BULLYING: AN OVERVIEW

Bullying is implied when a person in a real or perceived weaker position is directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly deliberately intimidated, and physically and/or emotionally and/or mentally and/or economically harmed, or controlled through repeated intentional negative or aggressive acts by an individual or group.

“Bullying is related to religion (3.7%); race (10.1%); ethnic origin (6.9%); disability (4.4%); gender (6.7%); sexual orientation (3.4%), and appearance (26.9%)”

“37 school shootings reviewed by the U.S. Secret Service, bullying was involved in 2/3 of the cases”

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1. Introduction

Bullying occurs in all societies and in various contexts where people interact with one another. The focus of this document is to provide a broad overview of bullying and to highlight certain aspects as guidelines to identify and be aware of the presence of bullying, either in an individual’s life or within the organisation/institution such as a school or workplace. The impact of bullying cannot be underestimated, and it appears to influence not only the victims, but also the active or passive bystander or participants and bullies themselves. Most people have probably themselves performed or experienced the different bullying roles (bully, victim, participant, supporter, bystander, defender) in the family, school, sports club or workplace at some stage. Bullying appears to be fluid, as the target could become the aggressor and vice versa, and defenders of the victim could become victims or bullies in the process. Determining the exact occurrences of bullying is hampered by factors such as under-reporting (for fear of bullies or threats from bullies and their accomplices); limited access to resources or support; lack of action from others such as peers, teachers and community leaders; the surreptitious nature of bullying (it is mostly done out of sight), etc.

One should also be aware of the fact that people apparently react differently to bullying, and that personal resilience or fragility, as well as access to approachable support systems or resources could determine the outcome or response. It is therefore important to not only emphasise acceptable conduct in an institute/organisation/community, but also to establish systems of prevention, identification, reporting and response to bullying incidents. The severity of bullying acts could differ from one environment to the next. The structures that are put in place should address the nature of the preferred bullying practices, for example in gang-infested areas physical violence is the preferred bullying tactic, or in the cyber-environment written and visual content is utilised to victimise the target. It is also important to note that, according to the available literature, bullying could be activated by external factors (family, friends, gangs, etc.) or originate from internal factors (mental illness in the bully or victim, anti-social attitude, etc.).

This overview is structured along the following lines: firstly bullying is defined, and the types of bullying and different bullying roles are highlighted. Next, emphasis is placed on the identification of a bullying situation, the effects of bullying and the prevention of bullying. The reader is then referred to the applicable legislation to deal with bullying, and we ask the question of when bullying becomes criminal. Lastly, resources for identifying and dealing with bullying situations (assessment questionnaires, prevention programmes and useful websites) are discussed.
2. What do we understand by the term “bullying”?

In essence bullying is implied when a person in a real or perceived weaker position is directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly deliberately intimidated, and physically and/or emotionally and/or mentally and/or economically harmed, or controlled through repeated intentional negative or aggressive acts by an individual or group.

The following definitions and views could further enhance the reader’s understanding of the “bullying” concept in comparison to less harmful bickering on the one hand, and acts of criminal violence on the other.

According to the Oxford Dictionary (n.d.), a bully could be defined as ‘a person who uses strength or influence to harm or intimidate those who are weaker’. Example: He is a ranting, domineering bully. Synonyms: persecutor, oppressor, tyrant, tormentor, browbeater, intimidator, coercer, subjugator.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA, n.d.), “bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words or more subtle actions. The bullied individual typically has trouble defending him or herself and does nothing to “cause” the bullying.”

"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself." (Olweus, 1993, as cited in APA, 2004)

To summarise, bullying could be seen as follows:

- Deliberate acts of negative or aggressive behaviour with the intention to cause physical, mental, economic and/or psychological pain or discomfort to another person.
- A pattern of behaviour that is repeated over time, or the threat of repeating such behaviour, or incidents to instil fear.
- Negative acts involving different targets or multiple acts involving the same victim.
- Harmful acts with short- or long-term physical, economic or psychological effects.
- Acts occurring in a context of real or perceived imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator(s).

It is generally presumed that the bullying phenomenon is confined to the school or educational setting, but this is a misconception as bullying behaviour is also prevalent at home, in the workplace, community life, military environment, cyber-sphere, prison, etc. Bullying is furthermore perpetrated by individuals, or collectively by groups, and includes all genders. Bullying can occur overtly or covertly, directly or subtly, and in full view or hidden (for instance, children tend not to bully in view of adults).
Bullying should be distinguished from acts of sexism, racism and anti-social conduct such as theft, physical aggression and generalised violence. It should also be distinguished from normal competition and bickering, although these elements could well form part of the bullying or intimidating behaviour.

3. Prevalence of bullying acts

It appears that bullying is rife in many South African institutions. The data is inconclusive due to the randomised samples for different studies or surveys targeting different age groups and different settings. Uniformed criteria and standardised measurements on national samples would contribute to more valid and reliable information such as demonstrated by the comprehensive research of the National Center for Education Statistics in the USA.

