bullying as a multi-dimensional complex phenomenon impacted by numerous individual and organisational dimensions.

Traits of Others: While the establishment of cause and effect with regard to workplace bullying is a highly complex matter (Zapf, 1999), the results of the present study indicate that a large majority of respondents exposed to workplace victimisation attributed the cause of bullying to the personality traits of others rather than to their own behaviour. Whilst a multitude of potential causes may be attributed to bullying experiences, in line with these findings research conducted in Germany by Zapf (1999) revealed that individuals are prone to diffusing blame to others for the negative impact of a given action rather than impugning the situation to alternative factors or oneself. According to Attribution theory, when negative behaviour is experienced, such as workplace bullying, fundamental attribution error is often adopted, whereby the target of adverse action will frequently attribute such behaviour to the internal disposition of the other person (Ross, 1977). As previously expressed (p. 79), if bullied individuals are of the opinion that their own behaviour is acceptable and rather it is the bully who has difficulty in dealing with their conduct then they may attribute the problem to the perpetrator rather than to themselves. The ascription of 'fault' to the perpetrator, and the simultaneous appraisal of personal behaviour as acceptable may result in the bullying not having induced any significant impact on wellbeing (Hunter et.al. 2004).

DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO THE IMPACT OF SOURCES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND INTENTION TO LEAVE: FREQUENCIES, MAIN EFFECTS, MODERATING EFFECTS AND NON-SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS.

Support Rankings versus Main Effects: With regard to frequency comparisons illustrated in Appendix 11: Table A8, 3.94% of respondents ranked *Colleagues* as a primary source of support, while 10.02% of the sample ranked colleagues as a secondary source of support. In comparison to other rankings, colleagues were the least popular source of primary support; however they appeared to demonstrate the most popular source of secondary support. Supervisor support was ranked third as both a primary and secondary source of support (6.26% and 6.98% respectively). Family was rated as the most popular overall source of support, followed by friends, while as a secondary source of support, friends were ranked second (9.66 %) and family was ranked last. Despite the popularity of friends and family in the rankings yielded for most relied upon source of support, in line with research conducted by Eisenberger et al., (1986) and Quine (2001) colleagues and supervisors demonstrated significant inverse main effects on both psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, while friends support and family support demonstrated no main effects whatsoever. Although the significance of MMR results may contradict the aforementioned support rankings (frequencies), it is possible that respondents did not sufficiently discriminate between social support sources at work and personal social support sources when ranking their use of support sources. Therefore, in responding to questions pertaining specifically to the use of social support in instances of work related matters (The Workplace Social Support Scale and The Friends and Family Social Support Scale), high levels of supervisor and colleague support were associated with lower levels of intention to leave and higher levels of psychological wellbeing (given that participants were explicitly cued to focus on work-specific situations); however, where social support was ranked, despite the question specifying reliance on support in work-related instances, it is probable that participants responded in terms of their general use of support sources rather than in context-specific (work-related) terms, thereby accounting for the discrepancy in main effect versus support ranking results. Additionally, it is perhaps likely that the sum of individual questions tapping into support pertaining to various occupational difficulties yielded significance due to the limitations of their work-related situational constraints: perhaps if more questions were included that covered a broader range of situations, other sources of support may have become significant. Moreover, a difference in perceived versus actual use of support may exist: participants may have perceived or rather may have been socially primed to perceive family and friends to be the most prevalent sources of support in all contexts (Bond et al., 1986); however within the context of work-specific situations, colleague and supervisor support may in fact be utilised more frequently by virtue of the greater level of understanding and empathy that may be afforded by such individuals given their actual presence and experience within the same workplace (Day & Livingstone, 2003).

A further factor that may have accounted for the deviance in the MMR results when compared to social support rankings is the concern of reciprocity: although respondents may have acknowledged the availability of sources of support, apprehension around obligatory reciprocation may have deterred the mobilisation of these available sources of support. Therefore, respondents may have ranked their sources of support based on the availability of such sources, however may not have necessarily mobilised these support sources accordingly (Winefield & Winefield, 1992).

Moreover, bullied individuals may be reluctant to discuss work-related problems with family and friends, and may therefore refrain from the use of such individuals as a source of support (Watson, Goh & Sawang, 2011). Particularly for men, concerns surrounding being perceived as weak when confessing to having experienced work-related problems to close friends and family may render such individuals inappropriate sources of support in the face of work-related problems (Watson et al., 2011). It is otherwise plausible that employees under severe stress may displace work-related tension onto friends or family members, thus relegating the potential for support from these individuals. Strained relationships between friends and family members as a result of regular displacement may expunge these individuals as sources of support; alternatively, guilt associated with the imposition of frequent stress-related outbursts at home or in the presence of friends may cause an individual to avoid turning to friends and family where support is required or desired.

Implicit here is the additional importance of the type of support provided by the source from which an individual is seeking and receiving support (Ostberg & Lennartsson, 2007). Although the aim of the current study focussed specifically on the instrumentality of the source of support within a work-related stress-strain relationship, the saliency of supervisor support as a dominant moderator draws forth supplementary value to the type of support provided (Ostberg & Lennartsson, 2007). Inferentially deducible is the significance of instrumental support -as supported by previous research (Rooney, Gottlieb & Newby-Clark, 2009) - and to an extent appraisal support provided by supervisors (given the power inherent within such a position to actively reduce or discontinue the occurrence of workplace bullying) in moderating the effects of work-related stressor-strain relationships (Rooney et al., 2009; Ostberg & Lennartsson, 2007; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). An exploration into the importance of source and type-specific support in the presence of workplace stress will be highly valuable to address in future research.

Moderating effects of Supervisor and Colleague Support: As described in the results section above, supervisors demonstrated inverse moderating effects on both psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, indicating thus that higher levels of supervisor support in the presence of workplace bullying predicted lower levels of intention to leave and higher levels of psychological wellbeing (*given that low scores on the GHQ indicated higher psychological wellbeing*). Colleague support demonstrated a significant inverse moderating effect for intention to leave, however did not afford the same interaction for psychological wellbeing in the presence of workplace bullying.

In light of supervisor support, as described earlier (p.56; 83; 86-87), the power and authority inherent in the position of supervisor may assist in the minimisation of workplace bullying (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). First and foremost, supervisors may themselves become a problem-focussed coping solution: in addressing the bully directly on behalf of the victim, supervisors may eradicate the negative behaviour through the use of fervent threat, the effectiveness of which is likely to be high given supervisor authority associated with dismissal, demotion and pay (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Secondly, the perception of authority and power commonly imposed on supervisors may elicit emotion-focussed coping in the victim, whereby the victim is comforted by the idea that the supervisor may use such mechanisms to 'defeat' the bully (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Psychological wellbeing and intention to leave are therefore less likely to be effected where perceptions of power and authority surrounding a supervisor are salient. In light of colleague support, the significance of colleague support as moderating the effect of perceptions of bullying and intention to leave is plausibly attributable to the shared general workplace experiences within the same environment between the victim and his or her colleagues (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003). In sharing similar bullying experiences with colleagues, the appraisal of bullying may become less by virtue of the regularity of its occurrence and associated imposition on other staff (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003). The 'victim' may consequently feel less victimised if he or she learns that other individuals within the workplace are also being subjected to the same or similar treatment: the victim may therefore reappraise the observed bullying experiences of others and in turn may redefine bullying as 'normal' behaviour or treatment, thereby reducing any intention to leave (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985). With regard to justice attribution theory, employees engage in self-other comparisons in order to decipher the degree of justice and fairness present in the organisation (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). Thus where incongruence exists in self-other comparisons, employees may conclude the organisation to be unjust. However, where perceptions associated with self-other comparisons illustrate congruence, employees are less likely to perceive unfairness within the organisation (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). In relating justice and fairness perceptions to bullying, where victims of bullying engage in self-other comparisons that reveal similar treatment across both parties, then the organisation may consequently be perceived as fair, despite the negative nature of bullying. Therefore intention to leave may be less likely (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2004). In this instance, social support thereby acts as a buffer by initiating the reappraisal of an adverse situation, thus eliciting a reduction in perceived threat or importance (Jennifer *et. al.*, 2003; House, 1981). Colleagues may likewise assist by confronting the bully on the victim's behalf, thereby actively reducing the bullying through indirect problem-focussed coping. Similar to supervisor support, the level of understanding and empathy provided by colleagues may outweigh that provided by friends due to the degree to which colleagues may be able to relate to the victim's expression of distress by virtue of mutual presence within the same work environment (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009). To illustrate, where a victim is describing an account of bullying imposed by a particular individual to a colleague, the extent to which the colleague can empathise with the victim is far higher where the colleague is familiar with who the bully is and how he or she

commonly behaves, invigorating thus, the relational value of the social transaction (Caravita et al., 2009). As provided earlier (p. 86), these findings draw attention to the situational specific appropriateness of the source of support alleviating stressful work-based situations such as bullying (Rooney et al., 2009). Moreover, these results highlight the need for future research to assess the type of support provided by a given supportive source, and the applicability of varying types of support from different sources in the presence of stressful work-related events.

