Influence of Teacher-Targeted Bullying Behaviour on Teachers in Selected Schools in South Africa

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Abstract. South African schools seem to be experiencing an increase in incidents of teacher-targeted bullying (TTB). Previous studies conducted in South Africa and abroad have proved that teacher-targeted bullying is a serious challenge in schools and needs immediate intervention. This study explored the influence of learners' bullying behaviour on teachers in selected schools in Ehlanzeni District. A semi-rural area in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. A qualitative approach was applied in this investigation, and a sample of six teachers was purposefully selected from three high schools. The data collected from a questionnaire, was analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that teachers have experienced verbal bullying, physical bullying, psychological bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual bullying, in incidents which normally take place in the classroom or elsewhere on the school premises. These experiences reportedly evoked disturbing emotions, affected teachers' lives at school, their personal lives, and undermined their professional standing. Findings further indicated that there are no strategic interventions put in place by schools or the Department of Basic Education to assist teachers who are victims of teacher-targeted bullying. It can be concluded that TTB poses a significant threat to teachers' mental health, physical health, performance and to the teaching profession as a whole. If the Department of Education does not introduce intervention strategies to try and resolve this issue, there may be an increase in the number of teachers resigning from their jobs, which will escalate the crisis.

Keywords: bullying; learner; teacher; teacher-targeted bullying

1. Introduction
Bullying affects teachers worldwide. This study explored the extent of teacher bullying in selected schools in Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Previous international studies on teacher-targeted bullying (TTB) conducted in Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa and Turkey (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021), revealed that there is a greater need for the

recognition of TTB by learners within the whole-school organisation (Hoffmann, 2013). Jacobs and de Wet (2018) stated that bullies are disobedient learners who lack parental support or guidance. Management styles may motivate classroom and school TTB, and an absence of constructive values in society, along with a disrespect for authority figures, perpetuate bullying. According to Jacobs and de Wet (2018), teachers are essential in any country's Department of Education. They therefore need protection from learners who are bullying them. The education system should look at more productive ways that need to be implemented to show that learners' bullying of their teachers is taken as seriously as any other bullying that occurs in the country. This would assist those teachers who were bullied in regaining their self-confidence and dignity.

Teacher-targeted bullying seems to be a discourse that is prevalent in South African schools. This discourse has not been given much attention since most studies focus on bullying that is inflicted on learners by other learners or perpetrated by their teachers. Teachers in South Africa experience verbal, physical, indirect and cyber bullying (Jacobs & de Wet, 2018). Bullying leads to serious challenges for the teachers who are experiencing it, so the government and schools may want to consider ways of supporting teachers who face teacher-targeted bullying (Santos & Tin, 2018). Some teachers manage to cope with and survive the fact that they are bullied in their work environment, but others may not, since human beings react differently to different situations. There are limited strategies and policies which are currently being implemented by the Department of Education that are aimed at eradicating teacher-targeted bullying.

The term 'teacher-targeted bullying' has been used by researchers in reference to bullying which is committed by learners against their teachers in school. This term was adopted in this study. Specifically, the research study attempted to answer the following questions:
1. What types of bullying behaviour do learners use against teachers in selected schools?
2. What influence does learners' bullying behaviour have on teachers in selected schools?
3. Which strategies would assist teachers who experience learners' bullying behaviour to better manage the situation in selected schools?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Background on Teacher-Targeted Bullying
Teacher-targeted bullying has been defined as a variety of aggressive behaviour involving the victimisation of teachers by learners (Moon & McCluskey, 2016). Teachers are not only bullied by learners, but they also experience bullying from their colleagues and school management team (such as the principal and administrative staff) at the school (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2015; Woudstra, 2015; Jacobs & de Wet, 2018). Bullying occurs where there are interactions, and since teachers interact with all the learners, the School Management Team (SMT) and other teachers, there is a possibility of bullying taking place. Teacher-targeted bullying is a form of workplace bullying because it occurs in teachers'

work environments. However, this type of bullying is different from other perceived workplace bullying, in that the individual who has a lower position within the organisation inflicts the bullying behaviour on someone of a higher position (Santos & Tin, 2018).

Work on TTB started at the end of the previous century, but research on this type of workplace bullying has barely moved beyond the creation of awareness that learners direct bullying at their teachers. This is an area that has not been given much attention in the past in terms of research (Hoffmann, 2013; Woudstra, 2015; Jacobs & de Wet, 2018; Qiao, 2018; Santos & Tin, 2018; Woudstra, et al., 2018; Payne & Gottfredson, 2019; Yang, et al., 2019). Few studies were found to acknowledge the presence of TTB (Hoffmann, 2013; Woudstra, 2015; Qiao, 2018; Woudstra, et al., 2018; Billett et al., 2019). There is a need for greater recognition of TTB by learners within the school context (Hoffmann, 2013). A limited but increasing number of studies have revealed that TTB is a serious matter (Santos & Tin, 2018).

2.2. Types of Learner Bullying

A systematic literature review has revealed that the most predominant types of TTB of teachers are verbal bullying, emotional bullying, physical bullying, cyberbullying, sexually orientated, insistent class disturbance, intimidating and threatening behaviour, and personal property offenses (Garrett, 2014).