The indications derived from the latest studies are, however, a grave concern. South African Grade 5 learners reported the highest incidence of bullying out of the 49 countries surveyed in 2015, as Makou and Bourdin (2017) report in their article, Reality check: Are SA pupils the ‘most bullied’ in the world? The survey also reflected the frequency of bullying, and most learners (44%) of the Grade 5 group reported being bullied “about weekly” and 34% reported being bullied “about monthly”. Makou and Bourdin (2017) further state that South African Grade 9 learners reported the third highest incidence of bullying out of 38 countries, with “about monthly” the predominant frequency. It should also be noted that apparently learners from public “no-fee” schools are bullied more often than learners in independent schools. Close to 48% of learners in public schools reported being bullied regularly (“about weekly”), compared to approximately 25% of independent school learners (Makou & Bourdin, 2017).

Khumalo (2013) reports the results of a study conducted in Gauteng during 2011-2012 by Unisa’s Bureau of Market Research. This study, which included 3371 students in Grades 8 to 12 from 24 schools, indicated that “nearly 35% of learners in Gauteng schools have been bullied in the past two years, with 42% of this group being Grade 8 learners” and “a third having experienced bullying throughout their secondary school lives” (Khumalo, 2013, par 1).

Earlier studies that corroborate the above indications stated one should also note that other studies yielded varied results, indicating a lower incidence of bullying. However, we may conclude that bullying in varying severity and frequency is present in South African schools (which excludes criminal acts of physical and sexual harassment and violence).

By way of comparison, the following transpired from the comprehensive research conducted in the USA in 2015 where 24 243 000 students in the age group 12 to 18 were surveyed (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015):

- 20% of the students reported being bullied in and around the school. This percentage is more aligned with the indications of the prevalence of bullying in the independent schools in South Africa.
The bullying happened in the classroom (33.6%), in a hallway or stairwell (41.7%), in a bathroom /locker room (9.4%), in the cafeteria at school (22.2%), outside on the school grounds (19.3%), on the school bus (10%) and online/by text (11.5%).

The kinds of bullying that were experienced included the following: being made fun of, called names or insulted (13.3%); made the subject of rumours (12.2%); threatened with harm (3.9%); pushed, shoved, tripped or spit on (5.1%); forced to do things the victim did not want to do (2.5%); being excluded from activities on purpose (5%); property destroyed on purpose (1.8%).

The students perceived the reasons for the bullying as being related to religion (3.7%); race (10.1%); ethnic origin (6.9%); disability (4.4%); gender (6.7%); sexual orientation (3.4%), and appearance (26.9%).

The prevalence of bullying in terms of where, what and why may vary from country to country or between geographical areas within a country, but the broad patterns could probably be well aligned with the above data gathered in the USA. It should however be noted that incidence of bullying in the public “no fee” schools in South Africa could be significant higher.

Insufficient objective data is available that addresses the prevalence of bullying in a family setting and the workplace.

4. Types of Bullying

According to the literature and various sources, bullying could be categorised into the following four types:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Social/emotional or relational
- Cyber

4.1 Verbal bullying

Verbal bullying refers to any acts of bullying by virtue of words either spoken or written. This appears to be the most common form of bullying. The following does not constitute a comprehensive list, but according to the literature the types mentioned could be deemed as the most utilised verbal bullying tactics.

- Verbal attack
- Making threats
- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm
- Making fun of a person
- Spreading rumours
- Put-downs
- Snide remarks
- Discriminatory remarks
- Refusing to talk to someone

### 4.2 Physical bullying

Physical bullying involves hurting a person’s body or possessions and it could include the following:

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping
- Pushing
- Taking someone’s possessions
- Breaking or damaging someone’s possessions
- Making mean or rude hand gestures
- “Standover” (dominance) behaviour
- Holding
- Threatening
- Making someone do things they don’t want to
- Physical humiliation

### 4.3 Social/Emotional or Relational bullying

The purpose of social/emotional bullying (also referred to as relational bullying) is to hurt someone’s reputation and relationships. According to the literature social bullying includes the following:

- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Excluding someone from a group or activities
- Telling other people or children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumours about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public
• Spreading embarrassing information about a person
• Spreading personal information
• Ostracising or snubbing someone
• Public humiliation

4.4 Cyber-bullying

The increased use of digital technology creates a platform for bullies to extend the perpetration of their victimisation to this medium (e.g. by using e-mails, social networking sites, instant messaging) which is accessible via various devices. The question arises whether the relative safety and perceived anonymity of digital technology elicit more bullying behaviour from potential bullies who would have otherwise refrained from such behaviour.

Cyber-bullying according to literature includes the following:

• Posting embarrassing information
• Posting negative photos
• Posting negative material anonymously
• Posting threatening messages
• Spreading false information
• Sending abusive text or messages
• Defacing the victim’s webpage or profile page

The repetition and multiplication of the above information is not only made easy by the nature of digital media, but there is also an element of permanence in the cyber-space that contributes to the potential harm done to the victim. The bully may also form groups and utilise collective bullying to ostracise the target.

