

Educators' Perceptions of Bullying Behaviours by School Leadership in the Gauteng Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Bullying in schools is a global phenomenon; however, most studies mainly focus on students, and less on educators being bullied by either the principal, the learners, or the parents of the learners. Research on workplace bullying (WPB) in occupations, identified teaching as a high-risk job. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of bullying behaviours by school leadership in South African schools. The data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analysed using appropriate statistical tests. The data revealed one latent factor, which was named the frequency of educators' perceptions of downward bullying behaviour in the primary school. This factor consisted of three reliable sub-scales. Educators believed that they seldom experienced downward-bullying behaviour; but they had to comply with mandated policy directives from school-management teams.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is perceived as a worldwide, complex phenomenon (Laas and Boezaart 2014: 1); and it is more often than not associated with children, teenagers and young adults on the playground, in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities (Besag 1989; Marr and Field 2000; Rigby 2008; De Wet 2010; Momberg 2011; Bureau of Market Research 2012; De Wet and Jacobs 2013; Ertük 2013). Recent in-depth studies internationally and in South Africa have revealed that bullying amongst educators in the staffrooms, and between educators and principals negatively affects the workplace environment (De Wet 2010; Jansen 2011; Bureau of Market Research 2012; Fahie and Devine 2012; De Wet and Jacobs 2013; Samnani 2013).

De Wet (2014: 1) suggests that research on workplace bullying has increased notably during the last three decades, in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Germany, Austria, Australia, and Britain. Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the United Kingdom, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassment or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986 (Department of Education 2014).

Naser et al. (2003) in addition to Smith (2010: 28) define bullying as: “aggressive behaviour

consisting of repeated physical, verbal or non-verbal acts displayed repeatedly over a period of time by one person against another that are intended to inflict injury or discomfort, and [which] take place in a relationship marked by a real or perceived imbalance of power”. De Wet and Jacobs (2013) point out that bullying can be seen as long-standing violence, which could be in the form of persistent insults or offensive remarks, persistent criticism, or even personal or physical abuse. De Wet (2014), Georgakopoulos et al. (2011), as well as Parzefall and Salin (2010) argue that despite the growing body of knowledge on workplace bullying, researchers are not unanimous regarding what exactly constitutes workplace bullying.

The factors that contribute to the unfavourable working conditions in the South African schooling system include the continuous changes in curriculum. There have been a series of changes from traditional teaching (pre-apartheid), to Outcome Based Education (OBE) in 2000 (post-apartheid), deemed as unsuccessful – mainly because of the lack of resources – inadequate teacher-training and the top-down way it has been advocated. These problems manifest in the underperformance of learners, which has increased the uncertainty among educators at all levels. Moreover, educator paperwork overload and guidelines that were not transparent or clear on the implementation of curriculum 2005, the revised national curriculum statement of 2005, the foundations of learn-

ing in 2010 to a more streamlined curriculum (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement) in 2010 to 2014 are adding further stressors to educators.

Furthermore, the limited teaching and learning resources, the limited budgets and the implementation of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) of 2011, as well as the high educator turnover also negatively influence the workplace environment.

Additionally, the present 2015 furore caused by the latest annual assessments (ANA) controversy in South Africa, could be seen as bullying behaviour by the teacher unions on the Minister of Basic Education and vice-versa. The Minister, initially bowed to union pressure to postpone the annual 2015 assessments in Grade 1 to Grade 9, which were to be written in September 2015, to February 2016. However, she soon reneged on her decision, and announced that they now had to be written from 1 to 4 December 2015. Marais (2015: 4) indicates that Van der Berg (an expert in the economics of education) believes that the whole fracas is the result of who is in control; and by forcing schools to write in December 2015, the Minister wants to show that she is the one in control and not the unions.

However, there is a real danger that the content of the existing question papers has already been dispersed in some schools; and hence, the whole system of ANA would be under suspicion. In light of this, the relationships between school principals and teachers are becoming more stressful – resulting in unproductive teaching and learning environments.

Problem Statement

De Wet and Jacobs (2013: 450) point out that in South Africa, the Internet survey conducted by Marais-Steinmann in 1998-1999 found that 77.8 percent of South Africans feel bullied in the workplace. The only common denominator of these behaviours is that these negative behaviours are used with the aim, or at least the effect of, persistently humiliating, intimidating, frightening or punishing the victim. De Wet (2014: 1) argues that there is a grave concern that workplace bullying in the educational setting has the potential to negatively influence teaching and learning. The pressure to improve student academic achievement and the compulsory signing of performance agreements exerts pressure

on school principals to demand more work from teachers (Govender 2011: 9). These pressures often result in teachers feeling bullied by the school leadership. De Wet (2014) suggests that consistent with the findings by Blasé and Blasé (2002), Fast and Chen (2009) and De Wet (2010), ineffectual leaders often bully their subordinates.

In light of the identified problems, the main research question is:

What are educators' perceptions of bullying behaviours by school leadership?

The sub-questions are:

Why are educators bullied at their schools?

What are the essential features of downward bullying?

What strategies could assist educators to recognise and deal with downward bullying?

Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the educators' perceptions of bullying behaviours by school leadership.

In order to realise the main aim of this study, the sub-aims are to:

Investigate why educators are bullied at their schools.

Probe the perceptions of educators on the essential features of downward bullying.

Suggest strategies that could assist educators to recognise and deal with downward bullying.

Literature Review

Bullying is a complex, yet universal phenomenon; and different terms have been used to describe the diverse aspects of bullying. The word bullying has been predominantly used by researchers in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Hoel and Cooper 2000; De Wet 2014). Salin (2003) used the words downward bullying, horizontal bullying and upward bullying, as well as workplace bullying. Zapf (1999) used the word mobbing to describe bullying by one or more individuals. According to Tehrani (2001: 6), the social learning theory defines bullying as a variant of repeated aggressions; and it can best be understood as a learned set of behaviours, primarily stimulated by external forces or modelling.

Langan-Fox and Sankey (2007: 64) argued that the bullying of subordinates has been

shown to flourish in chaotic or competitive environments. Within these environments, employees are typically willing to sabotage or expel unwanted colleagues or subordinates, in order to improve their own position within the organisation (De Wet 2014: 13). Research by De Wet (2010) used the term workplace abuse. Brodsky (1976) in Tehrani (2001: 70) argued that bullying behaviour may be related to the need to attain power or privilege – either formally by the gaining of reward and promotion, or informally by the power obtained from generating fear amongst one's colleagues.

Of the 21 types of downward bullying discussed by Vermeulen (2012: 19-26), regulation bullying is probably the one, which is most often used in bureaucratic and hierarchical structures. Regulation bullying is usually where the leader forces the employees to comply with the rules, regulations, procedures, policies or laws – regardless of their appropriateness, applicability or necessity. The educational system in South Africa, characterised by power levels, legislative acts, regulations and policies, which enforce certain management processes could be a “breeding ground” for perceptions to form, regarding this form of bullying.

One could associate regulation bullying with Foucault's 1977 (in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983) theory of panopticism or governmentality. For Foucault, panopticism is the general principle of a new political anatomy, whose objective is not sovereignty, but relations of discipline and governmentality, where government is impossible without statistics, the monitoring and surveillance of the populations, which all form part of disciplinary society. The government, which could be described as the power, rules, controls or regulates the society that it governs.

The public education system in South Africa is governed by the government. The government, in turn, is governed by the majority party, namely, the African National Congress (ANC) which is the ruling party. The education system in South Africa is a bureaucratic and hierarchical system; and political decisions are made at the macro-level of the system (Ritzer 2008). These decisions, policies or directives are then cascaded down nationally, changed and interpreted, and then cascaded down to the provinces.

The provinces, in turn, cascade their interpretations to their selected districts. The districts are responsible for the implementation of

policies and regulations. The districts either inform the principals by hosting an information workshop, or by using a circular to communicate their decisions, directives or policies that have to be implemented at the school level. This further increases the pressure on school leaders and educators; as they are the ones held finally accountable for the poor results.

In this research, the workplace is the primary school; and formal authority is legally established in terms of positions, rules and regulations. When joining the school for the first time, educators accept the authority relation because they agree, within certain limits, to accept the directives of their supervisors; the school principal has the right to command; and the educators have the duty to obey (Hoy and Miskel 1991: 79). This hierarchy of authority is thus based on the position held by the leader; and it is also named legitimate power (Hersey et al. 2001: 178).

It is also probable that such mandated change could be driven by downward or regulatory bullying. The long-term results of such downward bullying behaviours could result in decreased commitment to the vision and mission of education, low self-esteem, negativity, stress, absenteeism, loss of school effectiveness, educators opting for early retirement and the resignation of educators from their posts. The subsequent latent indicators could be mental distress, fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression, sadness, feelings of shame, physical and emotional isolation, unsympathetic peers, headaches, sleep deprivation, low morale, stress and burnout. These are some of the stressors that accompany downward bullying; and they could have a serious lingering impact on educator's physical and mental well-being, as well as on their professional lives (De Wet 2010: 21-23).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979: 132) indicated that power and authority are perceptions that are difficult to separate in an organisation, such as a school; since useful differences exist between them. Power is the ability to influence the decision-making process; whereas authority is the right to act on behalf of the organisation or the school. The sources of power in education, according to Bush (2003: 97), may be seen as the ability of the powerful (leaders or management members) to ascertain the behaviour of others; where these ‘others’ are assumed

to be the powerless (educators), thus deciding the outcome of conflict. The assumption is that the powerful oppress the powerless. Authority is legitimate power, which is vested in leaders that are usually appointed in their respective leadership positions within formal organisations (Bush 2003: 97).