2.2.1 Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying is an act of mistreatment by virtue of either spoken or written words (de Wet & Jacobs, 2018). This is a form of direct bullying which includes making threats, teasing, name-calling, improper sexual remarks, taunting, making fun of a person, spreading rumours, insults, sarcastic comments, discriminatory and refusing to talk to someone (Kõiv & Aia-Utsal, 2021). In most cases, if no action is taken to resolve verbal bullying, it can grow into physical bullying (de Wet & Jacobs, 2018). Studies in teacher-targeted bullying have found verbal bullying to be the foremost type of bullying learners use on teachers (Woudstra et al., 2018; Billett et al., 2019). This type of bullying is experienced mostly by females (Bayer et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Psychological Bullying

Psychological bullying refers to harming an individual through emotional abuse, therefore causing significant stress and interfering with an individual's capability to develop healthy and stable patterns of relating to other people (Hlophe, Morojele & Motsa, 2017). It is often conducted by an individual or a group of individuals, who repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions which cause psychological harm to another individual (Antiri, 2016).

This is a form of indirect bullying which includes actions like intentionally leaving somebody out, excluding somebody from a group or activities, embarrassing somebody in public, and spreading rumours as well as gossiping about someone (Smith & Thompson, 2017). Hlophe et al. (2017) stated that stealing and damaging other individuals' belongings amounts to indirect

bullying. Intimidation, manipulation and stalking of an individual are also part of psychological bullying (Antiri, 2016). This type of bullying often happens amongst close individuals, and impacts one's self-esteem (Hlophe et al., 2017). The perpetrator of this bullying stokes an individual up emotionally to try to make him or her uncomfortable, disturbed and mentally destabilised (Antiri, 2016).

2.2.3 Physical Bullying

Physical bullying is any activity conducted by a bully to inflict physical harm on a victim (Thompson, 2019). The bully must physically make contact with the victim so that this act can happen (Potocki, 2015). This is a direct form of bullying which includes hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking somebody's belongings, breaking or damaging somebody's belongings, and making somebody do things they do not want to do (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019). A perpetrator of physical bullying normally performs the bullying act when the victim is not aware that bullying is about to happen (Potocki, 2015). Homes, schools and workplaces are always affected by numerous occurrences of physical bullying (Antiri, 2016). Learners who commit physical bullying are more likely to worsen in their fierce behaviour and criminal offences (Thompson, 2019). Physical bullying is easy for people to detect in school because of the visibility of physical actions (Thompson, 2019). This type of bullying is experienced mostly by males (Bayer et al., 2018). A challenge for schools to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment is presented by physical bullying, hence it tends to be given more attention from school employees than other types of bullying (Antiri, 2016).

2.4.4 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is any technology-mediated bullying behaviour recognised in social media, websites and instant messaging which comprises repetitive behaviour like mailing, posting, messaging, sending images, videos with abusive content; the deliberate prohibiting of a person in the online space; spreading false information, and hacking of private accounts such as email (Palaghia, 2019). It is a type of indirect bullying which favours the perpetrator's invisible and anonymous state (Navarro et al., 2015). Cyberbullying behaviour is perpetrated by individuals who experienced or who are experiencing real-world abuse or strained relationships with others that trigger tension such as hostile interactions between parents and children (Yamin, Shalahudin, Rosidin, & Somantri, 2019). Victims of real-world abuse may conduct cyberbullying to express anger towards the individuals who bullied them in the real world, hoping they are aware of their mistakes, wanting to overthrow and humiliate them, feeling hurt and wanting to retaliate, seeking attention and pleasure (Yamin et al., 2019). Lack of inhibition and social disengagement are significant factors which may be responsible for online violence (Navarro et al., 2015). The main reason for teenagers to cyberbully people is because to them, it is a way of joking. They may also want revenge, because they are angry, or hate the person they direct the bullying towards (Yamin et al., 2019). Teachers are not often cyberbullied, but the few reported incidents have damaging effects on those

who have experienced them Cyberbullying is a tremendously harmful psychosocial phenomenon in constructive school life (Navarro et al., 2015).

2.5. Influences of Learner Bullying on Teachers

Bullying has a destructive influence on its victims. Sometimes it results in harm for the bullying perpetrators as well (Siregar et al., 2019). Regardless of the type of bullying that an individual has experienced, they all tend to have a similar influence on people. Bullying is hurtful towards its victims and may cause health problems for some victims; some might end up avoiding the places where the bullying took place in order to minimise the chances of being bullied again. This in turn disrupts their lives as it limits some of the basic human rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. These include freedom of movement, freedom of association and the right to a healthy environment (RSA, 1996).

2.6 Strategies to Assist Teachers

South Africa is currently facing the challenge of protecting teachers and creating sufficient resources to abolish learner-to-teacher bullying so that teachers' mental health will be improved (Woudstra, 2015). In South Africa, there are currently limited laws in place that strictly protect teachers from learners' bullying them at work. However, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996), legislation and common law, provide a legal framework in relation to TTB (Jacobs & de Wet, 2018). Learners should obey the laws of the country, which state that teachers have rights too, and need to be treated with respect and dignity within their workplace (Jacobs & de Wet, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative research design to explore the influence of learners' bullying on teachers. An interpretive paradigm was used to gain insights into TTB.

3.1. Participants

The researchers used a total of six participants from three selected high schools (two participants per school) in Sikhulile Circuit in the Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province. Purposive sampling, which falls under the non-probability sampling method, was applied in this study.