5. Different Roles and Profiles of those participating in the Bullying Process

The main actors in the bullying process are usually the person initiating and/or executing the bullying behaviour, i.e. the bully, and person on the receiving end, i.e. the target or victim. This is however a simplification, as bullying ranges from one-on-one to group bullying or mobbing.

The following roles often transpire in the bullying process:

• The person(s) who initiate(s) the bullying behaviour.
• The person(s) who engage(s) in the bullying and who could also be the initiator(s) – though not necessarily.
• The assistant(s) or accomplices who assist the bully and actively participate.
• The supporter(s) who encourage(s) and silently approve(s) the bullying. This approval is normally shown by smiling, laughing or making comments.
• The target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour.
• The silent and passive bystanders who do nothing.
• The defender who supports the victim.

To highlight some of the roles; the bully, his/her accomplices and those at risk of being bullied are discussed next.

5.1 The bully

An analysis of the literature and findings about the typical “bully profile” reveals some indicators that are empirically verified, and certain assumptions that need further investigation. It seems, however, that bullying crosses all racial, ethnic, gender and social lines.

The world-renowned expert on bullying, Olweus (1997) concluded in his research that bullies are characterised by the following behaviour or features:

• Pervasive aggression towards their peers
• Pervasive aggression towards adults such as teachers and parents
• A normalised view of aggression and violence. This includes violence based on “an aggressive reaction pattern”
• Impulsivity
• A need to dominate others
• A lack of empathy for the victim(s)
• Being physically stronger than his/her peers and the victim in particular
• Demonstrating little anxiety and insecurity (Olweus, 1997). This observation is in contrast to the general belief that bullies themselves experience an underlying anxiety and insecurity, and suffer from a poor self-esteem. (These findings do not exclude the possibility that certain bullies may indeed be anxious.)

According to Olweus (1997), empirical research suggests that bullies may possibly have three interrelated motives that drive their behaviour:

- A need for power and dominance in subduing others and to be in control.
- Factors in the bully’s upbringing caused a hostile attitude towards the environment, and inflicting suffering and pain on others is justified and provides satisfaction.
Gaining valuables through coercion and/or enjoying the reward of elevated status (Olweus, 1997, p. 500).

In addition to Olweus’ findings, the following characteristics of bullies are depicted in the literature:

- Anti-social conduct and rule breaking lead to a high percentage of bullies being convicted for criminal acts or the abuse of substances.

- A very small number of bullied children might retaliate through extremely violent measures. In 12 of 15 school shooting cases in the USA in the 1990s, the shooter had a history of being bullied (Kids who are bullied (n.d.), par 4).

- Being quick to anger

- Being defiant of authority figures

- Gaining status and recognition through bullying

- Mental health problems (may be a contributing factor)

- Having been ridiculed as child

- Disciplined in a harsh way

- Negative perception of and beliefs about others

Boys tend to bully according to group, such as “athlete” versus “non-athlete”, whereas girls tend to bully according to social status, such as “popular” vs. “non-popular (Lehnardt, 2016). Relational bullying can also be used as a tool by bullies to improve their social standing or to control others.

Cook et al. (2010, p.77-78) describe a typical bully as someone who has “trouble resolving problems with others and also has trouble academically”. They continue their description by stating: “He or she usually has negative attitudes and beliefs about others, feels negatively toward himself/herself, comes from a family environment characterised by conflict and poor parenting, perceives school as negative and is negatively influenced by peers.”

5.2 The bully’s accomplice(s)

Bully accomplices, sometimes referred to as lieutenants and followers, participate in the bullying process but do not initiate the bullying. As bystanders, they are followers of the initiator and often assume an active role by encouraging and reinforcing the bullying behaviour. Bystanders may also covertly support the bullying by being present without making any effort to prevent or moderate the bullying acts. Being accepted by the initiator and/or the group, the bully accomplices are motivated to participate actively or passively in the bullying process.
Olweus (1997) describes these accomplices as “passive bullies” and remarks that they often reflect a more mixed profile. Thus, they could have a profile similar to that of the bully, but they could also include people who are insecure and anxious (Olweus, 1997).

The behaviour that the bully’s accomplices display in a group setting is different from what they normally do as individuals or in a small group. They display herd or mob behaviour, whereby people seem to lose their individuality or experience a process of “deindividuation”. When people lose their sense of self, they become more likely to lose their individual sense of standards, morals or moral compass, and they take on the features of the group. In this situation, they may violate social norms that they would not normally transgress when they are alone (Vilanova, Beria, Costa & Koller, 2017).