No-moderation Effect for Colleague Support on Psychological Wellbeing: It is essential to explore and contrast the differential ability of supervisor and social support in moderating psychological wellbeing. As described above, supervisor support is jointly associated with authority, therefore prompting the resolution of the bullying by virtue of the supervisor's power to control and alleviate the situation for the victim (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The foresight for solution offered by supervisor support may therefore lead to the reappraisal of a stressful situation to a point where the bullying is diminished, and thereby the impact of bullying on psychological well being is reduced (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Colleague support however may not necessarily afford solutions, particularly where colleagues occupy positions at the same or lower levels of the organisational hierarchy as the victim. At best, colleagues may be able to offer empathy and comfort, which may be sufficient to alleviate intention to leave (Winefield & Winefield, 1992); however in the absence of power, colleagues may not be adequately able to assist in the resolution or control of the bullying situation and consequently may not be sufficient to reduce the negative impact of victimisation on psychological wellbeing (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). This provides a plausible explanation for the no-moderation effect detected for colleague support on psychological wellbeing in the face of workplace bullying.

Moderating effect of Friends and Family Support Combined: As provided earlier, friends and family social support, where combined, demonstrated a significant inverse moderating effect on intention to leave, suggesting thus that in the presence of workplace bullying, friends and family social support provide a buffering effect by reducing intention to leave. However, in line with research provided by La Rocco et al., (1980, as cited in Adams, King & King, 1996) separately, friend support and family support did not appear to hold as much weight in moderating the effects of work-related outcomes. While friends support and family support have been demonstrated to induce a significant impact on general wellbeing (Adams et al., 1996), in the presence of work-related matters, the effect may not be as momentous. Of explanatory value in this instance, is the notion that friend and family support supply supportive impact to work-related matters only when both are salient; however, on their own friend support and family support are unable to provide the same level of effectiveness as sources of support that relate directly to the workplace, given the lack of relational ability present in friends and family not immediately familiar with or exposed to the work environment (Lewis & Orford, 2005). On the contrary, when combined, the indirect supportive value

provided by friends and family may be sufficient to induce a moderating effect (Adams et al., 1996). This rationalisation is however exclusive to intention to leave; psychological wellbeing for the current sample remained unaffected by support from friends and family, both individually and when combined. Plausible here is the possibility that intention to leave may be more easily alleviated than psychological wellbeing, given that intention refers specifically to deliberation pertaining to action, and the subsequent inducement thereof, while psychological wellbeing centres around the internal workings of the individual as dictated by emotions, feelings and sensations experienced (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Thus where friends and family are concerned (the values and opinions of whom tend to be highly recognised by an individual and are unlikely to be context specific) the persuasive impact to act in one way or another may hold significant weight in steering the individual away from leaving the organisation, consequently reducing his or her intention to leave (Weisberg, 1994). Contrarily, given the inherent and inevitable experiential distance that exists between friends, family and the workplace, where psychological wellbeing is concerned, such external sources of support may be insufficient in reducing the negative impact of adverse workplace situations on internal unfavourable sensations and perceptions of the self (Winefield & Winefield, 1992).

Non-significant Effects of Friend and Family Support: Contrary to hypothesised predictions, the current sample demonstrated no main or moderating effects for friend and family support on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. It was initially presupposed that friend and family support would be more likely to indicate moderating effects on both dependent variables than workplace sources of support, given that the source of workplace bullying is very often attributable to supervisors and colleagues (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen, 2000). However, as evident in the current research, the contrary held true. As expressed formerly, supervisors and colleagues are directly proximate to the workplace and therefore are able to provide higher relational value and sharedness in experiences than sources of support such as friends and family that are external to the organisation (Winefield & Winefield, 1992). Friends and family are unable to fully relate to workplace occurrences given their unfamiliarity with first-hand organisational dynamics; therefore the probability of impactful social support stemming from external sources is far less than social support provided by individuals for whom the workplace is directly and holistically understood (Dakof & Taylor, 1990). Moreover the formation of natural group processes, sub-cultures and discourses that form within the context of organisation produce a common framework from which employees tend to perceive workplace incidences, thereby augmenting the degree of relational depth, understanding and empathy provided by individuals functioning within the same environment (Wheelan, 2005; Rigg, Stewart & Trehan, 2007). Perception frameworks and discourses in relation to friends and family, while salient for various life situations may not extend as far as the organisation, and therefore are less likely to induce positive social support effects in relation to psychological wellbeing and intention to leave (Rigg et al., 2007). As formerly discussed (p. 86), this brings to light the significance of the type of support offered by the source from which support is being provided (Ostberg & Lennartsson, 2007). In line with the dominant moderating effects

depicted for supervisor support, it can be suggested that instrumental support (which offers the direct or indirect confrontation and resolution of negative events), and to an extent appraisal support (which affords the perception of protection and resolve for employees given the power inherent within a supervisor's role) may be superiorly beneficial for workplace related difficulties such as bullying (Rooney et al., 2009; Ostberg & Lennartsson, 2007). Much value will be attained through further exploration into source and type specific support in the presence of work-related stress.

Additionally, as addressed previously (p. 86), bullied individuals may refrain from utilising friends and family as a source of support due to their reluctance to admit to being the subject of workplace bullying (Watson et al., 2011). The need to conceal such information so as to avoid the manifestation of any perceptions of weakness (particularly for men, where the assertion and maintenance of power and strength in the face of close family and friends is dominant) may deter any discussion of workplace dilemmas (Watson et al., 2011). Therefore, while the provision of high levels of support from friends and family may be acknowledged and reported, this does not necessarily translate into the mobilisation of such support sources in the face of work-related difficulties. Moreover, where the displacement of work-related tension onto family members or friends is salient, consequential guilt associated with such outbursts may discourage the use of these very individuals as sources of support; alternatively, those individuals upon whom the displacement is imposed may become reluctant to offer support (Watson et al., 2011).

CORRELATIONS PERTAINING TO PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES, SUPERVISORS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

As outlined by research question two, the present research additionally aimed to assess whether social support and perceptions of bullying were correlated such that higher levels of social support were related to lower perceptions of workplace bullying and vice versa. As described previously, Pearson's correlation coefficient yielded support from supervisors to be the only source of social support to demonstrate an inverse relationship with perceptions of bullying; that is higher levels of supervisor support were inversely related to lower perceptions of bullying. Colleague, family and friend support appeared to demonstrate no relationship whatsoever to perceptions of bullying, implying thus that the degree to which social support from each of these sources is salient, is unrelated to the extent to which workplace bullying is perceived for the current sample. In direct relation to the justifications pertaining to supervisor support provided earlier, the correlative findings evident here may similarly be accounted for by the strength of impact that supervisors and the associated authority inherent within such a position affords in instances of workplace bullying (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004): While colleagues, friends and family may offer advice or emotional support, this is often insufficient in resolving bullying related disputes. Contrastingly, supervisors are equipped with the power and influence to actively induce dispute resolution pertaining to bullying (instrumental support), particularly supervisors for whom matters regarding salary, promotion, disciplinary action and dismissal are

within their particular jurisdiction, inculcating thus perceived threat for the perpetrator in instances thereof (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; O'Donnell et al., 2006). Additionally and indirectly evident here is the importance of the type of support provided, and the manner in which such support may work to alleviate the negative effects of a stressful event such as bullying (Rooney et al., 2009). The type of support may therefore further enhance the ability of the social support source to moderate the impact of harmful stressors, thereby affording further consideration and exploration for future research.

To conclude, the current research provides evidence for the positive impact of supervisor and colleague support on intention to leave, and the interactional significance of supervisor support for psychological wellbeing in the presence of workplace bullying across numerous industries. It further demonstrates the strength of supervisor support in particular as a source of consolation and security in situations where workplace bullying is prevalent (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

POTENTIAL CONFOUNDING FACTORS AFFECTING PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WORKPLACE BULLYING

Cultural Differences: Numerous factors may be attributed to the saliency and consequent effectiveness of social support as a buffer against work-associated adversities. Within a kaleidoscopic workforce characterised by a fusion of diverse cultures that constitute organisations within South Africa, the sublimated undercurrent of factors housed within different employees hold inevitable impact in the consequent perceptions and experiences elicited within a given workforce (Human, 1996; Hudson, 2000). Those elements considered to constitute social support are framed according to the cultural, social and political backgrounds to which each employee has been previously exposed (Hudson, 2000). The rules and functions associated with interpersonal transactions are further governed by cultural context, as are inclinations in support seeking, provision and outcomes (Burlison, 2003). Moreover, social support in non-Western cultures may not serve as prevalent a function in terms of coping with adversities as social support within Western cultures, and therefore may be ineffective in buffering the negative impact on specific outcomes such as psychological wellbeing and intention to leave (Burlison, 2003). Given the collective and individualistic polarities that divide Western and African relations, communication manifests itself in juxtaposing forms (Hofstede, 1980, as cited in Burlison, 2003): for collectivist cultures, communication arises through “subtle, indirect, highly contextual and relatively non-expressive communication” alongside the “interpretation of unarticulated feelings, non-verbal gestures and environmental cues” (Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka, & Contarello, 1986, as cited in Burlison, 2003, p.8). Contrastingly, individualist cultures rely on “explicit and elaborated communicative utterances” (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996, as cited in Burlison, 2003, p.8). Therefore, the use of language, emotional tone and non-verbal cues that characterise supportive relations vary from one culture to the next. While the questionnaires pertaining to colleague, supervisor, family and friend support were formulated within the context of Western culture framework and could therefore be

deemed suitable for the white majority of the sample (53%), 47% of the respondents (Asian, African, or Indian) were from cultures rooted in collectivism, therefore the Western nature of the tests administered may not have been sufficiently applicable for collectivist notions of social support, thereby possibly accounting for the lack of effect provided by friend and family social support in the current study (Burleson, 2003).