Table 1: Participants' biographical information

Participants	Age	Female	Male	South African and SiSwati-speaking	Teaching experience (in years)	Educational qualifications	Subjects
Participant 1	45	✓		✓	19	Standard Teacher Diploma (S.T.D)	Life Orientation
Participant 2	31		✓	✓	8	Bachelor of Education (FET) & BA Honours	English (First Additional Language)
Participant 3	32	✓		✓	8	Bachelor of Education (FET)	Mathematical Literacy

Participant 4	31	✓		✓	5	Bachelor of Education (FET)	Economic and Management Science
Participant 5	46	✓		✓	24	Honours in Education	Geography
Participant 6	26	✓		✓	4	Bachelor of Education (FET)	Geography

The researchers used the following criteria for participants' inclusion in the study:
1. Participants had to express a willingness to be interviewed.
2. Participants had to be employed as teachers at the time of the study and be teachers by profession.
3. Participants had to be teaching in one or other of the three selected schools.
4. Participants had to perceive themselves as teachers who had experienced learners' bullying.

3.2. Data collection instrument
The research questionnaire included two sections, A and B. Section A required biographical details from the participants, and they had to fill in this section by hand. The biographical details included information on age, gender, qualification, number of years as a teacher and subjects they teach. Section B was the interview schedule, which had eight sets of questions intended to yield qualitative data on learners' bullying of teachers. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data in this study and participants' responses were recorded using an audio recorder. The research instrument's reliability and validity were ensured through the use of an audio recorder to record the interviews; notes were taken to supplement the data recorded. The interview schedule (see Appendices 1 & 2) was provided in two versions (English and SiSwati) for participants to choose the language with which they were comfortable. It contained a set of open-ended and closed-ended questions. All the questions were based on the research objectives. The open-ended questions required in-depth responses from participants. This semi-structured interview guide is a diagrammatic demonstration of questions or topics, which allowed the interviewers to explore further if necessary (Jamshed, 2014). The researchers thus gathered qualitative data which answered the research objectives and questions. All the participants were given the same interview schedule, and they answered the same set of questions.

3.3. Data collection procedures
The data was collected over a period of three days, one day for each school; two participants were interviewed per day. Before each interview, a briefing session was held to discuss the purpose of the study, allowing participants to make an informed decision regarding their participation. After the briefing session, participants signed the informed consent for participation in the study and for the audio recorded notes. Each interview was conducted in a private space so that the participants would feel comfortable and free to share. A 45-minute session was allocated for each participant and an audio recorder was used to capture the information. The participants had a copy of the interview schedule

to peruse while questions were asked in real-time, in either English or SiSwati (the participant's choice). During the interviews, the researchers asked the participants to clarify vague responses (if the participant's response was not clear) and asked probing questions to obtain more data. The researchers were cautious because bullying is a sensitive issue and may create emotional distress. Open-ended questions allowed the teachers to elaborate freely on the questions that were posed.

3.4. Data analysis procedure

Thematic data analysis was used to summarise information gathered from participants regarding learners' bullying. According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), thematic data analysis is used to extract meaning and concepts from gathered data, which can be in the form of interview transcripts, notes, documents, pictures or videos, and it comprises pinpointing, examining and recording certain patterns or themes.

Stage 1: Getting Familiar with the Data. The researchers listened to the participants' recorded audios to be familiar with the data they had provided. All the participants were SiSwati speakers, so they answered some questions in their home language, and others in English. Translation of the information provided in SiSwati was conducted by the SiSwati speaking researcher.

Stage 2: Transcription. The researchers transcribed the verbal data gathered from the participants' interviews in a sequential form, starting from the participant that was interviewed first and ending with the one that was interviewed last. All the transcribed data were compiled to form one transcript.

Stage 3: Finding Meaningful Data. The researchers read the transcript which contained the transcribed data from all six participants, and highlighted sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that seemed to be meaningful and relevant to the research questions.

Stage 4: Reviewing the Highlighted Information. The researchers went back to review the highlighted data on the transcript to ascertain if it really linked to the research questions. Irrelevant data were eliminated and stored in a separate document.

Stage 5: Developing Patterns. The researchers named each set of data, and the information that was connected was grouped together to form patterns, which were summed up using a phrase (Percy et al., 2015). The patterns were then gathered and identified as sub-emerging themes which were related to the research questions, and were coded (Hlophe, Morojele, & Motsa, 2017).

Stage 6: Naming Themes and Producing the Report. From the participants' interviews, open-ended questions were arranged into themes. For each theme, a comprehensive abstract analysis clarifying the scope and component of the theme was written. This procedure was conducted for each participant's data (Percy et al., 2015).

3.5. Ethical considerations

The prescribed ethical principles were followed and all policy and guideline documents that were provided by the University of Zululand, HPCSA and other regulatory bodies, which stipulated ethical practices, were taken into consideration when conducting research. These prohibit the researchers from plagiarism, harm or violation of the rights of others who are directly and indirectly involved in the research study.

a. Permission to conduct research

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Research Committee of the University of Zululand, Faculty of Education and Department of Education, Mpumalanga. The researchers wrote a letter which clearly outlined the study details and objectives to the Head of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, Ehlanzeni District, as well as the selected school principals, requesting permission to conduct the study. The Head of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, Ehlanzeni District, and the school principals provided the researchers with written permission to conduct research at the schools. Informed consent forms were signed by the participants as proof of willingness to participate in the study and to record the interviews. They were assured that confidentiality and anonymity of records would be maintained.

b. Informed consent

Information concerning participation, as well as information that might have reasonably been expected to affect their willingness to participate in the study, was distributed to all participants. The researchers provided informed consent forms to participants in a language they clearly understood, and made them aware that participation was completely voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time should they so wish. The researchers made sure that participants who were involved in the study all had the capacity to consent.

c. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

The researchers did not record participants' names or any private, identifying details in the semi-structured interviews. Pseudonyms were used to protect the information obtained from the participants. For confidentiality, the researchers ensured that information collected from participants was not disclosed to any individual who was not involved in the study, and stored information obtained from the participants in a safe location. Questions that were sensitive or embarrassing to the participants were avoided by the researchers (a senior psychologist and student psychologist), who made participants aware that should they feel emotional discomfort at any time, they could discuss this with the researchers.