5.3 Vulnerable Groups

In this section, the risk factors of being targeted as a victim are discussed. The environment (e.g. anti-gay lobbies) could play a role in exacerbating the fragility of certain people, and even legislation could be a risk factor in certain countries. According to the literature, displaying the following features could contribute to making someone vulnerable or a potential target for bullies:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, or other sexuality and gender diverse identities (LGBTQIA) (very highly represented in bullying statistics)
- People, children and youth with disabilities, special education needs or mental health issues
- All students who move to a new school
- Being unassertive or withdrawn
- Being different from the majority culture of a school or community (in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, socio-economic status, etc.)
- Academic achievement (perceived as a high or low achiever)

According to the APA (2004, p 7) “there are gender differences in the types of bullying that children experience, such that boys are more likely than girls to report being physically bullied by their peers and girls are more likely than boys to report being targets of rumour-spreading and sexual comments”. The APA (2004) also notes that bullying has been found to be related to negative psychosocial functioning among children who are victimised and who display the following features:

- Lowered self-esteem
- Feelings of loneliness
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicidal ideation
- Higher rates of school absenteeism
- Physical weakness
- Family problems
• History of trauma

A meta-analysis by Cook and co-authors from the University of California at Riverside who examined 153 studies from the last 30 years indicates that the main risk factors for children and adolescents being bullied, and also for becoming bullies, are a lack of social problem-solving skills. In addition, it is stated that negative thoughts, a negative family, school and community environment, being isolated or rejected by peers, and a tendency towards aggression can also be attributed to a likely victim of bullying (Cook et.al., 2010).

6. Signs that someone is bullied/or is the bully

According to the literature, there are some tell-tale signs that a person is being bullied or that he/she is the bully. These signs or “symptoms” may point to physical or emotional trauma being experienced. However, not all children who are bullied necessarily display signs of being bullied. Certain factors could furthermore hinder the timeous spotting of bullying because bullies tend to hide their behaviour from adults or figures of authority. What is more, the victims of bullying themselves often cover up evidence in fear of further victimisation, or because they are ashamed of being deemed weak.

6.1 Being bullied

According to the South African Police Services (SAPS) (n.d.) and other sources, the following are signs pointing to the possible bullying of children:

• The child’s mood changes and he/she appears worried, angry and moody
• Having difficulty sleeping and experiencing nightmares more frequently
• An increase in physical complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, etc.
• Unexplainable physical injuries
• Withdrawal from friends and activities that the child used to enjoy; avoidance of social situations
• Lost property or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewellery
• Changes in eating habits, or coming home from school hungry because the child did not eat lunch
• Loss of interest in schoolwork, not wanting to go to school and/or poor academic performance
• Decreased self-esteem and self-destructive behaviours such as self-harm, suicide ideation or contemplating to run away from home.

The following are signs identified by the SAPS (n.d., par 6) to warn parents that their child may be the victim of cyber-bullying. The child

• “becomes sad, angry or distressed during or after using the Internet or a cellular phone;
appears anxious when receiving a text or email or after having been on social media websites;
- avoids discussions or is secretive about computer or cellular phone activities;
- withdraws from family, friends and activities they previously enjoyed;
- refuses to go to school or to specific classes, or avoids group activities;
- illustrate changes in mood, behaviour, sleep or appetite, or shows signs of depression or anxiety."

How can I tell whether bullying is taking place in my workplace? Bullying behaviours can include:
(Bullying in the workplace, 2017, April 4, par 2)
- “constant put-downs, especially when it’s done in public
- frequent nit-picking and fault-finding, always discounting what the other person says
- using threatening language
- refusal to acknowledge the target’s contributions and achievements
- refusing to allow an employee to take the breaks they are entitled to
- frequent embarrassing comments about an individual’s appearance
- being singled out and treated differently from (worse than) work colleagues
- either being overloaded with work, or having most of it taken away
- making threats about job security”.

The bullying behaviours in the workplace identified by Leymann (1990) fall into five areas and involve attacks on the individual's
- ability to self-express or communicate by shutting him/her down when attempting to communicate;
- social relations by spreading negative information (true or not) as rumours;
- reputation by gossiping about things an individual supposedly has done in an effort to destroy his/her reputation;
- work, profession, or lifestyle;
- health.

6.2 Being a Bully

It is also important to be aware of warning signs that could indicate that a child or person is a potential bully that, he/she is actively bullying others, or that he/she participates in bullying. Most sources treat this as one list of signs, but given the nature of the characteristics or signs, it would be more appropriate to divide the behavioural indicators into two categories. The reason for this is that certain behavioural indicators could be present without active participation in bullying. A realistic division
would be those factors that indicate a potential predisposition to bullying, and those that indicate active participation in bullying.