Childhood Attachment: According to Kimatura, Wantanabe, Takara, Hiyama, Yasumiya & Fujihara (2002), early attachment experiences with parents and siblings during childhood are internalised in the solidification of personality, and may consequently account for later propensities associated with subsequent perceptions of social support and the formation of supportive networks thereof. Attachment patterns may additionally influence the degree to which emotional safety is perceived, impacting thus perceptions of environmental threats (Kimatura et al., 2002). To elaborate, individuals with predispositions embedded within secure patterns of attachment may be less likely to perceive bullying by virtue of a higher degree of felt emotional security. In addition, these individuals may be more likely to seek social support in instances of potential or actual threat, thereby increasing perceptions of emotional safety and consequently reducing the saliency of the perceived threat (Kimatura et al., 2002). This provides a pivotal precedent of social support not accounted for in the current study that may have impacted the aforementioned results yielded.

Reciprocity: While literature on social support has theorised its vast effectiveness, conditions have been suggested that may facilitate or hinder the use of social support within the context of a stressor-strain relationship (Antonucci, 1985). The function of reciprocity within social support is one such factor that may enhance or retard the mobilisation of social support. With regard to the enhancing functions of reciprocity, the perception of both giving and receiving support becomes important for some individuals' (Antonucci, 1985). In this instance an individual must feel comfortable with receiving the social support provided by another party in light of the support that this individual has been or will be able to provide to that party. Furthermore, perceptions of reciprocity that exist between two parties may characterise the degree of comfort that each party feels in terms of both giving and receiving support (Antonucci, 1985). This additionally implies that for persons for whom reciprocity is important, mutual exchange must be perceived in order to experience a positive impact from social support; that is, both parties must be able to provide and receive support within the same or similar circumstances, and in so doing may be able to issue more effective support by virtue of their familiarity with the situation (Winefield & Winefield, 1992). With regard to workplace adversities, the degree to which reciprocity is perceived may have consequently accounted for the moderating effect of supervisor and social support, given that these work sources of support are directly familiar with or subject to the same circumstances or environment and are therefore more likely to be perceived as effective reciprocal sources of support (Antonucci, 1985). Contrastingly, perceived reciprocity in social support provided by friends and family regarding workplace dilemmas may be far less for work-related

matters given their limited understanding and ability to relate to organisational matters to which they are not directly privy (Antonucci, 1985). The notion of reciprocity in supportive relationships may consequently explain the absence of a moderating effect for friends and family support on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave in the presence of workplace bullying. In light of the retarding functions of reciprocity, reciprocity for other individuals may deter the mobilisation of support sources due to the perceived obligation that may arise in having to return the gesture or owe something to the individual providing the support. Therefore, that resources of support may be readily available does not necessarily translate into the mobilisation of such resources due to the perception that obligatory reciprocation may be required thereafter (Winefield & Winefield, 1992).

Concealment of Work-related Difficulties from Family and Friends: As formerly addressed (p. 86; 90) bullied individuals may avoid acknowledging workplace difficulties in the presence of friends and family, in order to circumvent the manifestation of perceptions of weakness associated with being the subject of bullying (Watson et al., 2011). Particularly for men, the desire to assert power and dominance in the presence of friends and family may deter the use of such sources for support (Watson et al., 2011). While the assertion of power and dominance may be similarly important in the workplace, the difference lies in the ability to conceal: workplace bullying may be easily censored from friends and family through mere non-disclosure; however, the concealment of workplace bullying from colleagues and supervisors is more difficult at work due to the observable nature of such an event. Therefore despite non-disclosure, supportive colleagues and supervisors are at some point likely to be witness to the occurrence of the bullying, which will allow for an intervention.

Positive Support: Another condition to consider in light of social support is positivity (Antonucci, 1985). To elaborate, the type of social support provided to an individual from a particular source is required to have a positive effect and this will be determined according to the quality of support perceived by the recipient (Antonucci, 1985). Social support is not necessarily always positive; in some instances negative social support may manifest, which may amplify rather than ameliorate strain experienced as a result of stress (Antonucci, 1985). To illustrate, negative social support from an overprotective parent such as preventing association with the opposite sex, can hinder rather than promote healthy social development in a child. Similarly, if an individual confides in a chosen other for social support during a time of great stress or difficulty, and that chosen other is also experiencing some sort of strain, then a tendency to draw attention towards the negative rather than the positive may occur, which in turn is likely to increase rather than appease levels of strain (Antonucci, 1985). Moreover, where the displacement of anger onto friends or family members as a result of stressful workplace circumstances occurs, the manifestation of strained relations is likely, thereby reducing the use of family and friends as positive sources of support (Watson et al., 2011). This provides additional insight into the no-moderation effect yielded by friends and family for the present study, and in

particular for the no-moderation effect for colleague support for psychological wellbeing, where hostility experienced in tandem may aggravate rather than hinder the negative impact of workplace bullying.

Gender: Although individual differences in the nature and effect of social support provided or received did not constitute the main aim of the present study, it cannot be overlooked that variations do exist. Gender for instance, is a key individual difference that marks a major determining factor in the type, amount and effect of social support received or mobilised where available (Antonucci, 1985). Both theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that due to gender socialisation patterns, men tend to develop intimate relationships only with their spouse, while women have been evidenced to possess extensive networks of support from a variety of sources (Antonucci, 1985). While men may have numerous sources of support available for use, they are less likely to mobilise these sources; women on the other hand are socialised to express emotion more readily, and consequently are more likely to mobilise available sources of support (Blaine, 2007). Given the female dominance evident for the current sample (64.11%), this may account for the main and moderating effects of supervisor and colleague support, in that women are more likely to expand their social support networks to sources outside of immediate family, friends or spouse. It has been further illustrated that women experience more positive effects from social support than men based on social and occupational role expectations of females as socially shaped individuals (Antonucci, 1985). Women are moulded into highly sociable beings and tend to communicate feelings and emotions more readily than men (Antonucci, 1985). The male ego is a dominant force in the social formulation of what it means to be male. Readily expressing emotion is considered a sign of weakness in the eyes of socialised man; therefore men are more likely to deal with challenges or difficulties in a contained manner (Antonucci, 1985). Furthermore, men are inherently more reluctant than women to admit to situations in which they are classified the 'victim' (such a bullying) due to the associated perceptions of weakness that may stem from such a label (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). Within the context of South Africa the tendency to avert potential 'victim' status may be particularly true for African men - despite their collectivist roots - given their subjection to previous discriminatory injustices of Apartheid (Grant, 2007; Hunter *et al.*, 2004); the desire to assert their reclaimed power within the workplace is likely to override any desire to disclose difficult experiences pertaining to bullying or victimisation, and consequently the use of support in such situations is unlikely (Blaine, 2007). Women in contrast have been socialised to be more emotional and feeling-oriented, and therefore will more readily open up about the particular difficulties with which they are faced (Antonucci, 1985). Research conducted by Ashton and Fuehrer (1993) provides evidence to show that in comparing men and women for each type of social support (emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal), males reported a significantly lower likelihood of mobilising emotional support from others than did females. It has been further established that women seek emotional support from their partner and friends to a greater extent than do men, which supports the notion of gender differences in seeking social support (Day & Livingstone, 2003).

Personality: Personality additionally comprises a major individual difference in levels of social support received and associated outcomes of perceiving social support (Krause, Liang, & Verna, 1990). Traits such as negative affectivity, introversion and extroversion constitute two dominant personality variables that may vary the effectiveness of social support and the determination of the degree to which social support is sought after (Krause, et al., 1990). Individuals high on negative affect have been demonstrated to generally perceive experiences in a negative light (Penney & Spector, 2005). It is therefore unlikely that such persons will experience positive outcomes from receiving social support in the face of challenges (Swickert, Rosentreter, Hittner, & Mushrush, 2002). Introverted individuals tend to avoid social contact altogether, therefore social support may not even feature for these individuals in times of difficulty (Swickert, et al., 2002). Extroverts on the other hand are highly sociable and confident, and therefore will be most likely to seek and benefit from social support in instances where obstacles arise (Swickert, et al., 2002). With reference to workplace bullying, research has revealed that personality variables such as negative affectivity and aggression are associated with perceptions of bullying in such a way that individuals exhibiting higher levels of the aforementioned personality variables are more inclined to perceive bullying than are individuals low on these same traits (Einarsen, 1999). Therefore personality may function as a determinant of both perceptions of bullying and seeking social support (Swickert, et al., 2002; Einarsen, 1999).