Thus, authority means that the leader, such as a principal of a school, has the legal right to make decisions concerning school matters, which would be supported by sanctions. Bush (2003: 97), states that authority is the static, structural aspect of power in organisations; therefore, it is the formal aspect of power. Furthermore, authority refers to the formally sanctioned right to make decisions; and it implies the involuntary submission of subordinates. Moreover, authority flows downward and is unidirectional, it is circumscribed; and that is the domain, scope and legitimacy of the power that is specifically and clearly delimited.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The quantitative method of research and the survey design have been chosen for this study. The quantitative research method was found suitable; because it is based on historical and descriptive research, which includes evaluative surveys, comparative surveys and descriptive surveys, which are all useful instruments to obtain the relevant information from large sample populations (Fox and Bayat 2007: 8-10). The quantitative research method is, therefore, concerned with those things that can be counted, by using statistics to process and explain the data that have been collected via a structured questionnaire.

Population and Sampling

The research population comprises the 16 districts of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (Babbie 2002: 177). For the purpose of this study, a sample frame was requested from the Gauteng Department of Education of all the primary schools in the Johannesburg South and the Ekurhuleni South districts. A random sample of thirty schools was selected from the obtained sample frame. From the two districts, fifteen schools in each district were selected as being representative of all the primary schools

in the two districts. The researchers applied for permission to conduct the research, using the survey method (self-administered questionnaires) in two districts in Gauteng, to the Head of the Department of Education in Gauteng.

Once permission was granted by the Head of Department in Gauteng, appointments were set up with the two district directors of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni South. The deputy district director of Johannesburg South requested an interview and a summarised presentation of the research.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability was observed by ensuring that what was measured was reliable, and whether it consistently provided the same results all the time and at different intervals. Fox and Bayat (2007: 145) suggest that when measurements are consistent from one research session to another, they are perceived as dependable; and therefore, some measure of faith may be placed in them. According to Babbie (2002: 139), validity is the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the construct under consideration.

The researchers made sure that they had collected data that accurately replicated the construct being measured, namely downward bullying. Validity relates broadly to the extent to which the measure achieves its aim to measure, in other words what it claims to measure or test, as well as what it is intended to test. The three basic components of validity that are applicable for this study were: (i) Face validity; (ii) construct validity; and (iii) content validity (Babbie 2002: 139). A measure has face validity if it seems a reasonable measure of a variable. Thus, for example, researchers are unlikely to disagree with the assertion that intimidating behaviour from a colleague is something involved in the construct of bullying. Construct validity is the extent to which a measure reflects the hypothetical construct with which one is involved. Thus, for example, one is concerned with whether the variables are actually measuring the hypothetical construct, such as bullying.

These researchers will make use of factor analysis; where the factor loadings on the various variables would indicate the extent of their contribution to the bullying construct (Field 2009: 631). In content validity, one seeks to as-

certain whether the content one is using actually and only measures the dimensions of the construct, such as bullying (Blunch 2008: 43). The content validity of the construct being investigated was given to three different experts regarding bullying behaviour and questionnaire development.

The Data Collection

The quantitative research measurement procedure was a self-administered questionnaire to the selected sample of the study (Mouton 1996: 97). The questionnaires were distributed in the Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni South districts. Fifteen schools in each of the two districts were randomly selected. Each school received 14 sets of questionnaires for 14 respondents (elements). Ten educators, two heads of department, one deputy principal and the principal were asked to complete the questionnaires, thereby further stratifying the sample. The date of collection was stipulated on the envelopes containing the questionnaires. The collection took two weeks and four days.

Of the 420 questionnaires distributed, 280 were collected, of which 262 had all the data completed and which could be analysed. Thus, 62.4 percent of the questionnaires were used for the data analysis.

The Data Analysis

The analysis utilised both the descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis is discussed first.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis assisted in presenting the data in an organised manner; and they were used to describe the variables, the variable names, the coding, and the information related to the distributions. The representivity of the sample is discussed, in order to communicate its important characteristics. Of the 262 fully completed questionnaires, 218 (83.2 percent) were from females and 44 (16.8 percent) were from male respondents. This indicates a ratio of 4.9 female educators for every one male educator. The Department of Basic Education indicates a ratio of about 3: 1 (DoBE 2009: 16) in the Gauteng province. The sample is consequently over-rep-

resentative of female respondents. The original five position-occupied groups were re-coded to represent two groups, namely, management (1) and educators (2).

Of the 262 respondents, 192 (73.3 percent) indicated that they were level 1 educators; while 70 (26.7 percent) indicated that they could be grouped under a management position. Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 schools are the socio-economically poorer schools; while quintiles 4 and 5 represent the wealthier schools. The Johannesburg South schools and the Ekurhuleni South schools sampled probably came from the wealthier schools, and could be representative of the Johannesburg region; but they are not representative of the quintile groupings of all the schools in Gauteng. There were 149 (57.5 percent) respondents, who indicated that their school principal was a male; while 110 (42.5 percent) indicated that they had a female principal.

The ratio of male-to-female principals was 1.4 to 1; and this is reasonably representative of primary schools in the Johannesburg region.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Inferential Statistics and Factor Analysis

Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses and to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables, and to generalise the sample results to a population within a given margin of probable error (Fox and Bayat 2007: 125).

Section B of the questionnaire asked the respondents to give their perception of the frequency with which they had experienced downward bullying behaviour from the School Management Team (SMT). Given that numerous questions were asked on each of these dimensions, a factor analytical procedure could possibly confirm these dimensions. The scale used was a Likert scale with never at the one pole (1) and very often (5) at the opposite pole. Each question was answered relative to the header, which read "How often have you been...?"