The following signs could indicate a predisposition to bullying:

- Holding negative beliefs and attitudes about others
- Having difficulty to accept that people are different
- Being very competitive and concerned about the own reputation or popularity
- Living in a violent home where aggression is expressed regularly
- Verbally abusive
- Showing little or no empathy
- Easily frustrated and impulsive
- Prone to engage in physical fights
- Refusal to accept responsibility for their actions
- Anti-social activities

The following signs could according to the literature indicate the active involvement in bullying, especially if they suddenly increase:

- Involvement in verbal altercations or fighting
- Signs of having been involved in physical fighting
- An increase in aggressive behaviour
- Talking about friends who bully others
- Reports if having been sent to the principal’s office or to detention frequently
- Having unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Feeling justified in treating others badly and blaming the victim/target
- Constant negative talking about a person(s) or group of people

7. Effects of Bullying

The effects of bullying should be viewed in the context of the internal and external factors present in the lives of bullies, victims, bystanders and victims turning into bullies. It should also be noted that people react differently to acts of bullying. Resilience as an internal attribute, good socio-emotional support, preventative systems and social problem-solving skills may well act as protecting factors.

The physical and emotional effects of bullying in the short and/or long term can however not be underestimated or denied, and they appear to affect not only the functioning of victims, but also that of bullies and bystanders.

The severity and frequency of the inflicted physical, emotional or material harm would contribute significantly to the impact on a person’s functioning. This is illustrated by the fact that of the 37 school shootings reviewed by the U.S. Secret Service, bullying was involved in 2/3 of the cases (Lehnardt,
This finding is corroborated by the research of Cook et al. (2010) that the risk of adversity was found to be greater for victims that turned into bullies than for either bullies or victims. This adversity is in reference to the carrying of weapons, incarceration, and continued hostility and violence towards others.

The link between bullying and suicide is often highlighted in the media. However, in certain instances of suicide the prevailing depression in the victim prior, during and after the bullying could also be a significant contributor to the suicide. Cook et al. (2010) argue that victims have a heightened risk of suicidal ideations and even suicide attempts in extreme cases.

Lehnardt (2016) furthermore reports that 60% of boys who bullied from first to ninth grade were "convicted of at least one crime by age 24 and 40% had three or more convictions by age 24".

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) Grade 9 report (2015) revealed that learners who reported that they "almost never" experienced bullying, scored higher marks for maths and science than pupils who reported experiencing bullying on a weekly basis (Makou & Bourdin, 2017).

It also appears that cyber-victimisation, especially over a long period, contributes to negative self-cognition and depressive symptoms, while being a bystander in workplace bullying was also linked to depression – particularly in women (Emdad, Alipour, Hagberg, & Jensen, 2013).

In the comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Cook et al. (2010), the following were noted about bullies:

- They are significantly more likely to be convicted of a criminal offence when they are adults than their peers.
- Bullies appear to be at heightened risk for experiencing psychiatric problems.
- They experience difficulties in romantic relationships.
- There are indications of elevated substance abuse problems among bullies.

In addition, according to anecdotal observations and the literature, children who bully others appear to engage more in:

- risky behaviour,
- aggression/violence and fights,
- vandalising property even as adults,
- pervasive substance abuse during adolescence and adulthood,
- abusive behaviour towards romantic partners and children,
- truancy which leads to an increased school dropout rate.

In the case of victims of bullying, the following transpired (Cook et al., 2010):
• Victims appear to suffer long-term psychological problems, including loneliness, diminished self-esteem, psychosomatic complaints, and depression.
• They drop out of school due to fear of being bullied.
• Victims who were bullied at school often experience bullying in the workplace too.

The following list (The impact of bullying, 2017) highlights the impact on students who are bullied and states that they are more likely to:

• “feel disconnected from school, and not to like school;
• have lower academic outcomes, including lower attendance and completion rates;
• lack quality friendships at school;
• display high levels of emotion that indicate vulnerability and low levels of resilience;
• be less well accepted by peers, avoid conflict and be socially withdrawn;
• have low self-esteem;
• have depression, anxiety, feelings of loneliness and isolation;
• have nightmares;
• feel wary or suspicious of others; and
• have an increased risk of depression and substance abuse.”

In extreme cases, students who are bullied have a higher risk of committing suicide; however, the reasons why a person may be at risk of suicide are extremely complicated.

It appears that the bystanders of bullying experience similar effects as the victims of bullying. Increased prevalence of depression and anxiety, poor academic engagement and school dropout plus substance abuse are possible.

The presence of bullying could therefore potentially affect a school, work place or community as a whole if the bullying acts are conducted in view of others. Witnessing acts of bullying could cause feelings of fear and helplessness, due to the bystander’s inability to prevent the bullying as well as guilt for not being able to stop the bullying. Any environment where a high incidence of bullying occurs could become a toxic environment. For example, a school could become a place of fear and disrespect, especially if the teachers seem unable to intervene and control the situation, thus leaving students with feelings of insecurity.

8. When does bullying become a crime?

Bullying is a psychologically motivated act; “a myriad of constitutional rights are infringed upon when bullying occurs, and the problem is escalating” (Laas & Boezaart, 2014, p. 2702).