Of particular importance is locus of control, which as a personality factor may have played a significant role in determining the effects of stressful work-related situations such as bullying. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control the events that affect them (Lefcourt, 1991). More specifically, individuals who exhibit an internal locus of control are of the belief that they are capable of causing or controlling the outcome of external events, and are therefore more likely to actively seek resolution (through assistance or confrontation) where adversity is prevalent; contrarily, individuals who possess an external locus of control are of the belief that powerful others, fate or chance determine the outcome of events to which they are submitted (Lefcourt, 1991). Therefore, individuals in possession of an external locus of control are less likely to seek resolution and resultantly succumb to the negative impact of harmful situations.

According to Lefcourt (1991) the mere possession of knowledge that one can exert control over the outcome of a particular event serves to mitigate the effects of aversive stimuli; particularly, where an adverse event is predictable, the effects thereof are minimised. This may result from the opportunity that regularity creates to schedule efforts to be less sensitive to or to resolve the impact of an adverse event (Lefcourt, 1991). This suggests that individuals who believe that they have the ability to control an event (internal locus of control) are more likely to actively seek resolution in the face of adversity. In relating this specifically to bullying, such individuals may therefore confront the situation at its source or may alternatively seek resolution through social support, particularly where regular exposure to the negative event is evident (Lefcourt, 1991).

This brings to light a potential flaw in the notion of repetition evident in the current definition of bullying. Bullying is said to only occur where the event occurs *repeatedly* over a period of six at least months (Agervold, 2007). Problematic in this definition is the requirement that the event should occur continually: where the individual in question has an internal locus of control, the repetition of an event may assert predictability and consequently an increase in the belief that such an individual is able to control the bullying, given the passing of time during which that individual may have calculated potential methods to resolve the situation. Formulating methods of resolve may in turn induce the reappraisal of the event as less stressful. This may consequently account for low perceptions of bullying recorded in many studies that centre specifically on workplace bullying. This further elucidates the importance of the selection of time facets, the passage of time during which the construct is recorded (Beehr & Newman, 1978), and the use of longitudinal design (*this will be elaborated further in limitations for the present study*, p. 106-108).

In light of the current research, along with all the other aforementioned socio-cultural, demographic and personality variables, it is therefore possible that locus of control as a dispositional factor may have worked extraneously in the stress-support-strain relationship under observation, by moderating the likelihood of engaging in active resolution processes such as seeking support in the presence of bullying.

While the researcher of the current study is cognisant of the potential affects that the abovementioned factors may have imposed on the variables in question, it was beyond the scope of the present study to account for such factors; nevertheless, the impact that these confounding factors may impose are important to consider in the conduction of further research pertaining to stressor-strain models within which moderator variables may operate (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

THEORETICAL IMPLCATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The current research has thoroughly accounted for the significance of social support, particularly social support stemming directly from the workplace in alleviating the adverse impacts of workplace bullying on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave directly and through moderation. The significance of social support as a buffer for the current sample was particularly significant where supervisors and colleagues were included; additionally, the present results provide evidence for the importance of multiple sources of external support (friends and family) in alleviating the impact of work related difficulties on intention to leave. In tandem, indirect supportive value provided by friends and family may be sufficient to induce a moderating effect (Adams et al., 1996). The same however did not appear true where psychological wellbeing and multiple sources of external support for the current sample were concerned. As described formerly, this denotes the significance of relational ability, reciprocity and environmental immediacy relating to support in instances of work-related difficulty (Antonucci, 1985; Adams et al., 1996; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Intention to leave may be more easily alleviated than psychological wellbeing, given that intention

refers specifically to deliberation pertaining to action, and the subsequent inducement thereof, while psychological wellbeing centres on the internal workings of the individual as dictated by emotions, feelings and sensations experienced (Winefield & Winefield, 1992). Thus where friends and family are concerned (the values and opinions of whom tend to be highly recognised by an individual and are unlikely to be context specific) the persuasive impact to act in one way or another may hold significant weight in steering the individual away from leaving the organisation, consequently reducing his or her intention to leave (Weisberg, 1994). Contrarily given the inherent and inevitable experiential distance that exists between friends, family and the workplace, where psychological wellbeing is concerned, such external sources of support may be insufficient in reducing the negative impact of adverse workplace situations on internal unfavourable sensations and perceptions of the self (Winefield & Winefield, 1992).

The present research has thereby offered an indication of the predictive and buffering value that social support (particularly work sources of support) holds, in the relationship between workplace bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. These findings hold significant force for organisations in acknowledging the undesirable impact that workplace bullying may have on employees, and likewise illustrates the significance of solid workplace support networks as a source of alleviation where adversity of this nature is salient (Hansen et al., 2006; Vartia & Leka, 2011).

As formerly discussed (pg 9-10), perceptions and resulting experiences of bullying, especially where prolonged, impose major implications for the mental and physical health of victims in the bullying relationship. This includes susceptibility to depression, low self-esteem, impaired cognitive functioning, poor emotional health, alcohol abuse, prolonged duress stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, exclusion, social isolation and in severe cases suicide (Hansen et al., 2006; Sperry & Duffy, 2009; Lutgen-Skandvik *et. al.*, 2007). Negative organisational effects have further been demonstrated (Lutgen-Skandvik *et. al.*, 2007). These include an increase in levels of absenteeism and turnover, and subsequently, a decrease in levels of productivity, organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Lutgen-Skandvik *et. al.*, 2007). Environments in which bullying is cultivated through the reward of such behaviours are therefore vulnerable to low performance and consequently to poor income. The severity of impact consequently brings to light the importance of redress. It therefore remains in the best interests of organisations to take cognisance of the potential consequences that escalated levels of bullying in the workplace may impose on organisational outcomes (Sperry & Duffy, 2009; Lutgen-Skandvik *et. al.*, 2007).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The foundational aim of the present study has been to promote an awareness of bullying that may occur in the workplace. Furthermore this study has established the importance of considering social support, and in particular workplace support, in alleviating the harmful influence that situational workplace bullying may

impose (Hansen et al., 2006; Jennifer et. al., 2003). Empirical suggestions pertaining to the reduction of bullying in the workplace emphasize acknowledgement and understanding on part of the organisation of the occurrence of workplace bullying as experienced by employees. Knowledge, understanding and information pertaining to bullying will enable organisations to engage in the implementation of zero-tolerance policies against bullying through the development of anti-bullying policies, the provision of in-house counselling and Employee Assistance Programs to enable the solving of such problems, the assurance of efficient and effective grievance procedures, the regulation of disciplinary action against bullying perpetrators, the encouragement of open door policies throughout companies, and the thorough address of employee-related concerns so as to ensure that bullying-related problems are completely resolved (Zapf, 1999; Einarsen, 1999; Sperry & Duffy, 2009; Hockley, 2006; Vartia & Leka, 2010).

To elaborate on the above, through promoting an awareness of bullying and its potentially detrimental effects for both employees and the organisation as a whole, it is suggested that organisations' may come to appreciate the severe impact of such a phenomenon and consequently may become more inclined to draft new procedures and policies to their pre-existing company guidelines, rules and regulations that pertain specifically to the eradication of workplace bullying (Hunter et. al., 2004). Human resources development, conflict management and dispute resolution mechanisms, legislation and work policies are recommended as essential practices necessary to implement into the workplace as a means to both prevent and 'cure' incidences of victimisation (Vartia & Leka, 2010). The development and enforcement of legislation pertaining to quality of life and organisational support from colleagues and superiors in dealing with workplace bullying is further advised (Beehr & Newman, 1978). While legislation against sexual harassment is provided by the South African Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, it is nonetheless necessary to draft laws that deal specifically with the prohibition of and protection against workplace bullying, given that sexual harassment and workplace bullying are distinct from one another. This would require the input of South African citizens in creating an awareness of the negative implications of workplace bullying so as to encourage the South African government to invest time and money into the execution of solutions pertaining to this matter (Vartia & Leka, 2010; Zapf, 1999; Einarsen, 1999; Sperry & Duffy, 2009; Hockley, 2006).

The formulation of organisational Employee Assistance Programs in aid of developing coping skills in victimised employees may be of proportionate benefit (Jennifer et. al., 2003). Employee assistance programs should further include social-activity based assessments in order to better determine the dispositional tendencies of individuals to engage in the pursuit of social contact (Hunter et al., 2004). This will enable employee assistance practitioners to assist those individuals prone to isolation (and thereby perhaps more vulnerable to bullying) in accustoming to social activity, thus augmenting their confidence in social interaction, and thereby fortifying their sense of emotional security (Hunter et. al., 2004). This in turn may

assist victimised employees in overcoming the physical, emotional and psychological hardships that may result from continuous exposure to bullying (Jennifer et. al., 2003).

Further evidence in dealing with bullying has established the importance of screening individuals during the selection phase of the recruitment process in order to identify the dispositional tendencies inherent in their recruits that may tend towards aggression and hostility towards others (Jennifer et al., 2003; Vartia & Leka, 2010). In so doing, organisations may become more cognisant of the type of personalities present within the company and may thereby assist in deciphering those employees most prone to victimisation or perpetration (Keashly et al., 2004).