4. Results
4.1. Types of bullying behaviour learners use against teachers
a. Teachers' experiences of teacher-targeted bullying
This study revealed that teachers experienced learners' bullying behaviour in different ways and some encountered repeated bullying experiences. Teachers

are frequently exposed to different forms of bullying behaviours over time. The study also revealed that teachers are bullied by both female and male learners. As supported by Hoffmann (2013), there are no gender differences when it comes to bullying behaviours, as both girls and boys bully equally in the school setting.

The results indicate that most participants experienced physical and verbal bullying, while a few experienced psychological bullying, cyberbullying and sexual abuse. Most of the learners bullied their teachers in the classroom and around the school premises in front of fellow schoolmates. This shows that bullying normally occurs when teachers try to instil appropriate classroom behaviours on the learners. A study conducted by Hoffmann (2013) discovered that learners conduct bullying acts towards teachers when they are being approached and called into order after being disrespectful.

b. Characteristics of learners who bully teachers
Participants reported that the bullying behaviour was conducted by learners across different grades; however, most of those learners were not age appropriate to the grade. A study conducted by Steyn and Singh (2018) reported that learners who are too old for the grade and those who are repeating grades often tend to be bully others. The data revealed that age is one of the common influencing factors of bullying perpetration, and according to Steyn and Singh (2018), is a fundamental element for bullies since it creates a feeling of dominance. Learners who are three or four years above an assigned grade are often the ones who tend to bully their teachers. However, it was observed that even though age is found to be a dominant factor contributing to bullying, it was not the only factor. Some learners were age appropriate to their grades but were bullying their teachers, and these behaviours were facilitated by drug abuse. Singh (2016) indicated that schools are pressured to deal with learners who abuse drugs, and who portray little or no respect for acceptable social norms. These learners believe that they have the right to engage in violent and disruptive behaviour. Hence the use of drugs is also a contributing factor (Jacobs & de Wet, 2018).

4.2. Influence of learners' bullying behaviour on teachers
a. Emotions evoked by teacher-targeted bullying
With regard to the different bullying behaviours teachers have experienced, the study indicates that various emotions were aroused by the bullying behaviours. Two participants reported that they felt disrespected, others reported feeling hurt, disappointed, angry, scared, puzzled, confused, and not feeling good about attending work the next day. Qiao (2018) indicated that because of TTB behaviours experienced, teachers became angry and worried about being disrespected. One participant reported that she cried right after the bullying incident. de Vos (2013) stated that teachers who were bullied cried at home and at work because of the TTB behaviours.

The study indicates that all teachers experienced emotions differently as a result of their bullying experiences, regardless of the fact that the behaviours might be

of a similar nature. However, feeling disrespected was common among certain teachers. This study also revealed that some teachers experience not just one emotion, but a series of emotions right after being bullied. TTB may cause the victims to experience numerous negative emotions. These emotions may have a negative impact on teachers' passion towards the teaching field and lower the standard of their work.

b. Effects of teacher-targeted bullying: teacher's life at school

The TTB behaviours changed the lives of teacher at school. They started losing confidence, being afraid, avoiding classes, losing courage, being embarrassed and being scared around the school. One of the participants reported that she felt like the bullying act compromised her dignity. A study by Qiao (2018) mentioned that bullying behaviours from learners has the power to deprive teachers of their pride and dignity. As stated by de Vos (2013), bullying towards teachers tends to affect their human dignity and self-worth. These findings indicate that the teachers' lived experiences changed in and around the school setting which resulted in a change in the way they interacted with learners within the school environment. TTB behaviours impact negatively on teachers' attitude and behaviour towards learners which, in turn, could negatively impact teaching and learning as well as the educational system as whole. In addition, a study conducted by Mollema (2018) also revealed that TTB has an impact on teachers' performance, the teacher-learner relationship and teaching: "…sometimes when you go to the class you will spend 60 percent of your time scolding the learner who mistreats you instead of teaching, so learners end up losing most of their academic learning time" (participant 6). The results indicate that because of TTB behaviours, teachers started to feel disempowered in as teachers, and some then showed avoidance behaviours towards the learners.

c. Impact of teacher-targeted bullying: The teacher's personal life

All participants reported that the bullying experiences that they encountered from learners at school had an impact on their personal lives outside school. Effects on their physical, psychological and social heath were reported by most participants. A study conducted by de Vos (2013) and Matsela (2014) confirmed that the experience of bullying of teachers in their workplace negatively affects their physical, psychological and social heath. Psychological health effects are defined as harmful effects which occur as mental symptoms in the victim of bullying (Matsela, 2014), were more prevalent for the teachers in this study, as five teachers reported experiencing them. Teachers reported being diagnosed with illness, having negative thoughts, being afraid, feeling anxious, avoiding certain places and noting changes in their personality.

These findings indicate that the experience of TTB behaviours of teachers tends to change their lives outside school. Teacher's mental health is affected and that changes who they are. A teacher reported to have changed from being a quiet person to a loud out-spoken person, signifying a complete change in personality. As de Vos (2013) stated, the personalities of some teachers who are victims of bullying tend to change because of the bullying experience. Families tend to suffer due to teacher's moods. Matsela (2014) reported that teachers'

relationships with other people were affected as a result of the moods that they experience because of being bullied at work. Hoffmann (2013) found out that bullied teachers tend to avoid the bully as a coping strategy. This study also indicates that teachers started to be cautious of the places they went to and to avoid certain places because they might meet the learners or friends of the learners who bullied them at school.

d. Teachers' perceptions of the profession after experiencing teacher-targeted bullying

Teachers seem to be a bit overwhelmed by the teaching profession currently. Participants reported studying towards a different course, and planning on taking a different field of study; some would like to switch within the teaching profession, and some were keen to jump into opportunities presented by   fields other than teaching, if such opportunities presented.

