THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE BULLYING, JOB SATISFACTION AND THE INTENTION TO QUIT IN AN IT COMPANY

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- In this dissertation, the references and editorial style used have been prescribed by the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy requirements of the programme Labour Relations Management at the North-West University.

- This dissertation is submitted in the format of **two research articles**.

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SUMMARY

Title: The relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company.

Key words & terms: Bullying, prevalence, job satisfaction and intention to quit

Globally, workplace bullying is a growing phenomenon which affects millions of employees. It is characterised by frequency of incidence, duration and reaction on the side of both the perpetrator and victim, ultimately caused by power struggles in ineffective working environments. The impact on both the Company and employee is significant and there is a negative impact on the employment relationship. It may lead to reduced performance and productivity, individual health problems, impact on job satisfaction and foster intentions to quit.

The primary objective of this research was to determine the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African Information Technology (IT) company, and determine the impact of this construct on job satisfaction and intention to quit. A cross-sectional survey design was used. The constructs were measured by means of a biographical questionnaire, the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised, a Job Satisfaction Questionnaire and an Intention to Quit Questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used to assess the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments. The phi-coefficient was used to determine effect size and power of the chi-square tests for independence (Aron, Elliot, & Aaron, 2011). The research method for the articles consisted of a literature review and an empirical study. The statistical analysis was carried out using the SPSS 20.0 programme (SPSS 2012).

Article 1 focuses on the prevalence and measurement of workplace bullying in an IT company. Descriptive statistics (frequencies) and cross tabulations were used to describe the data. Significant relations were found in constructs within the negative acts, and also between the negative acts and biographical information.

Article 2 focuses on the relation between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were determined to describe the data, principal component

analysis was used and an Oblimin rotation was performed to determine the constructs for analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationship between these constructs. Significant relations and difference are found between the various individual constructs and the scores of the negatives acts, job satisfaction and intention to quit.

Conclusions are made for the current research, limitations discussed and recommendations for future research are put forward.

CHAPTER 1

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on the prevalence of, and the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an Information Technology (IT) company.

In this chapter, the problem statement is discussed, research objectives set out (including the general and specific objectives), the research method is discussed and the division of chapters is given.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Internationally, bullying has been recognised as a serious problem in the work environment and a large body of research has developed around this phenomenon. The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) conducted an interactive survey in 2010, interviewing 4 210 individuals representing the adult population of the United States of America. The conclusion was that 35% of the employees (estimated at 53.3 million Americans) have experienced bullying first hand. In 2012 the WBI conducted a similar survey in Canada and concluded that 45% of respondents reported to be victims of bullying. In a poll of more than 1 000 employees by the law firm Peninsula, it was found that 69% of individuals reported workplace bullying in 2008 compared to 52% five years before (Pitcher, 2008).

In a study conducted in southern India among 174 trainee doctors, it was found that 50% of the subjects reported having been bullied (Bairy, et al., 2007). Salin (2001), on the contrary, found that only 8.8% of Finnish business professionals reported being bullied occasionally. Other studies conducted by Einarsen and Raknes (1997) indicate that high risk organisational settings appear to be large, male-dominated manufacturing companies (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). This research not only suggests that the prevalence of bullying runs across borders and may differ by country, sector, company, culture and occupation but that workplace bullying is growing as an international workplace issue. Despite this, not a lot of research has gone into South African companies.

The mere thought of the word "bullying" in the workplace would almost immediately suggest physical aggression, but it has emerged that bullying behaviour will mostly include more subtle forms of abuse, including but not limited to; work overload, abuse of authority, harassment and verbal abuse. Leymann (1996), a pioneer in bullying/mobbing research, deliberately uses the word *mobbing* rather than *bullying*. He borrowed the word "mobbing" in the early 1980s from ethologist Lorentz (describing animal behaviour where a group of smaller animals attacked a single larger animal) when he found similar kinds of behaviour in workplaces. "The connotation of "bullying" are physical aggression and threat…physical violence is very seldom found in mobbing behaviour at work…mobbing is characterised by much more sophisticated behaviour" (Leymann, 1996, p. 167). Although there is no consensus in defining bullying in the workplace, Salin (2001, p. 425) summarises it as follows; "Workplace bullying can be defined as repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or several individuals".