Training and developing the interpersonal skills of managers may contribute towards proactive assistance in dealing with employees who have been bullied (Jennifer et al., 2003). Pearson, Andersson and Porath (2000, as cited in Upton, 2010) emphasize the importance of moulding the effective use of emotional boundaries into interpersonal training programs along with negotiation techniques and the management of difficult individuals (Lazarus, 1993, as cited in Upton, 2010). Educating managers and employees about the nature and impact of workplace bullying, and training company individuals in the management of victimisation has been suggested to further enable greater success in the resolution of such matters (Pietersen, 2005; Vartia & Leka, 2010). In order to stifle the effects of workplace bullying, it has been additionally recommended that new employees should be sensitised to the personal values and behaviours that are expected of them as well as to the company culture adhered to by the organisation (Vartia & Leka, 2010).

In light of the results obtained for the present study, in which the importance of supervisor support is particularly evident, the development of supportive and nurturing qualities in both managers and supervisors becomes evident. The current findings have shed light on the benefits inherent in the assumption of leadership techniques that embody the use of androgynous qualities, whereby traditionally masculine and feminine attributes become enmeshed within a body of potential reactions to which organisational leaders may subscribe (Korabik, 1990). The mellifluousness of femininity, where nurturing, caring and genuine concern for the wellbeing of others is dominant, may engender in leaders the ability to provide social support to employees that is bound to induce positive influence on the wellbeing of employees (Korabik, 1990). The maintenance of fairness and justice within organisation, particularly where the eradication of workplace bullying is necessitated, equally requires masculine power and control to ensure the sustainability of workplace ethicality - principally in instances where workplace bullying is predominant. Furthermore, the inception and successful entrenchment of an ethical discourse to suppress negative workplace behaviour necessitates powerful speech highlighted through charisma, influence and persuasiveness in generating a following (Marsh, 1987; Korabik, 1990).

Given that decision-making power lies mostly in the hands of managers, Stacey (1993, as cited in Pietersen, 2005) suggests the use of a decision-making and problem solving model to assist managers along in the process of entrenching workplace bullying resolution practices. It is proposed that the implementation of a step-by-step decision-making and problem solving model may promote the reduction of bullying incidences in the workplace through the creation of problem awareness, the identification of problem scope, the formulation of actions to solve the problem and the subsequent activation of such solutions. This proposed model recommends knowledge-sharing and awareness regarding matters of workplace bullying (Stacey, 1993, as cited in Pietersen, 2005).

The ramifications of workplace bullying furthermore necessitate the monitoring of employer-employee relations as well as employee-employee interactions in order to promote a friendly and open work atmosphere that is free from hostility or victimisation of any kind (Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996). Individual-level interventions in turn may build from the instillation of organisational concern, given that open and friendly work environments may promote confidence and assurance within employees in the event of needing to report an incident (Zapf, et al., 1996). Creating a pleasant work environment will also encourage civil behaviours in employees, and in so doing will allow for the detection of negative actions if such conduct is considered a violation against organisational-behavioural norms (O'Moore & Lynch, 2007).

The espousal of organisation-specific social networks may enhance the availability of channels of social support to employees by providing them with an alternate option of virtual support; this may assist in increasing the emotional security experienced by employees within a given organisation. While social networks are commonly considered to be a negative distraction for employees often resulting in reduced productivity, the importance of the positive impact of social support provided by such networks should not be overlooked (Leskovec, Huttenlocher, & Kleinberg, 2010). Particularly where the network is work-specific, less of a distraction in terms of miscellaneous activities engaged in on social networking sites such as Facebook may result (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Social networking sites are frequently associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing and lower levels of intention to leave, demonstrating thus, the potentially positive effects that the implementation of social sites within the workplace may provide. This may further be transferable where workplace adversities such as bullying are salient (Ellison et al., 2007).

While most individual-level interventions stem from the implementation of organisational-level adjustments as illustrated above, workplace social support may be one source of individual-level intervention that may be independent of organisational assistance, especially where the individual possesses a solid support system (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). In addition to the findings of the current study, a plethora of evidence exists in support of the positive effects of social support as a moderator of negative outcome events, particularly in light of the manner in which individuals appraise negative events (House, 1981; Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985; Antonucci, 1985; Lirio, et al., 2007; Cox & McKay, 1985). Consequently, it may therefore be deduced that

workplace bullying in the face of social support, particularly workplace support, induces less of an impact on victims. Encouraging employees to build systems of external support thus proves to be an additional factor which may effectively contribute to the minimisation of the negative impact that workplace bullying may have on employees (Sperry & Duffy, 2009). Organisations can foster social support through the implementation of work-related social network engines, social gatherings, family-work events, and team building weekends in order to promote healthy socialisation within employees both organisationally and externally.

Although the present study has only been able to address a fragment of the multi-dimensional conceptual bullying framework proposed by Einarsen (2003), it serves as one of many building blocks that will further the construction of the model in its entirety. The current study provides a platform from which further research in similar and alternative segments of the field may extend.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING RESEARCH WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA

The notion of bullying in the workplace is particularly germane to the South African context given the nature of its history embedded within the discriminatory injustices of the Apartheid movement (Nel, Kirsten, Swanepoel, Erasmus & Poisat, 2008). In considering the past oppression of black population groups (this included African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian individuals) that characterized this period in South African history, one can infer the pervasiveness of bullying in the reinforcement of discriminatory action ((Nel *et al.*, 2008; Hunter, Mora-Merchan & Ortega, 2004). 2004). With particular reference to the workplace of pre-1994, by law, black employees were restricted to the performance of blue-collar work in return for minimal remuneration, and were subjected to discordant handling within unfavourable working conditions (Pelled, 1996). Grand upheavals were initiated by labour unions in 1973 and 1974, and protests such as the Soweto uprising of 1976, the legalisation of trade unions in 1979, and the great union movement of the 1980's which marked the beginning of major rebellion against the Apartheid policies; however, the voice provided to black population groups remained stifled under the oppressive systems in rule. The undertaking of struggle and rebellion took many years to render the Apartheid regime entirely dormant (Pelled, 1996).

Despite the termination of discriminatory policies that once enveloped the laws of the country alongside the birth of a democratic South Africa in 1994, a degree of segregation continues to permeate South African society at present (Holtzhausen & Fourie, 2008). Governmental laws and policies such as the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003, Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997, the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 and Affirmative Action policies respectively, have been instilled in an attempt to negate the injustices of the past (Nel *et al.*, 2008). While backed with all good intention, these laws and policies have failed to bring about the equality originally envisioned for South Africa (Nel *et al.*,

2008). Numerous diversions have been discovered by organisations in order to evade the prescribed racial quotas (Holtzhausen & Fourie, 2008). Organisations have engaged in the symbolic hiring of non-white individuals, placing them in figure head positions that require minimal skill, and in addition have embarked on the use of considerable remuneration packages and benefits in order to entice these employees to remain in such positions (Holtzhausen & Fourie, 2008). The expertise of figurehead employees in such instances is therefore completely undermined and undervalued (Pelled, 1996). The continuation of evasive action may lead employees in these positions to believe that their skills are insignificant and as a result may engage in concordant behaviours that support such a belief (Pelled, 1996). Recruitment practices of this nature reveal the ever-present subtleties of discrimination that continue to pervade the minds of many individuals within the workforce (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998).

Much of the discrimination occurring in the South African workplace at present is most commonly underpinned by bullying and intimidation (Grant, 2007). Given that present South African employees are the products of a period of major injustice, a tendency to bully previously disadvantaged minority groups may continue to permeate the workforce (Grant, 2007; Hunter *et al.*, 2004). Considering this statement in the reverse, previously disadvantaged groups, especially those in lower levels of employment may be more likely to perceive bullying based on the grounds of race, given prior experiences of racial stigmatisation (Grant, 2007). The importance of workplace bullying research thus becomes evident in establishing an awareness of the nature of employee interactions that are taking place, in order to appropriate interventions if it is established that workplace bullying is salient (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). More interestingly, an assessment of the differences in culture, the type and nature of social support received by previously disadvantaged individuals, and the impact that these various forms of culturally contextualised forms of support may have on personal experiences of victimisation would illuminate the linkage between culture and social support. This however is a question for future research (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). While the oppression of the past plays a major part in the social interactions that occur in the workplace today, it is important to be cognisant of the fact that the term “minority” does not exclusively refer to previously disadvantaged groups. Any employee or employees who are part of the minority of that specific workforce may be bullied based on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or any other status that may be observed as different from the majority and the norms that underpin the majority’s beliefs.

The radical change that has been imposed upon the individuals of South Africa has initiated major resistance (Blaine, 2007). It has been advocated that in most instances change is more effectively implemented incrementally, therefore initialising a gradual shift in employee perceptions dictated by the past by means of encouraging employees to value diversity through acknowledging the strengths that a diverse workforce brings forth may serve as more successful approach (Blaine, 2007). This could be prompted through the development of intervention programs in aim of educating employees on the disadvantages of workplace

bullying, the destructive nature of the physical and psychological effects that submission to bullying may generate, and the need to value rather than shun diversity within the workplace (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). While the present research is limited in scope given that examining the impact of social support on the relationship between perceptions of bullying, strains of psychological wellbeing and intention to leave will not necessarily reveal how and to what extent workplace bullying is related to minority or majority groups; it serves to elucidate a possible link between social support and cultural diversity in terms of perceptions relating to the subjection of individuals to negative actions. The current research therefore serves as a starting point upon which further research can build. Future research may therefore be able to contextualize bullying specifically within the context of South Africa, giving particular attention to bullying in relation to minority groups in the workplace. That being said, the present study will still assist managers in deciphering the extent to which bullying is perceived in their organisations and whether social support may moderate the associated psychological effects that may stem from the exposure to negative behaviour (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). This information will therefore present a potential need for interventions such as counselling or group therapy that may help foster coping behaviours in employees that relate specifically to fostering strong social support networks (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, given this information, companies may realise the need to cultivate an organisational culture that promotes tolerance and acceptance of workplace diversity, promotes equality and that encourages co-operative behaviour for the purposes of achieving common organisational goals (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Hunter *et al.*, 2004).

LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

A number of limitations exist for the present study, the acknowledgment of which is important given that the present research is non-experimental in nature:

Generalisability: Sample Size and Organisational Context

While results of the present research seem somewhat promising, it cannot be conclusively deduced from this study alone that true and generalisable moderating effects for supervisor and colleague social support on intention to leave, and supervisor support on psychological wellbeing in the presence of workplace bullying exist for all populations (Howell, 2008). This is due in particular to the use of partial snowballing in the recruitment of the current sample, thus disabling the ability to identify the type of organisations present. While two large companies from which the majority of the sample originated were approached and are consequently directly identifiable, the origination of the remaining portion of the sample not from these two organisations is therefore unaccounted for. Limiting in this is the inability to identify differences in the levels of bullying, experienced, given that actual objective levels of bullying may differ from one organisation to the next. Factors such as organisational climate, culture and industry may have further influenced the present results (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Bannon & Schmidt, 1993). These particular variables were not

controlled for thus the impact of extraneous variables cannot be discarded (Howell, 2008). Plausible is the possibility that the organisations from which the majority of the sample participants were extracted exude positive and pleasant climates and culture; consequently, many participant employees may have responded to the questionnaire in a manner that is conducive to organisational atmospheres of this nature (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Bannon & Schmidt, 1993). Research provides that a pleasant organisational climate is likely to reduce negative perceptions associated with workplace interactions, which may be further extrapolated to include workplace bullying (Bannon & Schmidt, 1993). Therefore, organisational climate may serve as an additional moderator within the relationship between perceptions of workplace bullying, psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, such that pleasant work environments may reduce or at most nullify the negative outcomes traditionally associated with workplace bullying (Bannon & Schmidt, 1993). It can be additionally deduced that supervisors may form part of a pleasant work climate, thereby working in conjunction with other environmental factors to moderate such a relationship. In contrast to this, research provides that hostile climates serve as a breeding ground for negative behaviour (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000). Furthermore, constrictive corporate cultures tend to induce widespread negativity which in turn may impact upon employee perceptions of events occurring within the organisation. Consequently, in hostile climates with suppressive cultures, the propensity to perceive and experience negative events may increase, or alternatively may be reduced due to acceptance of and indifference towards hostility as an organisational norm (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000).

With regard to sample size, Miles and Shevlin, (2001) provides that a larger sample size is likely to reduce the value of standard error, and therefore may increase the possibility of finding significant associations. Moreover, a small sample size may produce spurious data which may demonstrate no association in the population when in fact one exists (Miles and Shevlin, 2001). However, it is also necessary to acknowledge previous research on the subject, appropriate effect size and methodology pertaining to the establishment of a suitable sample size (Howell, 2008). For example, Cohen (1988; as cited in Upton, 2010) defines a small effect size as $R^2 = 0.02$, a medium effect size as $R^2 = 0.13$ and a large effect size as $R^2 = 0.26$, the interpretation of which defines the strength of a significant result and subsequent ability to generalise findings.

For the purposes of the current study, a sample size of 209 was deemed acceptable; however it is advised that in future research pertaining to the present topic, a larger sample consisting of a variety of *known* organisations in different fields be obtained in order to yield more conclusive and generalisable results. Furthermore, it is advised that further research in the field of workplace bullying be cognisant of the possible effects of extraneous variables described previously (such as attachment, gender, organisational climate, reciprocity in social support, cultural differences, personality and positive support) that may serve as additional moderators or mediators functioning within the bullying-wellbeing relationship. Controlling for

such variables by including them as covariates or additional mediator or moderator variables in a regression analysis will enable future researchers to determine the impact of such factors within the stressor-strain relationship.

Retention of Outliers

Close inspection of scatter plots (see Appendix 15: Table B1- C4) illustrates the presence of major outliers indicating the possibility of dominant response tendencies, dishonesty or an actual presence of high perceptions of bullying and social support for a select few within the present sample (Howell, 2008). Outliers tend to impact the distribution of data causing it to be skew, and therefore may impact on the significance of results obtained (Howell, 2008). To elaborate, running parametric correlations on non-normally distributed data (*although corrected for in the present study through the use of log and square root transformations*) may yield significant results where in fact there are none (Howell, 2008). Response tendencies were accounted for through the analysis of raw data responses, which revealed no apparent suspects. In the present study, the researcher decided against the removal of outliers, given the nature of the research topic. It was concluded that the presence of outliers in this instance should not be removed from the statistical procedure, as this would have meant neglecting the possibility that certain employees were in fact experiencing high perceptions of workplace bullying. In light of workplace bullying, the disregard of outliers may therefore have taken for granted that *all* employees were experiencing low perceptions of bullying. It was consequently deduced that the few respondents who were experiencing higher perceptions of bullying should nonetheless be accounted for, given the possibility that these individuals may encompass the select few who were most willing to admit to victim status. However the retention of outliers and subsequent violation of normality as an assumption for conducting parametric correlations may nonetheless have impacted on the present findings (Howell, 2008). It is advised that future studies aim towards a deeper appreciation and understanding of the reasons attached to the presence of outliers, and how the inclusion or removal thereof may influence research results obtained.

Cross-Sectional Design

Cross-sectional research implies obtaining a measurement of a particular variable or variables at one point in time (Howell, 2008). While observations of this nature are valuable in themselves, the conclusiveness of findings stemming from single instance measurements can be limiting due to the fact that the passing of time may impact upon the degree of a variable present at any point in a continuum (Howell, 2008). External or biological influences such as positive or negative life events, age, health and so forth may inevitably influence the amount of a variable experienced (Howell, 2008). Therefore if any one of these factors is present, absent or changing at the point in time at which a given variable is observed, the degree of that variable may either increase or decrease, thereby presenting an inaccurate reflection of general levels of

such a variable (Howell, 2008). Longitudinal designs are therefore more effective in paving the way towards the augmentation of accurate causality in that the value of a variable observed over time provides a greater link between levels of that variable in relation to other variables of interest (Howell, 2008). To elaborate, if the relationship between two variables remains consistent from one observation to the next, then it can be more conclusively established that such a relationship will hold true over time (Howell, 2008). Even though correlative and regressional research can never establish causality, the use of correlative and regressional research within a longitudinal design is likely to provide stronger evidence for both predictive and associative value between variables than do correlations or regressions conducted within the realm of cross-sectional design (Howell, 2008). It is therefore advisable to conduct regressional and correlative research in the presence of a longitudinal design so that stronger evidence for association and prediction may be reaped.

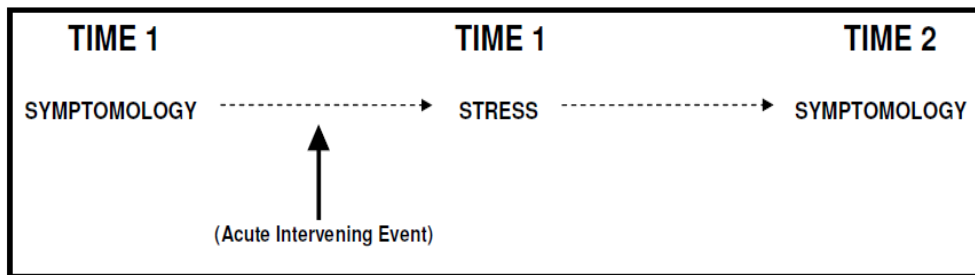
The Selection of Time Facets

As previously introduced, the period of time during which data is collected is of great importance in the instance of observing moderator effects (Cohen & Willis, 1985). In particular, the period during which data pertaining to the hypothesised moderator is obtained may impact the degree to which a moderator is effectively at work. Obtaining data cross-sectionally may run the risk of discovering no-moderator effect due to the possibility that the moderator may already be in effect and consequently may already have positively reduced the impact of a negative stressful event (Beehr & Newman, 1978). Consequently prior resolution or reappraisal may cause respondents to report less of the stress under observation than initially experienced (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Of notable mention for the current research is the high level of friend and family support reported by the study sample: While no moderator effect was detected for friend support or family support on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, it is nonetheless plausible that because the level of support provided by these sources was acknowledged by the sample as being particularly high, support in this instance was already actively reducing the affects of perceptions of bullying on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave (Beehr & Newman, 1978). Accordingly, this may additionally account for low perceptions of bullying reported by the present sample. Longitudinal design and the selection of appropriate time facets is advisable for future research in order to enhance the power of research design to detect moderating effects when they are actively predicting the variance in the outcome variables under observation.

Cohen and Willis (1985) have formulated the following analytic model in an attempt to guide the selection of appropriate time facets, and further to reduce results that are attributable to pre-existing stress enhancing or stress reducing symptoms that may result in behavioural changes. The Model depicted below permits the attainment of two-wave data, where Time one stressors indicate predictors, while Time two

symptomologies denote criterions. Symptomology at Time one, measured at an instance occurring prior to Time one stressor is included as a control variable (see Figure 24 below).