Teacher-targeted bullying behaviours resulted in participants changing their perspectives towards their profession and reporting no longer wanting anything to do with the teaching profession, because their passion had vanished due to TTB. They reported that they were still teaching because they have responsibilities such as feeding their families and taking care of their children's education. If it was not for these responsibilities, they would give up the teaching profession.

Teachers stated that work was difficult; they no longer enjoyed the experience and had lost their confidence in their vocation. Billett et al. (2019) also revealed that TTB results in teachers having low self-esteem, self-efficacy and enjoyment in the school environment.

4.3.   Strategies that assist teachers who experience learners' bullying
a. Reporting of teacher-targeted bullying

Billett et al. (2019) stated that that teachers trust in the principal and other people in management positions to deal with the TTB towards teachers. This study showed that teachers believed that the principal and other staff from the management team are the appropriate people to whom one reports the bullying. Most participants stated that they reported TTB behaviours to the school management right after it happened; however, all participants felt that not much was done to assist them. According to Billett et al. (2019) and Mollema (2018), teachers who were victims of bullying behaviours reported that little or no support was provided to them by the school management. While most teachers felt the need to report an experience, one of the participants did not see the need to report the bullying experiences.

The research found that there seemed to be no procedures that are to be followed when teachers report bullying behaviours that are conducted by learners towards them. Most of them indicated that they reported the bullying behaviours orally, immediately after it occurred. Steps that the management normally take to resolve the bullying cases did not seem to help since the learners' behaviours did not seem to change after the meeting.

b. *Management of teacher-targeted bullying at schools*

Three participants reported that the school did nothing to handle TTB. They seemed dissatisfied by how school management teams handle TTB. They indicated that the schools have no interventions in place to correct teacher-targeting bullying. Teachers have to find their own way to deal with the experience. Some tend to ignore the fact that they have been bullied; they control their anger to avoid fighting back and move on with their lives as if nothing happened.

Teachers seemed to be dissatisfied with how the schools handle their bullying cases. They wanted the school management to implement more measures which will assist in dealing with TTB. Researchers agree that it is necessary steps must be taken to make sure that teachers' working environments are safe (Billett et al., 2019). Teachers felt like the rights of the learners who are perpetrators of the bullying behaviours were prioritised when they were trying to resolve the matter and that they were not taken into consideration. The study indicates that there are no other stakeholders which tend to intervene in this matter as it ends internally. One teacher voiced the opinion that the South African Council of Educators (SACE) is supposed to be protecting them, but it seems as if they do not take teachers' personal lives into consideration. SACE prohibits workplace bullying, and teachers should be able to turn to them for support, as there are procedures to be followed when filing a complaint (Jacobs & de Wet, 2015).

c. *How teachers want schools to manage teacher-targeted bullying*

Teachers shared different views on strategies that they believe will be effective in assisting the school in handling TTB. They believed that a policy on TTB; a disciplinary committee; being provided with professional help; suspending the bully and taking TTB seriously, could effectively help in management of this phenomenon at schools.

This study indicates that participants felt that it would be helpful if schools could design a policy to deal with TTB. In a study conducted by Billett et al. (2019), teachers also suggested that a zero-tolerance policy with clearly stipulated guidelines should indicate all forms of behaviours that are classified as TTB and what consequences will be faced by perpetrators of TTB. de Wet & Jacobs (2013) argued that policies that address work-place bullying should cover all South African employees, including teachers. Participants also suggested that the schools should have a committee that will take act decisively on TTB and enforce disciplinary measures on the perpetrators.

Participants felt that the school's security was not tight enough and learners were often found carrying weapons to school, resulting in bullying behaviour and harassment. Steyn and Singh (2018) found that bullying and carrying of weapons such as knives and guns by learners at school, have led to some consideration on introducing more stringent security measures at school. Qiao (2018) reported that teachers who were bullied by learners recommended that the learners who committed the bullying behaviours should be suspended.

It was suggested by participants that learners who are perpetrators of TTB should be suspended from school so that they understand the seriousness of their actions. Bullying in schools is a serious challenge and a violation of a person's human rights (Mollema, 2018); it has varied negative implications and therefore needs to be urgently addressed. Hence participants also suggested that management should consider the seriousness of bullying of teachers by learners.

d. Teachers' expectations of the Department of Basic Education in the management of teacher-targeted bullying

Diverse views were shared by the participants on how they want the Department of Basic Education to deal with the bullying behaviours they encounter in their work environment from learners. Participants believed that if the Department of Basic Education could place members of the South African Police Services (SAPS) and social workers at schools, the environment will be safe. Teachers would like the Department of Basic Education to state its strategies to discipline learners, develop programmes to assist both parents and learners, devise ways to suspend learners and introduce appropriate channels to report TTB; these would be effective measures to handle this matter.

Steyn and Singh (2018) stated that involvement of police officers and other agencies may better influence how much faster TTB behaviours at school are addressed, since learners give more respect to leaders from their own society. This study indicates that the participants believe that the police officers could effectively enforce discipline in school if learners get out of hand. They suggest that the Department of Basic Education should assign police officers who will operate at schools.