The 23 items in Section B of the questionnaire were subjected to a factor-analytical process (PCA) using PASW 18.0, as described by Field (2009) and Norusis (2009). The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) value of the first-order analysis had a value of 0.88; and a Bartlett's sphericity of $p=0.000$. Bartlett's test indicates whether

the correlation matrix of the data is significantly different from an identity matrix. Thus, if the test is significant ($p < 0.05$), then it means that the correlation between the variables is overall significantly different from zero; and hence, there are clusters of variables present that measure similar things (Field 2009: 648). Furthermore, none of the 23 items had a Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) value of less than 0.6, with the vast majority of the commonalities being above 0.40. This suggested that a factor analysis would produce meaningful factors.

Four first-order factors were formed, which explained 64.13 percent of the variance present. However, only three factors loaded on the rotated (Varimax) factor matrix.

The first factor contained 10 variables, which all loaded with values greater than 0.3; and hence, they are considered to be important (Field 2009: 644). It had a Cronbach's reliability of 0.903; and as it contained items that were all indicators of bullying behaviour, it was named "perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour by the SMT. The abbreviation FB1.1 indicates that it is the first factor of the items in Section B of the questionnaire; and that it is merely an abbreviation for the name of the factor. The items, their factor loadings, and the mean scores obtained, are all shown in Table 1.

The factor mean score ($\bar{X}_{EBL1} = 1.53$) suggests that the respondents believed that bullying behaviour by the SMT towards them seldom takes place in their schools. The Cronbach reliability coefficient was 0.903, indicating that the items in the factor were reliably answered. However, the histogram and box-plot in Figure 1 (FB1.1) indicate that the data distribution was positively skewed. The box-plot has a median of 1.3; and this clearly shows that 50 percent of the respon-

dents had the perception that such bullying behaviour by the SMT towards them seldom occurred.

As the distribution of the data is not symmetrical, this means that non-parametric statistical procedures will have to be used to search for possible differences between the various independent groups. When comparing two independent groups, one can use the Mann-Whitney U-test; while the comparison of several groups is done via the Kruskal-Wallis test. These tests work on the principle of ranking the data by finding the lowest rank and numbering it by using 1. The next highest score is ranked 2, and so on (Field 2009: 540). This process results in high scores being represented by large ranks, and low scores by small ranks. The analysis is thus carried out on ranks rather than on the actual data.

The histogram and box-plot of the data in the factor, and the perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour by the SMT (FB1.1) are shown in Figure 1. The histogram clearly indicates the slope towards the right; whilst the box-plot indicates numerous outliers, which could have added to the non-symmetrical distribution of the data. These respondents were, however, not removed from the data; as this would involve the permanent loss of the data; and because non-parametric tests do not have to meet the assumptions of parametric tests.

The second factor contained nine items with a Cronbach's reliability coefficient 0.885, indicating that it was reliably answered. As all these items involved some form of bullying behaviour from colleagues, that factor was named 'the perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour by colleagues' (FB1.2). It was the second of the three first-order factors, hence

Table 1: The items in the factor "Perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour by the SMT" (FB1.1)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Description: How often have you been:</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Mean</i>
B4	Belittled by the SMT?	0.83	1.50
B10	Exposed to unreasonable criticism from the SMT?	0.81	1.56
B21	Exposed to intimidating behaviour from the SMT?	0.80	1.47
B2	Subjected to bullying by the SMT?	0.79	1.56
B17	Endured hostile behaviour from the SMT?	0.73	1.37
B7	Encountered verbal abuse by the SMT?	0.70	1.31
B11	Judged in a negative critical manner by the SMT?	0.64	1.45
B19	Subjected to aggressive behaviour by the SMT?	0.59	1.45
B23	Isolated by the SMT?	0.58	1.25
B8	Subjected to an unreasonable workload?	0.34	2.64
	Average	0.68	1.53