Bullying has become a major occupational stressor that leads to a decrease in morale, health and job performance and increased absenteeism and turnover among the targets of bullying (Keashly, 1998; Raynier & Cooper 1997 as cited by Lee & Brotheridge, 2006). Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) support the notion that job stress as a result of environmental stressors may impact employees in such a way that they behave in a certain manner which "expose" them, and make them become targets of bullying more easily. Studies indicate that power play seems to be one of the root causes for bullying in the workplace. In a research study conducted by Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) on the origin of workplace bullying, the researchers found that long-standing struggles for power precede systematic bullying in the workplace.

These power struggles emanate from conflicting values at the workplace caused by interplay between poor organisational conditions, weak or indistinct leadership and the involved parties' personalities and work-related expectations. If a targeted individual thus refuses to surrender in a power struggle and conflict persists, it escalates and grows into bullying. It is thus not surprising, as Stone (2007) has noted, that bullying is sometimes passed off as "tough management", personality conflict or seen as being brought on by the victimised employee. Upton (2007) supports this view and argues that employees are sometimes too sensitive to criticism.

Today's information technology specialists shoulder a heavy load. According to the Info-Tech Research Group IT employees experience task overload, work long hours, are undervalued and apart from this also have a responsibility to meet client deliverables. In a survey of 860 IT professionals, 65% believed that they had been bullied at work; of these, 22% had taken the time off work because of stress caused by bullying (Thompson, 2008). According to Arora (2007), employees of IT-enabled service companies are at the highest risk of suffering from lifestyle diseases, and are affected by stress more than any other occupation. It is the view of the researcher that organisational factors such as the challenging, complex and stressful work environment and impossible deadlines, which lead to longer hours, less rest, exhaustion and errors, foster an environment which may give rise to bullying behaviour in the IT industry.

Studies conducted by Hauge et al. (2007) on the relationship between stressful work environments and bullying, indicated a strong correlation between job satisfaction across different measures of bullying. Exposure to an abusive work environment not only causes a breakdown in the immune system, but also leads to decreasing job performance (Stone, 2007) and reduced job satisfaction (Rutner, Hardgrave, & McKnight, 2008). Rawlinson and Tong (2005) support the fact that the indirect cost of bullying is reduced employee performance. They argue that bullying and harassment will lead to a less engaged workforce, eventually affecting customer relations and sales activity. This will ultimately impact on a company's financial performance. This view is supported by Tuna (2008) from the *Wall Street Journal* reporting on Graniterock's chief executive officer, Bruce Woolpert's opinion that emotionally abusive co-employees can hurt a company's reputation with customers and employees and poison the work environment.

Studies by Hershcovis and Barling from Queens University on the consequences of employees' experience of sexual harassment and workplace aggression, as reported by Zeidner (2008), concluded that "Employees who experience bullying, incivility or interpersonal conflict were more likely to quit their jobs, have lower well-being, be less satisfied with their jobs and have a less satisfying relationships with their bosses than employees who were sexually harassed".

Therefore, from the above it is clear that one's attitude towards one's job or company may have profound effects on job satisfaction and commitment and thus on the way one performs.

Zapf and Cox (as quoted by Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001, p. 394) found that bullying in the workplace has been related to rises in negligence, staff turnover and cases of sick leave. Rossi (2006) reports that 70 % of bullied victims ultimately leave their job of which 33% do so because of their health. Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, and Salem (2006) reviewed published studies on the risk and outcomes of workplace bullying and found that lower job satisfaction and sickness absence were of the most frequent outcomes of workplace bullying. In the light of this, Namie (2007, p. 47) stresses the economic consequences of bullying in the workplace, "bullying affects the bottom line both from loss of productivity from targets and witnesses of bullying…. and turnover is expensive". According to the American Institute of Stress, job stress in the US is estimated at over $300 billion annually due to accidents, absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity and other cost (medical, insurance, legal, compensation etc.). It is the view of the researcher that turnover as the result of stress caused by bullying may have a high cost impact on companies.

Lutgen-Sandvik (2006, p. 415) found that quitting a job or having the mere intention to quit, seems to be a major form of resistance against workplace bullying. She refers to this behaviour as the "Exodus" and reported the following: "Exodus included quitting, intentions/threats to quit, transfers/requests for transfers, and aiding others' exit. All participants told stories of co-employees quitting and voiced a desire to resign and, when asked what advice they would give others in comparable situations, recommended leaving the organisation". She also found that victims not only experienced very negative emotions when they left the company, but that these emotions were still present where bullying occurred years before. The emotions that these victims experienced included, angriness, resentfulness, bitterness, hurt, distrust, antipathy and incredulity.