According to Laas and Boezaart (2014, p. 2672), the definition of harassment contains the following elements: “(a) Conduct aimed at causing harm or the belief that harm is imminent through: (i)
Following or watching the victim at his or her home or place of study; (ii) Communicating with the victim through verbal, written or electronic media; or (iii) Sending letters, emails or other objects to the victim. (b) The said conduct could also amount to sexual harassment.” It should be noted that the Protection from Harassment Act, (Act 71 of 2011) was signed and accepted into law on 27 April 2013.

Laas and Boezaart (2014, p. 2672) also define the similarities between harassment and bullying as follows: “In both contexts the negative behaviour of the perpetrator is aimed at causing harm, or at least instilling fear of harm; the definition of harm is very similar in both contexts, ranging from physical and psychological harm to economic harm; and the negative behaviour is aimed at exercising control over the victim. The differences are that bullying often takes place in the educational context, for the spectator(s) to see, and involves the show of force. Furthermore, bullying is seen as threatening conduct over a period of time.”

Cheadle, Davis and Haysom point out that human dignity in South African Constitutional Law and “all that it encompasses tie into the humanity of the individual which is an inalienable right, and not a privilege granted by the state” (cited in Laas & Boezaart, 2014, p. 2676). Furthermore, a person’s dignity cannot stay intact when he/she is bullied, as bullying has a physical and psychological element in most cases. Through experiencing intimidation, physical and/or emotional harm, humiliation and/or academic and/or economic harm, such a person is stripped of human dignity. This is in contrast to the fact that every individual has the right to be left alone and is guaranteed autonomy.

“One's right to privacy is related to one's identity, which in turn influences one's sense of oneself and thus one's right to dignity” (Laas & Boezaart, 2014, p. 2676). Unsolicited access to someone’s private information is a transgression of privacy and making an individual’s personal information known to others constitutes an invasion of privacy. The victim’s right to dignity and privacy has in such a case been infringed.

It is also accepted that bullying becomes a crime when it involves the following:

- Physical violence
- Threats
- Stalking
- Child pornography
- Violation of privacy
- Physically assaulting someone
- Harassing someone, especially if the harassment is based on gender or racism
- Making violent threats
- Making death threats
- Making/Sending obscene and harassing phone calls and texts
- Sexting
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual harassment
- Committing hate crimes
- Taking a photo of someone in a place where they expect privacy
- Extortion

(When bullying and cyberbullying become a crime (n.d.); South African Law, 2015)

Depending on the nature of the acts of cyber-bullying, the perpetrator may be criminally charged with the following criminal offences:

- Crimen injuria
- Assault
- Criminal defamation
- Extortion
- Harassment

Note that sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome sexual attention, sexual threats, suggestions, messages or remarks offend, intimidate or humiliate the victim (Harassment, 2015).

9. Interventions

- Intervening in bullying requires a multi-level approach that deals with the environment through legislation, education, codes of conduct, as well as systems and mechanisms for identifying, reporting and preventing further bullying. It is important to provide practical avenues for people to be able to report victimisation, and to offer psychosocial interventions to assist the victims and perpetrators to deal with the effects of the bullying incidents.

- One of the most powerful interventions is to administer a bullying assessment to an individual or collectively to a designated group of people. Using such intervention in the case of institutions or companies has certain advantages. It does not replace direct and supportive access to people who could intervene and protect the bullying victim, but (especially when conducted anonymously) the assessments could enhance our understanding of the particular bullying behaviour, as well as the severity and frequency of the behaviours. Structured assessments are also helpful to indicate appropriate prevention steps or interventions, and could further assist with the monitoring of the effectiveness of such interventions.

A survey or assessment in the form of a questionnaire would typically try to gauge the type and severity of the bullying behaviour experienced by an individual or a group of people. It would further determine whether the behaviour has an emotional, mental or physical impact (increasing or decreasing). Bullying could range from behaviour such as exclusion, name calling (which could be described as moderate in impact if it happened once), to severe sexual and physically life-threatening actions.
It is important to determine the frequency, whether the incident was a one-off occurrence, or whether it is prolonged and to be repeated. Assessments or surveys could also help to indicate whether the bullying involves the same or different bullies or initiators, victims, or bystanders. Surveys or assessments could furthermore illuminate factors such as age, physical and/or status differentials and the vulnerability or resiliency of the bullying targets.

Although standardised questionnaires or custom-designed questionnaires could be employed, it is crucial that the questions of the survey or assessment be absolutely distinct/clear in meaning. Typical questions would elicit information regarding the following harassing actions: made fun of me or called me names; left me out of their games or activities; spread lies about me; stole something from me; hit or hurt me; made me do things I didn’t want to do; shared embarrassing information about me; posted embarrassing information about me online; or threatened me.