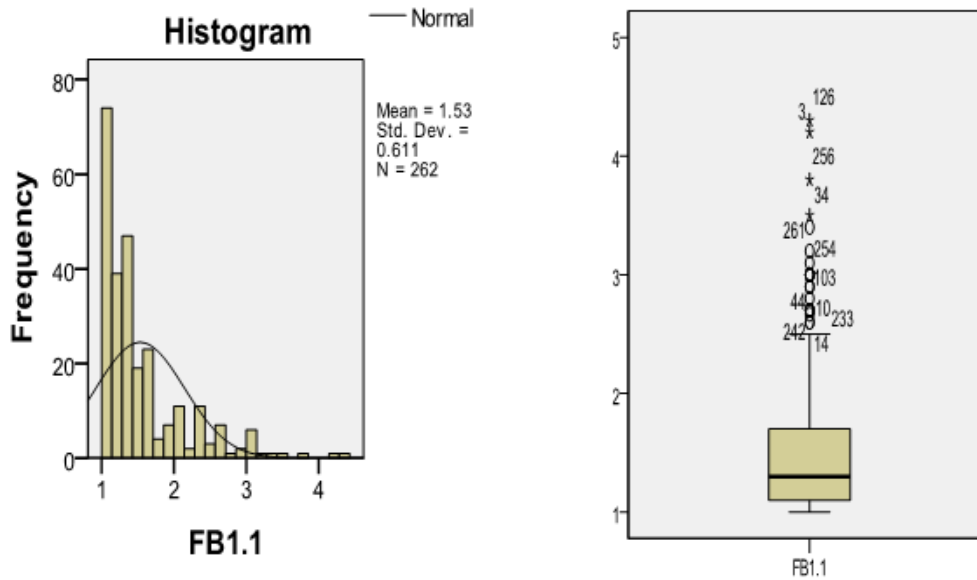


Fig. 1. Histogram and box-plot of perceptions of the frequency of bullying behaviour by the SMT (FB1.1)

FB1.2. The mean score and the loading of each item in the factor is given in Table 2.

The factor mean score ($X_{FB1.2}=1.63$) indicates that the majority of the respondents had the perception that they seldom experienced downward bullying behaviour from their colleagues. The distribution of data was positively skewed, indicating that non-parametric tests should be utilised. Item B5 had a loading of less than 0.3; but it was not removed from the data analysis.

The third factor (FB1.3) contained four items, and had a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.77 indicating internal reliability. It is a “rule of thumb” that Cronbach values of above 0.70 be

accepted as reliable; but with psychological constructs, such as bullying, values of less than 0.70 are sometimes also acceptable (Field 2009: 674). These items all involved bullying behaviour towards oneself; and hence, they were named ‘perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour towards their persons’ (FB1.3). The items, their mean scores and the factor loadings are given in Table 3.

The mean score of 1.15 indicates that the respondents had the perception that downward bullying behaviour towards their person never occurs. However, the low mean score indicates that the distribution of the data should be positively skewed. The mean score and the predom-

Table 2: The items in the factor “Perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour by colleagues” (FB1.2)

Item	Description: How often have you:	Loading	Mean
B18	Been subjected to aggressive behaviour by a colleague?	0.75	1.48
B6	Encountered verbal abuse by a colleague?	0.74	1.61
B1	Subjected to bullying by a colleague?	0.73	1.73
B16	Endured hostile behaviour from a colleague?	0.73	1.70
B3	Belittled by a colleague?	0.69	1.77
B22	Experienced isolation by a colleague?	0.64	1.48
B20	Experienced intimidating behaviour from a colleague?	0.64	1.55
B9	Experienced unreasonable criticism from a colleague?	0.58	1.87
B5	Embarrassed by a district official?	0.24	1.36
	Average	0.64	1.63

Table 3: The items in the factor “Perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour towards their persons (FB1.3)”

Item	Description How often have you:	Loading	Mean
B13	Endured insulting comments by the SMT about your physical appearance?	0.72	1.10
B12	Endured insulting comments by a colleague about your physical appearance?	0.70	1.17
B14	Tolerated insulting comments by a colleague about your private life?	0.62	1.23
B15	Tolerated insulting comments by the SMT about your private life?	0.60	1.10
	Average	0.66	1.15

inant mode of 1 clearly indicate a positive skewness; and non-parametric statistics need to be used, when investigating factor mean scores – in order to find possible significant differences between the independent groups.

When the three first-order factors were subjected to a second-order procedure, the KMO was 0.65; and the Bartlett’s sphericity was $p < 0.0005$. These values all indicate that factor analysis can be used to further reduce the number of factors present. One second-order factor was formed, explaining 61.5 percent of the variance present. It contained 23 items and had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.920. It was named the ‘frequency of educators’ perceptions of downward bullying behaviour in the primary school’ (FB2.0). However, if one uses the one second-order factor and significant differences are found, then further tests would still need to be conducted, in order to determine which of the three first-order factors are responsible for this difference. Hence, the first-order factors were used in the analysis.

Significant Differences between Two Independent Groups with Respect to the Three Downward Bullying Factors

As the data distribution did not meet the parametric requirement of normally distributed data, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used. Only those groups, in which statistically significant differences were found, will be discussed. The first independent variable, where significant differences were found involves the two district groups of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni South.

Hypotheses for the district from which the respondents came, could be the following:

Ho. MW – There is statistically no significant differences between the sums of the ranked scores of the two district groups regarding the three first-order factors FB1.1, FB1.2 and FB1.3.
Ha. MW – There is a statistically significant dif-

ference between the sums of the ranked scores of the two district groups regarding the three first-order factors FB1.1, FB1.2 and FB1.3.

The data indicated statistically significant differences in the mean ranks of the perceptions of the frequency of bullying behaviour by the SMT (FB1.1) only.

($Z_{FN1.1} = -2.55$; $p = 0.011$; $r = 0.16$). The probability value ($p = 0.01$) is less than 0.05; and hence, the null hypothesis cannot be accepted. This means that the Johannesburg South respondents had a statistically significant difference ($\bar{X}_{JHB.S.} = 1.43$) from the respondents from Ekurhuleni South ($X_{ES} = 1.62$); and that this result was not due to chance. The respondents from Ekurhuleni South, thus, had the perceptions, that although they seldom experienced bullying behaviour by their colleagues, they perceived that it happened more often to them than it occurred to the respondents from the Johannesburg South district.