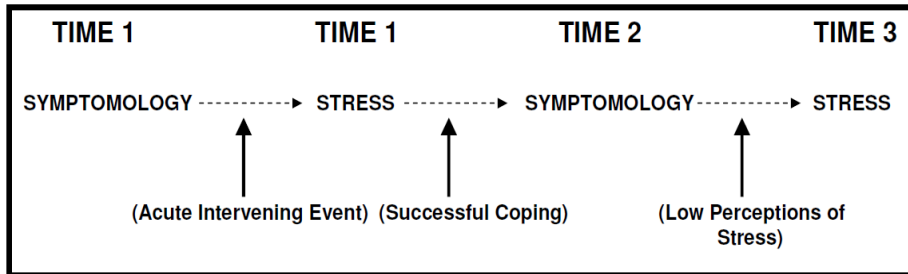
FIGURE 24: TEMPORAL LAGS IN LONGITUDINAL STUDY



However, Cohen and Wills (1985) state difficulty arises at the point during which Time one-Prior Symptomology is assessed. Kessler (1987) advises that if the time-lag selected for measures of prior symptomologies is premature or delayed, then bias may be introduced into the prediction equation. In light of the current research, it is likely that such bias may have occurred: the researcher may have assessed the perception of workplace bullying along with both individual (psychological wellbeing) and organisational (intention to leave) outcomes subsequent to the occurrence of workplace bullying. This being so, respondents may consequently have already engaged in the selection of a suitable source of support in aid of alleviating the negative effects of such a situation (Time 3). As a result, individuals may have come to realise that seeking social support, particularly from supervisors, proved highly effective in the resolution or reappraisal of the negative bullying event. Therefore, where bullying is subsequently perceived, the individual would then be inclined to select the most effective source of social support to alleviate or resolve the negative impact of the bullying. Therefore, prior knowledge and experience pertaining to the efficacy of social support, as an extraneous variable, may be responsible for the low levels of bullying reported for the current sample and simultaneously may have accounted for no-moderator effects evident for friends and family support on both outcome variables and likewise for colleague support on psychological wellbeing. That is, the moderating effect may already be at work, thereby having already alleviated the negative effects of bullying on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave.

Additionally, a lengthy time lag may have provided individuals with the opportunity for rest and recuperation subsequent to the stressful event; thus when assessed, respondents may not have considered the preceding event to be as stressful as initially perceived, thus accounting for low perceptions of bullying in the present sample (see Figure 25). The decay of memory may furthermore be at work in the recollection of the bullying event. That is, with the passing of time, the event -when recalled- may not have seemed as traumatic as initially perceived (Cahill, 1997).

FIGURE 25: TEMPORAL LAGS IN LONGITUDINAL STUDY RELATING TO WORKPLACE BULLYING



Gravetter and Forzano (2009) suggest that a substantial degree of control may be exerted over time-related threats to internal validity through the management of time from one observation to the next. To illustrate, the use of longitudinal design where the time period between observations is reduced, may alleviate the risk of time-related threats, although this technique can often increase the likelihood of order-effects influencing result outcomes. To conclude, allowing a reasonable amount of time between observations will permit participants to rest and recuperate before the next observation, although longer rest periods between observations may allow for bias to be reflected in the results (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). The selection of time facets then is dependent on the researcher and the variables under investigation.

Spurious Data

Spuriousness provides an additional limitation in the present study. Moreno-Jimenez *et al.* (2008, as cited in Upton, 2010) state that individual experiences of bullying will vary across situations, and therefore, depending on the level of bullying experienced, negative outcomes may or may not result. Taking cognisance of individual factors is thus essential in explaining and/or premeditating workplace bullying as well as the type of coping strategy preferred and/or employed. Spuriousness may therefore result due to the impact of these individual factors. *Multivariate analysis* may assist in minimising the effects of spurious data by means of considering the *joint distributions* present in that data (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). To elaborate, this would amount to the incorporation of possible confounding variables pertaining to the studied association, into the design so as to amplify the significance of findings in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). It is therefore important for future research within the realm of social support and workplace bullying to consider potentially extraneous factors such as organisational context, organisational structure, climate, industry, culture, personality variables and precedents of support. In so doing, certain deviations in the results that may lead to unexpected findings may be more comprehensively explained (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Thus, in examining such confounding variables if

present, it becomes possible to statistically remove or partial out the effects of these variables thereby enabling more conclusive results (Howell, 2008; Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

Multicollinearity

The presence of high multicollinearity of the variables utilised in conducting the current study (as demonstrated by condition indexes exceeding 30: see Appendix 14: Table A1) may have reduced the ability of MMR to detect actual moderation (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Multicollinearity may consequently be accountable for the absence of any moderating effect in the case of friend support and family support. While it has been argued that the robustness of MMR allows for the detection of moderating effects even in the presence of multicollinearity, evident in its ability to distinguish moderating effects for colleague, supervisor and joint friend and family support (thereby indicating the strength of effect in this instance) it is nonetheless possible that multicollinearity underpins non-significant effects for family and friend support, particularly if the moderating effect is slight (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

Limitations of the Self-Report Technique

As with cross-sectional research, the use of a questionnaire to gauge intention to leave, psychological wellbeing, alongside perceptions of social support and workplace bullying- the intensity of which is likely to change overtime- may produce less accurate results (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Perceptions of bullying in particular cannot be accurately obtained through this method of observation given that single instance measurements do not provide an effective means of understanding such material in its entirety. Extending on this, factors such as the nature, type, length, physical and psychological consequences of experienced bullying and social support are likely to contribute to a greater understanding of the situation; nonetheless, the measurement thereof is difficult to obtain through questionnaires alone (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). This presents an obstacle for researchers in their pursuit for appreciating the significance of certain effects elicited by the variables under examination, as the questionnaire technique may lead to spurious data and insignificant results (Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

In addition to the above, the use of the self-administered questionnaire technique may result in the researcher overlooking the possible influence of additional moderator variables (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Thus, the observation of the subject at a certain point in time may occur in the presence of an extraneous variable which may be moderating the relationship between the main effect variables, and thus may be impacting on the significance of subsequent findings (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). As a result, researchers advise the use of questionnaires in conjunction with personal interviews in order to attain accounts from respondents that impart higher value and accuracy (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Pietersen, 2005). The use of the questionnaire technique for data collection in the current study was deemed appropriate given the need

to recruit as many participants as possible. However, the use of self-report measures is not without limitations: Self-report techniques are particularly vulnerable to response biases such as social desirability, false positives or negatives, and defensive tactics such as denial or rationalizations which may yield unrealistic or incorrect results (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The subject of workplace bullying drives this problem further due to the labeling involved in answering a questionnaire of this nature. Bullying may thus be perceived as a stigmatized labeling process whereby individuals are either labeled as *victim* or *bully*. Individuals previously subjected to bullying experiences may be less likely to label themselves as victims by responding to questionnaires honestly, in fear of appearing vulnerable once again (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). The low perceptions of workplace bullying observed for the current sample may therefore be due to fear of submitting to this stereotype, or being furthermore vulnerable to the admittance thereof.

Responses to the NAQ may have furthermore been impacted by factors pertaining to diversity that provide obstacles for standardization in the understanding of bullying. One such factor to be accounted for is the priming effect, which refers to the impact of prior context on the interpretation of currently attended information, whereby frequently activated thoughts are surfaced more easily than ideas that have not been recently activated (Bargh, Bond, Lombardi & Tota, 1986). Thus prior experiences alongside the social and cultural contexts of individuals may potentially factor-in when responding to questionnaires that deal specifically with emotive terms such as bullying (Bond et al., 1986). Responses may thus be drawn according to what has been primed rather than what is actually experienced. To illustrate, in an instance where an individual was bullied during childhood but not necessarily at work, the word bullying may prime that individual to re-experience the bullying that occurred during childhood and consequently the individual may answer the questionnaire in accordance with that specific primed frame of mind, which may not in essence correspond to the actual reality that the respondent experiences in his or her workplace at present. Discrepancies may therefore exist in responses due to the interference of the priming effect, which in turn may either inflate or deflate the results obtained (Bond et al., 1986).

While the coversheet attached to the electronically distributed questionnaires was drafted to assure participants of their confidentiality, it is still possible that respondents may have engaged in bias or defensive responses given potential fears of stigmatization (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Based on the limitations present in the use of self-report data, it is advised that future research in the field of bullying utilize a variety of qualitative data sources such as focus groups, personal interviews or observation techniques, so as to promote the accuracy of scores provided by respondents (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Miles & Shevlin, 2001; Pietersen, 2005).

In historical hindsight of the adversities that once painted the tapestry of an oppressive South African past, the memory of discriminatory testing and assessment procedures - used to perpetuate white domination - has impressed within minority groups a residual distrust in other forms of assessment such as surveys and questionnaires (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009; Sehlapelo & Terre Blanche, 1996). Enduring negative perceptions and destructive emotions associated with testing and assessment may thereby deter minority groups from participating in research that requires personal information (Paterson & Uys, 2005). This may consequently result in the acquisition of samples dominated by white participants (as has been illustrated in the current study), reducing thus the generalisability and representativeness of results in terms of ethnicity (Sehlapelo & Terre Blanche, 1996).