Some participants suggested that a social worker should be assigned to schools to work with both the victims and perpetrators of TTB, because in some instances, the learners who bully teachers may also be experiencing personal problems; they need to be assisted too. As suggested by Steyn and Singh (2018), the Department of Basic Education should allocate a guidance counsellor in each school to assist learners with behavioural problems and support victims who are experiencing psychological pain emerging from their interaction with the perpetrators of TTB. If the problem is not adequately resolved at the school level, then a request for assistance from the Department of Basic Education should be made by the school principal, to get a specialist like a social worker or psychologist to address the issue (Steyn & Singh, 2018). They also suggested that effective strategies must be clearly stated since the one that was quite effective was corporal punishment, and it was removed. Most policies and procedures do not provide guided or directed plans to manage TBB.

Qiao (2018) stated that genes, family environment, parenting style and school environment all have an influence on aggression, which is closely associated with bullying. Participants suggested that the Department of Basic Education should put in place programmes that will target parents and learners since some learners who bully teachers have burdens which emanate from challenges they

may be facing at home. Another factor is the unavailability of after school programmes in rural societies, which results in learners engaging in unwanted activities which tend to affect their behaviour (Steyn & Singh, 2018).

Participants also wanted the Department of Basic Education to allow schools to suspend learners who are perpetrators of bullying behaviour because they violated teachers' rights. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education should create specific reporting strategies that will allow teachers to report TTB since there appears to be no established reporting channels that focus on the management of TTB.

5. Discussion

The study findings show that learners' bullying of teachers is a serious challenge that schools are currently facing. Some participants reported more than one bullying experience from learners. Through examination of the teachers' experiences in the Ehlanzeni District, the current study has found physical, verbal, psychological, cyberbullying and sexual bullying to be the types of bullying learners use against teachers. These acts were reportedly committed by learners who were over-age and under the influence of drugs.

Physical and verbal bullying were identified as the most frequent types of TTB behaviour towards participants. The current study findings were aligned with those of previous studies conducted by Hoffmann (2013), McMahon et al. (2014) and Woudstra et al. (2018), which indicated that teachers tend to experience psychological and verbal bullying more often than any other forms of TTB. However, a study conducted by Rea Garrett (2015) found class disruption to be the most prevalent bullying which teachers experience daily. Moon and McCluskey (2016) found non-physical contact aggressive behaviours to be predominant in TTB. This includes throwing, kicking or destroying things in the teacher's presence.

The current study has found that teachers least experienced psychological bullying, cyberbullying and sexual bullying. These findings are similar to those of the studies by Hoffmann (2013) and Moon and McCluskey (2016), which revealed that cyberbullying and sexual bullying were not often experienced by teachers. Nevertheless, Qiao (2018), found sexual bullying to be the most prevalent type of TTB in China.

Teacher targeted-bullying results in teachers feeling disrespected, hurt, disappointed, angry, scared, puzzled, confused and distressed about going to work the next day. Studies by Hoffmann (2013) and de Vos and Kirsten (2015) indicated that anger is the common emotion teachers experience. Hoffmann (2013) reported that teachers also feel insecure, vulnerable, helpless, belittled, powerless and hurt. Billett et al. (2019) noted that teachers tend to feel powerless after a bullying experience, and Qiao (2018) stated that it leads to discomfort.

Findings of this study show that participants' lives at school are affected because of TTB. These findings echo those of previous studies by Woudstra (2015), Moon

and McCluskey (2016), Santos and Tin (2018), Woudstra et al. (2018) and Booysen (2020), which indicated that teachers' professional lives are severely impaired due to TTB. Teachers reported losing self-esteem, avoiding classes, losing courage, having their dignity compromised and being fearful around the school premises, while Woudstra et al. (2018) found that bullying affected teachers' mental health, causing low self-esteem, and affecting interaction with their learners.

This study has revealed that participants' personal lives were affected as a result of TTB. Participants reported physical, psychological, social and sexual health effects. Psychological effects reported by teachers include depression, anxiety, and personality change. Some of these are chronic mental health illnesses which teachers must live with forever. It may be difficult for them to cope with the bullying experiences since they spend most of their time at school or in the classroom where the bullying experiences often occur; therefore, this might lead to them having flashbacks of the bullying incidents. The current study findings aligned with those of a study conducted by Matsela (2014), which indicated that feeling depressed and anxious are psychological effects experienced by teachers, and revealed that they also include being aggressive, demotivated and demoralized, have sleep problems and feel paranoid. de Vos and Kirsten (2015) reported change in personality, low self-esteem and a feeling of worthlessness, indications that teachers may have internalised the bullying experiences.

Physical health effects reported by participants include both physical injury and somatic symptoms. They reported injury to a finger, change in their sleeping patterns and frequent headaches. These results concur with those of the studies conducted by de Vos (2013), de Vos and Kirsten (2015) and Booysen (2020), which also revealed that TTB disrupts teachers' sleeping patterns. Some teachers have nightmares and suffer from headaches. Other symptoms include fatigue, weight gain, musculoskeletal pains, gastro-intestinal problems, and cardiovascular-related problems, including hypertension and a rapid heartbeat. These symptoms are often long-term physical health effects that TTB victims experience, caused by the anxiety and stress resulting from the bullying experiences.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be inferred that participants' social lives are affected because of TTB. One participant reported to have noticed behavioural change and is now communicating harshly with her son; she describes herself as always being angry around their home. de Vos and Kirsten (2015) stated that the bullying experience causes uncharacteristic anger in teachers. In some instances, they tend to project these feelings onto their own children at home. de Vos (2013) and de Vos and Kirsten (2015) indicated that teachers' marital relationships and those at work also suffer.