The ethnic groups were collapsed into white persons and other persons; and the data indicated that the two ethnic groups only differed statistically significantly in their mean ranks, with respect to the perceptions of downward bullying behaviour towards their persons (FB1.3). ($Z_{FN1.3} = -2.72$; $p = 0.030$; $r = 0.17$). The significant p value ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the difference in mean scores was not due to chance; and that the null hypothesis could be rejected. The other persons’ group had a mean score of 1.56; while the white persons grouping had a mean score of 1.51, which means that bullying behaviour directed at white persons, occurs less frequently than the other persons’ ethnic group perceived this to be so. It is difficult to find reasons for why these two groups differ statistically significantly from one another; but as the bullying was towards oneself, the reasons could be cultural. For example, there is a difference in how collectivistic cultures view direct confrontation by others, which is considered to be rude; while

in individualistic cultures, confrontation is believed to lead to a higher truth (Hofstede 1991: 58).

Significant Differences between Three or More Independent Groups with Respect to the Three Downward Bullying Factors

When the parametric assumptions of data distribution, such as normality, are not met, then the Kruskal-Wallis test is one of the non-parametric tests that can be used. Only those groups where statistically significant differences were found will be discussed. The age of the respondents was re-coded to form three groups, namely, < 37 years, 38 to 47 years and 48 + years. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the three different age groups, regarding bullying behaviour by colleagues (FB1.2) only.

($\bar{X}_{<37yrs} = 1.45$; $\bar{X}_{38-47yrs} = 1.67$; $\bar{X}_{48+yrs} = 1.73$; $p = 0.015$; $r = 0.18$). As it is more convenient to show the mean scores than the ranked means they are used, the data, consequently, indicate a direct proportion – In the sense that the older the respondents were, the higher the mean score, and hence, the higher the mean rank. The probability value is significant ($p < 0.05$); and hence, the three age groups differ statistically significantly from one another with respect to bullying behaviour from colleagues (FB1.2). However, the Kruskal-Wallis test does not indicate which of the three groups differ from one another.

Such a pair-wise difference is likely to lie between the youngest and the oldest age groups. The Mann-Whitney U-test ($U = 2350.0$; $Z = -2.913$; $p = 0.004$) indicates that this is so. The significant p value ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the older age group had significantly greater perceptions with regard to bullying behaviour by colleagues (FB1.2) than did the younger respondents. It is likely that persons who are 48 years of age or older have had more time in which to observe and experience bullying behaviour by their colleagues than the younger age group.

One would expect that teaching experience shows a similar relationship; and the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the three different age groups:

($\bar{X}_{1-10yrs} = 1.50$; $\bar{X}_{11-20yrs} = 1.60$; $\bar{X}_{21+yrs} = 1.76$; $p = 0.017$; $r = 0.16$). The significant p value indicates that the null hypothesis

for FB1.2 should not be accepted. The pair-wise difference is likely to lie between the least and the most experienced teaching groups. The Mann-Whitney U-test ($U = 3106.0$; $Z = -2.73$; $p = 0.006$) indicates that this is so. The most-experienced teaching group had significantly greater perceptions with regard to bullying behaviour by colleagues (FB1.2) than the least-experienced teaching experience respondents. Again, it is likely that the greater one's teaching experience, the more probably one would have experienced some form of bullying behaviour from colleagues.

The mother-tongue groups were grouped into Afrikaans, English and Other (Nguni and Sotho). The data from the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the three different mother-tongue groups taken together, with respect to their perceptions of downward bullying behaviours by the SMT (FB1.1) only:

($\bar{X}_{ENG} = 1.62$; $\bar{X}_{Afr} = 1.58$; $\bar{X}_{Other} = 1.70$; $p = 0.014$; $r = 0.06$). The significant p value again indicates that this result was unlikely to be a chance happening; and hence, the null hypothesis for FB1.1 was not accepted. The pair-wise difference was likely to lie between the lowest mean score and the highest score. The Mann-Whitney U-test ($U = 2155.50$; $Z = -2.03$; $p = 0.04$) confirmed that the difference was between the Afrikaans mother-tongue group and the other group. The Afrikaans mother-tongue group had the perception that they seldom experienced bullying behaviour from the SMT; while the other group (Nguni and Sotho) had the perception that they seemed to experience such behaviour more frequently. The reason is again likely to be due to cultural differences.

Section C of the Structured Questionnaire

A policy is not considered to be law in terms of the Constitution; therefore it is not binding on the public at large. It is, however, binding on Departmental officials, as well as principals in schools. Therefore, its purpose is to effectively constitute a managerial instruction. Ritzer (2008) suggests that when obedience to a policy has become mechanical and passive, rather than active, it is nothing more than willing compliance. Thus, teachers could feel they are governed by an impersonal law, which they have no ability to implement. Therefore, it may be assumed that policies, regulations and circulars pertaining to

education are based on bureaucratic top-down principles. The following questions in Table 4 pertain to educator's possible perceptions regarding compliance with the implementation of policies, circulars and regulations within the last twelve months.