Type of Support

Although the relevance of the type of support provided in the face of a stressful event was beyond the scope of the present study, assessing the significance of both source and type specific social support within the context of negative work-related situations is likely to have contributed towards the value of the outcomes depicted in the current research (Rooney et al., 2009). Specifically, the dominant moderator effect evident for supervisor support was likely to have been accounted for by the ability of supervisors to assist in the resolution and/or reappraisal of the bullying event, given the power and authority inherent within such a position. Implicit here is the importance of the type of support provided (particularly instrumental and appraisal support) and the manner in which such support may work to alleviate the negative effects of a stressful event such as bullying (Rooney et al., 2009). The type of support may therefore further enhance the ability of the social support source to moderate the impact of harmful stressors, thereby affording further consideration and exploration for future research.

Reporting to More than One Supervisor

While supervisor support appeared to dominate as a prevalent moderator, this source of support simultaneously featured as the prevailing source of bullying. The co-existence of such results is most likely accounted for by the common case of reporting to more than one supervisor. Therefore, while one supervisor may be highly supportive, another supervisor may be contrastingly intimidating and harsh. This provides a significant omission for the current research given that the inclusion of a question pertaining to the number of supervisors reported to by the sample respondents would have provided a more comprehensive account of the individuals to which bullying and support were attributed. It is advised that future research, in particular research centered on workplace support, account for the number of supervisors reported to and the consequent attributions made to each in light of support and stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the current findings, future research pertaining specifically to friend and family social support in moderating the negative effects of workplace bullying on individual and organisational level outcomes is encouraged. While the current study was unable to provide sufficient evidence for the existence of such a moderating effect, it was able to demonstrate the buffering effect of friend and family support in tandem. As provided in earlier sections, the saliency of multicollinearity within the present study may have underpinned the lack of moderation evident where family and friend support were concerned; urging thus, the replication of MMR for friend and family support in the absence of multicollinearity (Howell, 2008). In eliminating multicollinearity, future research may thereby be able to demonstrate evidence for moderation where external support is concerned. Placing multicollinearity aside, and given the combined moderating effect of friend and family support, it is advised that future research engage in the qualitative dissembling of potential explanations for the importance of duality for external support where work-related matters are concerned. The present research has provided potential explanations including the significance of reciprocity, relational value and proximity of social support, all of which impart prospective topics for research within the realm of social support (Antonucci, 1985; Winefield & Winefield, 1996). It appears that the subliminal functions and inherent tendencies underpinning social interaction, and how these factors may function for psychological wellbeing require further address. Previously proposed, is the notion that psychological wellbeing, if low, may be more difficult to alleviate than intention to leave in that the latter refers only to deliberation pertaining to action, while the former comprises the internal workings of an individual in their entirety, as dictated by emotions, feelings and previous experience (Weisberg, 1994). Where psychological wellbeing is concerned, the persuasive value of individuals that are distant from the target problem (*and therefore only serve as indirect sources of support*) may be insufficient in reducing the negative impact of adverse workplace situations on internal unfavourable sensations and perceptions of the self (Antonucci, 1985). It may therefore be of paramount value to assess the functions of various sources of support within various contexts, in order to determine whether the effectiveness of certain types of support is context-specific (Dakof & Taylor 1990).

Causality in this association will contribute immensely to the study of bullying in the workplace, by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship that exists between social support, perceptions of bullying and individual and organisational wellbeing (Howell, 2008). This may be achieved through assessing experimental (receive support) and control (no support) groups who are exposed to workplace bullying, and the subsequent effects on individual and organisational outcomes. Ethical implications however may arise in subjecting individuals to bullying, thereby complicating the ability to perform experimental research where bullying is concerned. Alternatively, the use of a longitudinal design may further contribute towards the establishment of stronger implications through proving the recurrence of the predictive value of social

support in alleviating the negative impact of perceptions of bullying on individual and organisational wellbeing overtime (Howell, 2008). In supplementation to the above, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques may also provide more accurate and concentrated data from respondents on the subject of workplace bullying and social support, which may in turn establish within the researcher a broader appreciation of the underlying functions thereof (Pietersen, 2005). Pertinent here is the importance of the propensity of an individual to seek support, the functioning of which may serve as an additional moderator or mediator in the bullying-support-wellbeing interaction (Antonucci, 1985).

Considering the effects of extraneous variables in this relationship and the possibility of these variables acting as additional moderators or mediators in the bullying-social support-psychological wellbeing/intention to leave association, will further contribute towards a more holistic understanding of the underlying dynamics tied to victimisation in the workplace and inclinations to seek social support (Howell, 208). Furthermore, the identification of the different types of coping strategies utilized by victimised employees and subsequent positive or negative effects of such strategies will assist in determining experienced outcomes pertaining to the bullying situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Andreou, 2001).

The type of individual employed and the type of culture perpetuated by organisations may additionally determine the saliency of workplace bullying and the availability of support networks (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). In light of the present study, low perceptions of workplace bullying were recorded; it may therefore have been beneficial to examine the type of organisational culture salient within the organisations under investigation in order to establish how culture relates to employee perceptions regarding negative workplace events (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Einarsen, 2000). Employee coping mechanisms and tendencies to seek support in the face of adversity may further be influenced by the surrounding environment to which employees are exposed (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Andreou, 2001. Additionally associated to individual type, are individual coping mechanisms and dispositional traits. Previous research provides evidence that individuals displaying high levels of resilience, internal locus of control, hardiness and sense of coherence are more likely to deal with adverse social workplace situations through adopting problem-focussed coping tactics such as confrontation, and are therefore less susceptible to the subsequent negative effects of such transactions (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Strumpfer, Gouws, & Viviers, 1998). The dispositional characteristics of individuals as precedents in the impact of workplace bullying on individual and organisational outcomes elucidates additional significance in the execution of future research endeavours (Kitamura et al., 2002).

Within the current sample under investigation, race did not appear to significantly influence victim perceptions of bullying in the workplace or patterns of social support. However, due in part to the fact that the current sample demonstrated a white majority, the possibility remains that racial background and historical events pertaining to a given race may provide a powerful influence over perceptions of negative

acts in the workplace. As discussed in previous sections (see p. 17-18) workplace bullying is particularly relevant to the South African context given the nature of its history entrenched in the discriminatory injustice of Apartheid, (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998; Nel, *et. al.*, 2008). Membership in a previously disadvantaged social or racial group may impact upon overall perceptions and interpretations of events in the workplace, in such a way that historically persecuted individuals may be more inclined to perceive discrimination or bullying in the workplace than individuals who do not hold with them the memory of governmentally enforced disadvantage (Nel, *et. al.*, 2008). Moreover, cultural differences in the meaning and significance of social support may impact the degree to which a buffering affect may be manifest in the face of adversity (Human, 1996). It is consequently advised that future research progress towards the contextualisation of workplace bullying specifically within South African paradigm (Human, 1996; White, 2004). Additionally the present research urges the particular placement of attention on bullying in relation to minority groups in the workplace, in order to establish the potential co-variational impact of race on perceptions pertaining to workplace interactions (Human, 1996).

CONCLUSION

The present research has illustrated a plethora of elements salient within situations of workplace bullying. Einarsen's, (2005) conceptual framework of the study and management of workplace bullying further reveals the multifaceted nature of interpersonal organisational transactions. The present research has offered evidence for the buffering effect of social support, particularly support obtained from supervisors within the workplace, on psychological wellbeing and intention to leave, and colleagues for intention to leave in the presence of perceived workplace bullying. Additional individual level factors worthy of future consideration include the function of childhood attachment, race, gender leadership, proximity, relational value and context specificity of support, propensity to seek support and coping mechanisms (Antonucci, 1985; Wiesberg, 1994; Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Winefield & Winefield, 1992). In conjunction with individual-level factors, organisational-level factors such as such as company culture, climate, context and industry, need to be taken cognisance of in the attempt to grasp a holistic understanding of the complexities that may function as precedents of the workplace bullying and social support process (Ouchi, & Wilkins, 1985; Bannon & Schmidt, 1993). It is thereby recommended that future research account for the suggestions provided in the present study with regard to the limitations, theoretical implications and potential resources utilisable in the subsistence of this process. In so doing, future research may aid in expounding understandings of the severe experiences to which victimised individuals are exposed, alongside the nature and function of various forms of support most effective for workplace difficulties (Hansen et al., 2006; Dakof & Taylor, 1990). The responsibility to ensure that an organisation is functioning at optimum levels of productivity rests in the hands of Human Resources practitioners and industrial psychologists working within the organisation. The implications of failing such responsibility are severe; therefore it is necessary for such practitioners to grasp

a holistic perspective of the underlying relational elements that operate within the workforce, and to consequently ensure the cultivation of a positive and productive work environment that is conducive to the nurturing of positive and productive employees (McCarthy et al., 1995; Neuman & Baron, 1997; O'Donnell et al., 2006; Hansen, et al., 2006). This may be facilitated through continuous monitoring of both internal and external environments so as to detect and eradicate negative acts such as bullying, and thereby prevent the escalation of such events.

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