Teachers seem to have internalised the bullying experiences, and this results in them being angry and aggressive towards other people. The embarrassment and fear that is caused by being bullied may result in teachers lacking trust in people and always fearing that they might be bullied again; therefore, their mistrust

may cause them to doubt and always be suspicious of people, and their relationships might suffer.

de Vos (2013) and de Vos and Kirsten (2015) revealed that sexual problems also result from TTB. The current study findings revealed that a teacher could not engage in any sexual activities with her partner for a week after the bullying experience. Victims of sexual bullying may experience depression, anxiety or low self-esteem as a result of the incident, resulting in low sexual desire as they might be blaming themselves for the perpetrators' actions.

Because of their bullying experiences, participants' perception of the teaching profession changed. They reported to be studying or planning to study different courses, wanting to switch within the teaching profession and engage with adults rather than children, and that they would not hesitate to leave the teaching profession and work in a different field if an opportunity presented itself. These findings are similar with those of studies conducted by Smith (2013), Santoro (2016), Santos and Tin (2018) and Booysen (2020), which underlined that learners' bullying behaviours may cause teachers' dissatisfaction and intent to leave the teaching profession. de Vos (2013) reported that teachers lost passion towards their profession, their performance depreciated, absenteeism increased owing to health issues, and they resigned from the profession. Jacobs and de Wet (2018), Santos and Tin (2018), Woudstra et al. (2018) and Booysen (2020), found that teachers become less dedicated to their profession, which results in lowered productivity in the classrooms. Santos and Tin's (2018) findings further indicated that teachers become passive-aggressive towards learners because of TTB, and that may affect them professionally: teachers fear that they might lose their careers if they fight back when a learner bullies them. Teachers may express their frustration though actions such as keeping themselves busy with other things to avoid their classes, showing less dedication to their work, and performing duties with less efficiency.

Findings of the study indicated that participants have not yet established appropriate measures to manage TTB. They reported that they tend to control their anger to avoid fighting back, ignore the bullying experience, and move on with their lives as if nothing happened. The findings indicated that in some instances, the learners' parents are called to school to discuss the matter with the School management Team (SMT) and the School Governing Body (SGB), but participants felt that the bullying learner still takes priority when the school looked into the matter. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) states that in consultations with teachers, parents and learners, the SGB has to implement a code of conduct for learners at the school and conduct disciplinary hearings when there is a need. The code of conduct must acknowledge TTB and include it as non-compliance with the code (Jacobs & de Wet, 2018). One participant reported to have tried reaching out to SACE about her TTB experience, but the matter was not taken seriously. Jacobs and de Wet (2018) recommended that SACE, the Department of Basic Education, and researchers at Higher Education Institutions should collaborate and conduct research on anti-TTB programmes.

The findings revealed that participants want their schools to manage TTB by formulating a policy, establishing a well-functioning committee, providing therapeutic interventions, tightening security systems, suspending the perpetrators, and having TTB taken more seriously. Billett et al. (2019) found that teachers wanted to be shown support by their SMTs and the schools, to create and implement a code of conduct which states that all types of behaviour which are considered as TTB will not be condoned and that if it occurs, it will include penalties that learners will face for breaching the code. They wanted stronger procedures to prevent perpetrators from coming back to class. School needs to look into implementing policies that could help in addressing TTB.

Yang et al. (2018) stated that since findings indicated that there is a high rate of TTB, mental health professionals who are based in the schools, such as psychologists, social workers and counsellors, could offer support to teachers who are bullied, by providing therapy to deal with the stressful emotions caused by the experience, such as anger, hate, sadness and anxiety. Therapy can be provided as individual therapy or in groups. These mental health professionals can also work with TTB perpetrators and provide them with anger management therapy or assist them to change their behaviour by using different behaviour modification strategies. A psychologist can also assist the school by designing and implementing bullying intervention programmes that will involve learners and teachers. He/she can also conduct seminars to psycho-educate members of the SMT, the School Based Support Team, teachers, parents and learners about bullying, its effects on both the victim and the perpetrators, and ways to manage it.

The findings also revealed that participants want the Department of Basic Education to manage TTB by allowing the schools to work together with the South African Police Services (SAPS); obtaining professional help from social workers; designing strategies that will replace corporal punishment; developing parent and child programmes to tackle problems faced at home; allowing suspension of the bully and developing appropriate channels for teachers to direct complaints. Nowadays, learners carry weapons and drugs to school, and that creates an unsafe environment which leads to teachers seeking security from the SAPS. In the past, teachers may have used corporal punishment as a way of fighting back against those learners who disrespected them, but since it was banned, they feel powerless, as in most cases the learners' education is paramount.

Jacobs and de Wet (2018) stated that the Department of Basic Education should design a policy that will prevent and handle TTB, so that schools will be able to become accustomed to the implementation of the policy. Bradshaw (2015) found that programmes that involve a family component are highly effective in bullying prevention. Children's development is affected by parents and their parenting styles. In most cases, learners who are bullying perpetrators learn that kind of behaviour from home, from their peers or from society. If parents are

involved in bullying prevention programmes, they will also learn effective parenting styles, and to take responsibility for their children's behaviour.