The overwhelming response, to the items posed in Table 4, was that educators would comply with the policy directives. Furthermore, if one makes the assumption that the final choice lies with the individual person; then the probability of compliance with item C1 would be 0.87; while the probability of not complying or being unsure is 0.13 (a value of 1 would mean yes they would comply). Thus, for every 100 respondents, 87 would answer yes; while 13 would say no, or be unsure as to whether they would comply with the request.

The exception to this compliance trend was item C3, where the SMT were involved, and where no discussion was allowed; and where only 29.3 percent indicated that they would comply with the SMT's directive. This item could possibly have been interpreted as an unreasonable request by educators. To accept such a decision without discussion was not acceptable to 70.7 percent of the educators; while 29.3 percent indicated that they would comply without any questioning.

Analysis of Section D of Questionnaire

Section D of the questionnaire contained seven items that tested the respondents' own perceptions, as to the frequency with which they had made use of downward-bullying behaviours.

The respondents had to answer the items on a six-point interval scale; where 1 was that they had never used such a behaviour; while 6 was that they always made use of such behaviours. Item D2 had a KMO <0.60 and was removed. The first-order analysis formed three factors that explained 63.96 percent of the variance present. However, none of the three factors had Cronbach Reliability coefficients >0.70; and hence, it was decided to analyze the questions separately.

Item D1 asked the respondents how often they had intentionally undermined the professional authority of a colleague. It had the following values ($X_{D1}=1.41$; $S.D=0.78$), indicating thereby that the respondents had the perception that they seldom, or never intentionally, undermined the professional authority of a colleague.

Question D3 asked: "In your opinion, have you ever experienced improper procedures to address issues of professional incompetence"? The mean score was 2.15 and the S.D was 1.28, indicating a relatively large variance in this question among the respondents. However, the majority indicated that they had seldom experienced improper procedures used when addressing professional incompetence.

Item D4 enquired how frequently respondents had refrained from verbal harassment of their colleagues. A mean score 4.07 indicates that they believed that they often refrained from using behaviour that could be constituted as verbal harassment. However, the large S.D of 2.17 indicates a large variance on a six-point scale; and it seems to indicate that some of the respondents had possibly used language that could be interpreted as being annoying to other people.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who indicated compliance to the question in Section C

<i>Item</i>	<i>Will you comply? (%)</i>
C1. Your principal requests you to read a circular pertaining to changes in the curriculum. These changes would mean you have to redo your preparation for your subject for the next week. Do you comply with the request?	87.5%
C2. If new policies are implemented and you know it would mean more work, longer hours as well as changes in your work schedule, would you implement the policy immediately?	45.6%
C3. If SMT have decided to implement a new school code of conduct as prescribed by GDE. Their decision is not open for discussion. Do you accept this decision without questioning it?	29.3%
C4. At the end of each term schools are required to collect a summary of the term's statistics in each learning area for each grade. The principal instructs you to collate the statistics for your grade. Do you comply?	95.8%
C5. Weekends are important to you. Your principal hands out a list of duties. Your name appears as organizer for an event that requires you to be on duty on a Saturday morning. Do you comply?	81.5%

Item D5 asked the respondents how frequently had they used inappropriate language in their interactions with the SMT. A mean score of 1.32, with a standard deviation of 0.99, indicated that the majority of the respondents felt that they had never used inappropriate language in their interactions with the SMT.

In item D6, respondents were of the opinion that they had never been exposed to abuse (physical or otherwise) from their colleagues ($\bar{X}=1.43$; $S.D.=0.89$). Item D 7 had a mean score of 1.64, indicating thereby that the respondents had very seldom felt the need to act aggressively in response to a threat.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Reflecting on the literature study, one comes to the conclusion that the following are essential features for downward bullying, namely: the researcher's perception of downward bullying seems to be related to the organisational climate, the types of downward bullying, power, authority, leadership, control and compliance, governmentality and managerialism. Furthermore, the literature revealed that downward bullying was a difficult concept to define; but it was often associated with the organisational climate and the post levels in the hierarchical structure of the educational system. Downward bullying was facilitated where a threat to one's professional status or a threat to one's personal standing occurred. It was also enhanced if a possibility of isolating the victim was present. Dysfunctional consequences, such as undue pressure resulting from deadlines, and assigning meaningless tasks to educators, in order to find an equitable workload were also often present. Repeated reminders to all educators when only a few are guilty of not conforming to the norms of the school also places undue guilt on those who are not guilty of any misdemeanours. Power is the resource that enables a person to induce compliance from others, or to influence them in achieving organisational goals.

Thus organisational control is about power. When power and knowledge are used for personal power, control of rewards, or as coercive power, an imbalance of power occurs; it loses its legitimacy; and the impetus points to downward bullying.