To illustrate what is meant by severity, impact and frequency, some of the criteria listed in the Bullying assessment matrix, (n.d., par 1) of www.bullyingfree.nz are utilised are explained below:

- **Severity:** “Mild, e.g. put downs, name calling, occasional social exclusion to Severe, e.g. physical harm requiring medical attention, inappropriate sexual behaviour, incitement to suicide.”
- **Impact:** “Mild, e.g. target is resilient, has good peer support and seems to be handling situation with minimal adult intervention (in the case of children) to Severe, where target is vulnerable and/or likely to need ongoing, intensive support from specialists.”
- **Frequency:** “Mild, e.g. has never or rarely happened before, and is very unlikely to recur or be digitally replicated to Severe, e.g. similar incidents have happened repeatedly (three or more times) and/or are very likely to recur or be digitally replicated.”

- Bullying in an institution such as a school or workplace can usually be addressed effectively if a **prevention strategy and response systems** are in place. Furthermore, awareness must be raised about the type of behaviour that constitutes bullying and how to identify it. Note should be taken of the fact that bullying is quite often group or group-supported behaviour, which reinforces and improves the status of bullies. It is important to create a safe structure for victims to be able to report bullying, and to be supported and protected in the process. Fear of retribution and threats from bullies could be a hindrance, and it is therefore especially important to ensure that people with special needs receive the necessary support, as they often tend to be targets.

- As far as the bully is concerned, it is important to address his/her problem-solving approaches, emotional control, lack of understanding of the effect of their actions and possible legal consequences.

- **Various websites and programmes** contain tips on how to deal with bullying. In the case of cyber-bullying, the essence of the advice is the following: Do not respond and retaliate, as bullies need that to control their victims; save the evidence and use the block functions in the case of an electronic device. The same advice applies in personal interactions, and victims are advised to walk away and not to react in anger or by retaliation. Victims (especially students) are urged to
talk to an adult or friend if they receive threatening messages or are bullied. It is therefore important to negate the bully's effort to cause emotional harm, not to blame oneself, and to seek help.

- In the last instance, legal action could be required. Taking legal action against a bully is sometimes required and the victim of bullying can apply for a protection order. Criminal charges could also be lodged, for example *crimen injuria*, trespassing, extortion or any other offence that has a bearing on the person of the victim or his/her property.

10. Resources

10.1 Psychological Tests

The following assessments may be made to determine the presence of bullying or behaviour/attitude that could lead to bullying:

**Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scales for Schools**

Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scales for Schools; W. Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scale (BVS); Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS); School Violence Anxiety Scale (SVAS).

Bully-Victimization Scale (BVS), Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS), School Violence Anxiety Scale (SVAS)

These three self-report, standardised instruments form a comprehensive picture of a child’s experience of peer-related threat, level of distress and anxiety related to school safety. Results can provide benchmarks for identifying a child for intervention, or for identifying what students perceive as a threatening or unsafe school environment.

**Bully-Victimization Scale (BVS)**

The BVS provides for the identification of youngsters who are being bullied and students who engage in bullying behaviour.

It may be used individually and as a school-based screening measure for the identification of bullies and bully-victims.

**Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS)**

The BVDS is a measure of students’ psychological response to bullying and determines the internalising and externalising nature of this distress.

**School Violence Anxiety Scale (SVAS)**

The SVAS evaluates anxiety about the school as a safe environment, inc

These three self-report, standardised instruments form a comprehensive picture of a child’s experience of peer-related threat, level of distress and anxiety related to.....[read more](#)

**Adolescent Anger Rating Scale™ (AARS™)**

Adolescent Anger Rating Scale™ (AARS™) – D. McKinnie Burney.
The AARS is a 41-item psychometrically sound instrument that assesses the intensity and frequency of anger expression in adolescents aged 11-19 years. The items are consistent with behaviours identified in the DSM-IV™. Elevated AARS scores can help to identify adolescents who.....read more

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) – A.H. Buss & W.L. Warren

This self-report inventory makes it possible – and practical – to routinely screen children and adults for aggressive tendencies. The Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) measures an individual's aggressive responses and his or her ability to channel those responses in a safe, constructive.....read more

Adolescent Psychopathology Scale™ (APS™)

Adolescent Psychopathology Scale™ (APS™) – William M. Reynolds.

The APS empirically assesses the severity of symptoms associated with specific DSM-IV™ clinical and personality disorders. Features and benefits a multidimensional self-report instrument. Also assesses other psychological problems and behaviors that may interfere with an.....read more

Beck Youth Inventories™ - Second Edition


Now assess your clients to age 18 years assuring confidence in your clinical decision making, while helping you plan effective intervention. The new Beck Youth Inventories™ -Second Edition (BYI-II) for Children and Adolescents are designed for children and.....read more

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ)

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ – D.P. Bernstein & L. Fink

The CTQ is a 28 item self-report inventory that can be administered to adults and adolescents to provide reliable, valid screening for a history of abuse and neglect in order to establish whether traumatic childhood conditions are a factor in your client's personal history.....read more

Coping Responses Inventory (CRI)

Coping Responses Inventory (CRI) – R.H. Moos, Ph.D.
The three CRI kits now include the new Manual Supplement which provides a broad range of information about recent applications of the CRI-Adult and CRI-Youth versions and summarizes validity information based on more than 180 studies and dissertations published over the past decade. Use the CRI.....read more

**Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS)**

Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS) – P.A. Mauger (Ph.D.), D.R. Adkinson (M.A.), S.K. Zoss (Ph.D.), G. Firestone (Ph.D.), & J.D. Hook (M.A.)
The Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS) identifies interaction styles that may lead to conflict at home, on the job, or in school. Used in individual and group therapy, assertiveness training, marriage and.....read more

**Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents**

Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents – S. Prince-Embry
New Expanded Age Range 9 to 18 years. Why do some children and adolescents adjust or recover and others do not? Now, you have a brief tool to profile personal strengths, as well as vulnerability that is theoretically based and psychometrically sound. Resiliency Scales for.....read more

**Personality Inventory for Youth (PIY)**

In the tradition of the highly regarded Personality Inventory for Children, Second Edition (PIC-2), this self-report measure assesses psychological problems in 4th- through 12th-graders. The Personality Inventory for Youth (PIY) answers the need for a multidimensional, psychometrically sound self-report instrument designed.....read more

**Conflict Tactics Scales**

Conflict Tactics Scales M.A. Straus, S.L. Hamby, S. Boney-McCoy, D.B. Sugarman, D. Finkelhor, D.W. Moore & D.K. Runya The Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) have been used for decades to evaluate violence within families and intimate relationships. The widespread use of these scales has resulted in a proliferation of adapted forms and some.....read more

**Detailed Assessment of Posttraumatic Stress™ (DAPS™)**

Detailed Assessment of Posttraumatic Stress™ (DAPS™) J. Briere The DAPS is a 104-item, detailed, and comprehensive clinical measure of trauma exposure and posttraumatic stress in individuals ages
18 years and older who have a history of exposure to one or more potentially traumatic events. The instrument assesses peri- and posttraumatic..... read more

**Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS)**

Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS) P.A. Mauger, Ph.D., D.R. Adkinson, M.A., S.K. Zoss, Ph.D., G. Firestone, Ph.D., & J.D. Hook, M.A. The Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS) identifies interaction styles that may lead to conflict at home, on the job, or in school. Used in individual and group therapy, assertiveness training, marriage and..... read more

**Trauma and Attachment Belief Scale (TABS)**

Trauma and Attachment Belief Scale (TABS) L. A. Pearlman Previously known as the Traumatic Stress Institute, (TSI) Belief Scale, this highly useful new instrument assesses the longlasting psychological impact of traumatic life events. The TABS helps clinicians design the most effective therapeutic approach for individual trauma survivors as well..... read more

**Trauma Assessment Inventories**

Trauma Assessment Inventories E.S. Kubany, Ph.D. Whether you’re screening for or responding to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, this set of three related inventories can improve assessment and focus treatment. The Trauma Assessment inventories include two sets of materials: Screening Kit: Composed of the Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire..... read more

**Trauma Symptom Inventory™-2 (TSI™-2)**

Trauma Symptom Inventory™-2 (TSI™-2) J. Briere The TSI-2 is designed to evaluate posttraumatic stress and other psychological sequelae of traumatic events. This broadband measure evaluates acute and chronic symptomatology, including the effects of sexual and physical assault, intimate partner violence, combat, torture, motor vehicle..... read more

**10.2 Prevention Programmes**

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program proposes to be the most researched and best known anti-bullying prevention programme. (Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, 2015). Programs to be considered can be reviewed at http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/search-results.
Available custom-made packs or toolkits as referred to are readily available on the internet, and different toolkits for different ages are proposed (http://stopcyberbullying.org).

10.3 Useful websites

The following websites provide useful information that could be utilised by individuals or institutions. Please note that the author of this article (Frikkie Kriek) or Mindmuzik Media (Ltd) cannot guarantee the authenticity or scientific foundation of the information, tools, or opinions contained in these websites.

http://bullyonline.org
http://thestudentlawyer.com/2013/07/22/when-does-bullying-become-harassment/
http://www.cab.org.nz/vat/eb/paw/Pages/Bullying-workplace.aspx
http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/bullying-tips-parents
http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/search/node/bullying
http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2013/01/24/57-of-SA-children-claim-to-have-been-bullied-at-school1
https://nobullying.com/mob/
https://thelowdown.co.nz/categories/school/bullying?gclid=CJOs56WiOgQovQodiv8NnQ

https://www.edutopia.org/article/bullying-prevention-resources

https://www.edutopia.org/blogs/tag/bullying-prevention


https://www.legalwise.co.za/help-yourself/quicklaw-guides/harrassment

https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/parenting/10-warning-signs-your-child-is-a-bully/ss-AAk2bwq#image=10


https://www.reportbullying.com/bullying-expert/

http://safe2tell.org


https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/assess-bullying/


11. Bibliography


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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullying

www.cyberbullying.org.za/south-african-law.html

www.edutopia.org/article/anatomy-school-bullying-stephen-merrill

www.hrc.co.nz/index.php/search/?search_paths%5B%5D=&query=bullying&submit=