6. Conclusion

Based on the data collected from participants, findings indicate that TTB is a serious problem faced by schools. Most teachers have experienced verbal TTB, and it occurs more frequently than the other types. TTB changed the lives of teachers at school: they started losing confidence, being afraid, avoiding classes, losing courage, being embarrassed and being scared around the school. Their lives outside school also changed; their mental health was affected and it completely changed their personality. They began to feel as if they had lost control and were ineffective because of their circumstances. South Africa is currently facing the challenge of protecting teachers from TTB and creating sufficient resources to eradicate TTB to improve the teaching and learning environment. There are laws in place that protect teachers from the bullying behaviours they experience at work, but these are currently limited in terms of scope and specificity. Therefore, the South African Constitution should be taken into consideration when dealing with TTB. Teachers also have rights, so learners need to obey the laws of the country and treat teachers with respect and dignity. The school needs to take action to protect teachers' right to work in an environment where they feel respected and valued.

7. Limitation and recommendation

A limitation of this study is typical to many qualitative studies, namely, that the findings are based on a small sample. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalised and do not necessarily apply to the remaining three districts in Mpumalanga province; nor can they be generalised to other populations. The researchers also used a self-reported data collection instrument rather than a multi-informant approach, which may have resulted in bias and limited reliability in the study findings.

From the findings and conclusion, this study recommends that future research should focus on why TTB occurs, the consequences it has on the teaching profession, and learners' education, as well as examine the use of a multi-informant approach to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from learners, members of the School-Based Support Team, the School Management Team and other stakeholders. Also, exploring how participants cope or deal with TTB may help with the identification of effective coping strategies, and researching effective disciplinary measures may can assist in reducing the frequency of learner bullying.

It is further recommended that the findings from this study be used as a foothold to further examine the area under study. The study was conducted in a semi-rural area in Mpumalanga and could be broadened to include townships and urban areas which may provide further insight into teachers' experiences. The study should be conducted in different areas (possibly provinces) in South Africa. A larger sample may enhance the quality and relevance of the findings and will also allow generalisation of the results, making it easy to evaluate the

sample's representativeness. Finally, diversity in terms of race and gender can be increased to increase the validity of the findings.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule (English Version)

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your experiences with learners' bullying behaviours and its influence on teachers. The researcher will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR
For this study the authors chose to define teacher-targeted bulling as "a communication process that involves a real or perceived power imbalance where a teacher is subjected, by one or more students [or their parents], to interaction that he or she perceives as insulting, upsetting or intimidating this may be verbal, nonverbal or physical in nature, it may be premeditated or opportunistic, be a single instance or recurring and or of short or long duration. (Billett, Fogelgarn, & Burns, 2019)

SECTION A

Biographical Information

Age: _____

Gender: _____

No. of years teaching: _____

What are your educational qualifications? _____

SECTION B

Interview Questions:

1. Describe, in detail, the nature of the bullying behaviour that occurred?

2. Where did the bullying behaviour/incidents take place?

3. How did the (se) bullying experience(s) affect your life at school?

4. Can you describe the impact that the bullying behaviour may have had on other aspects of your life, outside of school?

5. Did reporting of the bullying behaviour(s) help you?

5.1 If yes, explain the process of reporting the bullying behaviour.
(Who?, When?, Where, How?)

5.2 If no, explain why you did not report the learner's bullying behaviour.

6. How does your school deal with teacher-targeted bullying?

7. How would you like your school to deal with teacher-targeted bullying?

8. What measures do you think the Department of Education should put in place in an attempt to address learners bullying behaviours towards teachers?

Thank you for participating in this research study.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule (Siswati Version)

Inhloso yale ngcoco kucokelela mininingwane nge lwati lwakho mayelana nemtselela webantwana besikolo wekucaphata kwabo thishela. Umcwaningi utawucinisekisa kugcina imfihlo nokungatiwa kwakho. Kubamba lichaza or kutibandzakanya kungokutitsandzela futsi unalo lilungelo lokuyekela noma ngabe kunini.

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

For this study the authors chose to define teacher-targeted bulling as "a communication process that involves a real or perceived power imbalance where a teacher is subjected, by one or more students [or their parents], to interaction that he or she perceives as insulting, upsetting or intimidating this may be verbal, nonverbal or physical in nature, it may be premeditated or opportunistic, be a single instance or recurring and or of short or long duration

(Billett, Fogelgarn, & Burns, 2019)

SIGABA A

Mininingwane

Minyaka _____

Bulili _____

Unombolo yeminyaka lonayo ufundzisa _____

Ngitiphi ticu lonato _____

SIGABA B

Imibuti Yelicwaningo

1. Chaza kabanti ngeluhlobo lesento sekuchashwatwa lesenteka.

2. Lesento sokuchaswatwa sententeka kuphi?

3. Letigameko tekuchashatwa tayitsintsa njan impilo yakho eskolweni?

4. Ungawuchaza umitselela lekungenteka kutsi letento tokuchashwatwa tibe nawo kuletinye tici tempilo yakho, ngaphandle kwaseskolweni.

5. Kubika ngalesento(tento) sokuchashwatwa kwakusita yin?

5.1. Umakungenjalo, chaza lenqubo yokubika kwesento sokuchashatwa. (kubani, nini, kuphi, njani)

5.2. Umakungenjalo, chaza kuts kungani ungabikanga lesento sekuchashwatwa mfundzi.

6. Sikolo sakho sibukana njan nekuchashatwa lokucondziswe kubo thisela?

7. Ungatsandza kuts sikolo sakho sibukane njan nekuchashatwa lokucondziswe kubo thisela?

8. Ngitiphi tinqubo mgomo locabanga kutsi kelelwe tifakwe Litiko Letenfundvo njengemizamo yokulungisa sento sebafundzi sokuchashatwa khabothishela.

Siyabonga ngokutstsa lichaza kulelicwaningo.