The following important management strategies were identified, in order to reduce downward bullying, namely: promoting an awareness of downward bullying behaviours; and identifying and recognising downward bullying behaviours. The negative effects of bullying behaviour should be discussed by the SMT. All stakeholders need to be consulted, when developing a policy to address the school's attitude towards downward bullying. Educators need to be involved in a dialogue, where all participate in a common pool of meaning. The policy should be written in detail; and the wording should be clear and easy to follow. The policy document should include the characteristics of downward bullying, as well as appropriate examples to identify such downward bullying.

Regarding the frequency with which respondents believed that the SMT indulged in bullying behaviour towards them, a factor mean score of ($X_{FB1.1}=1.56$) suggested that the respondents believed that this seldom occurred in their schools. Non-parametric statistical tests indicated that respondents from the Ekurhuleni South had the perceptions, that although they seldom experienced bullying behaviour by the SMT, they perceived that it happened more frequently to them than it occurred to the Johannesburg South district respondents.

The majority of the respondents had the perception that they had seldom experienced ($X_{FB1.2}=1.62$) downward bullying behaviour from their colleagues (FB1.2). The statistical tests indicated that there was a statistically significant association between age, teaching experience and perceptions of the frequency of downward bullying behaviour from colleagues. The older and more experienced group of teachers had significantly higher factor mean scores than the younger age group and the least experienced group of educators. This indicates that age and experience are directly related to perceptions of the frequency with which bullying behaviour by colleagues occurs.

Respondents had the belief that downward bullying behaviour towards them as individuals (FB1.3) never occurs ($X_{FB1.3}=1.15$). The respondents from the White ethnic group had a statistically significantly lower mean score than the respondents from the other ethnic group on the frequency of bullying behaviour towards their own persons. In order to determine possible compliance with policies, regulations and instruc-

tions from management structures in the school, the researchers made use of the odds ratio. The odds ratio indicated that most respondents would answer yes to the items posed indicating compliance – even if they regarded the item as adding to their present work load or intruding on their weekends.

When it came to whether respondents believed whether they indulged in bullying behaviour, the overwhelming response was that they seldom to never made themselves guilty of undermining the professional authority of their colleagues. Similarly, they believed that they never used language, which could be considered as inappropriate, or interpreted as aggressive towards their colleagues. It appears as if the self-perceptions of one's own bullying behaviour are largely based on the preservation of one's self-image.

Downward bullying in the workplace in education has not received much attention from government, nationally, provincially or from the districts. Therefore, more research is recommended to investigate the reality of this phenomenon. Underperforming districts and schools need to establish an integrated and continuous improvement approach that is built on trust, values, communication, respect, and finding approaches that are unique to the culture of their schools. Principals and leaders, as well as the elected educators from the underperforming districts and schools, need to be involved in drawing up programmes with possible management strategies to identify and reduce downward bullying.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of educators on how frequently downward bullying is perceived to occur in their schools. The literature revealed research in workplace bullying has been researched extensively in European countries; whereas in South Africa, such studies are limited. The educators in the primary schools sampled had the perception that downward bullying behaviour seldom occurs. Bullying is something which is done to an individual person; hence, identifying such individuals and obtaining their opinions would probably provide more information than a sample of educators, where the mean score, and hence the average opinion, is what matters.

However, compliance with instructions from persons in positions of authority is highly likely to be complied with. In hierarchical educational systems, where discipline and order are the main purposes of education, and where the content is via prescribed curricula and national standardised examinations, compliance from educators is likely to be the norm generally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

Downward bullying in the workplace in education has not received much attention from government, nationally, provincially or from the districts. Therefore, more research is recommended to investigate the reality of this phenomenon. A recommendation that the *essential characteristics of downward bullying* in chapter two that highlighted the different types of bullying and that according to the researcher is ambiguous to educators should be made available to educators in a comprehensive document. This would assist the educators to identify and address downward bullying, the characteristics as well as the different types bullying in the organization. The more experienced educators can be appointed as mentors to the newly appointed educators. Time could be set aside for mentoring, guiding and discussing this comprehensive document with the newly appointed educators.

Underperforming districts and schools need to establish an integrated and continuous improvement approach that is built on trust, values, communication, respect and finding approaches that is unique to the culture of their schools. Principals and leaders as well as elected educators from the underperforming districts and schools need to be involved in drawing up programmes where possible management strategies to identify and reduce downward bullying can be addressed. The education department, provincial and districts should be able to identify downward bullying in the schools, address this phenomenon and implement policies to reduce it.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given that the climate in South-Africa's education system, plays a large role in fostering the behaviour of the leaders and principals in man-

agement positions, future research in downward bullying should include: doing a pre-test with the same questionnaire and then implementing a training programme on downward bullying to one group of the respondents while the other group would receive no such training or exposure to a programme. A post-test on the same two groups should then be conducted to determine whether such a programme would make a difference.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted using a quantitative design where data was collected using a structured closed-ended questionnaire. The nature of closed-ended questionnaires does not allow the respondents to express their personal experiences and views. Furthermore, the researchers selected two of the 16 districts in the Gauteng province to respond to the questionnaire. Of the 420 questionnaires distributed, 280 were collected, of which 262 had all the data completed and which could be analysed. Thus, 62.4 percent of the questionnaires were used for the data analysis. The small sample does not warrant generalisation of the results to the entire population in the province.

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