It is the researcher's view that there is no doubt that bullying is a form of harassment. This behaviour will clearly have an impact on the employment relationship, which results in losses due to diminishing productivity. The fact of the matter is that all experts agree that abuse and intimidating behaviour have no place in the office. Whereas most research on bullying focuses on studies in Europe and America there is very little literature on bullying in South African companies.

Therefore, it is clear that bullying is a social stressor, which negatively impacts the company and leads to a decrease in productivity, lower levels of job satisfaction and higher turnover rates.

The following more specific research questions can be formulated based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem:

- How is bullying in the workplace and its effect on employment relations conceptualised in literature?

- Is the IT industry associated with high levels of workplace bullying?

- How reliable and valid is the workplace bullying questionnaire for employees in an IT company within the South African context?

- What is the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company based on victims being exposed to bullying as opposed to victims not being exposed to bullying?

In order to answer the above research questions, the following research objectives are set.

1.3   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

1.3.1   General objective

The general aim of this study is to investigate the prevalence of and the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company.

1.3.2   Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are to:

Article 1: The perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of workplace bullying within an IT company

- Conceptualise workplace bullying and its effect on employment relations from literature.

- Determine the perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of workplace bullying within this IT company.

Article 2: The relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company

- Conceptualise workplace bullying and its effect on employment relations from literature.

- Examine the reliability and the validity of the workplace bullying questionnaire for employees in this specific IT company within the South African context.

- Determine the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in this IT company based on victims being exposed to bullying as opposed to victims not being exposed to bullying.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

This research, pertaining to the specific objectives, consists of two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

1.4.1 Paradigm perspective

The behaviouristic paradigm is scientifically orientated and focuses primarily on positivism and empiricism. Based on these research methodologies the environment plays the ultimate role in the development of an organism's attributes and abilities, and is further only applicable to those actions that can be observed, and scientifically be verified (Plug, Meyer, Louw, & Gouws, 1991; Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 1993). Behaviour can be explained without the need to consider internal mental processes (Geir, 2008).

1.4.2 Literature review

A comprehensive literature study was done based on previous research on workplace bullying. Literature studies focused primarily on the effect of bullying on the employment relationship which forms the basis for questions on which the empirical research was based.

In Chapter 2 – Article 1, the content focuses on the prevalence and definition of bullying in the workplace and as well as the characteristics of this construct.

In Chapter 3 – Article 2 focuses on an overview on the causes of bullying, the impact of bullying on the individual, and the effect on the employment relationship.

Information was obtained through, but not limited to, media such as books, articles, publications, journals, newspapers, EBSCO Host Research database (PsycINFO database, Academic Search Premier and Business Source Premier, Computers & Applied Sciences Complete, EconLit, E-Journals, MasterFILE Premier, MLA Directory of Periodicals, MLA International Bibliography, Newspaper Source, PsycARTICLES, Regional Business News) and the internet in general.

1.4.3 Empirical study

The empirical study comprises the research design, study population, measuring instruments, statistical analysis and research procedure.

1.4.4 Research design

The aim of a research design, according to Mouton and Marais (1996, p.32), is "to align the pursuit of a research goal with the practical consideration and limitation of the research project". A cross-sectional survey design was used to achieve the research objectives. The researcher collected data by means of questionnaires as this was the most effective method to obtain adequate information to reach the research objectives. Based on the nature of the study a confidentiality clause was included in conjunction with the North-West University. These questionnaires were delivered by hand. The data was collected from the participants within 7

days of issue. A random sample of about 200 employees, that is representative of the entire company, was given the opportunity to participate.

1.4.5   Study population

The participants who took part in this study represented IT personnel (N = 200) from different divisions and levels within the company. A response rate of 84% (n = 168) was achieved.

1.4.6   Measuring battery

The following measuring instruments were used in this study:

- *Biographical information*: a biographical questionnaire was constructed in order to obtain relevant biographical data about the participants in the research. This enabled the researcher to obtain different respondent profiles for the purpose of statistical analysis (e.g. age, gender, qualifications, job level, marital status and family status). The participants' anonymity was maintained throughout this process.

- *Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised* (NAQ-R)*:* The NAQ-R (Einarsen & Raknes, 2007) was specifically designed to measure perceived exposure to bullying and victimisation at work. The version of the NAQ that was used in this research consists of 22 items describing negative behaviour in the workplace, which may be perceived as bullying if it occurs persistently over a period of time (e.g. "Someone withholding information which affects your performance"). The NAQ-R contains items referring to both direct (e.g. finger-pointing) and indirect behaviours (e.g. being ignored). The response alternatives are; "never", "now and then", "monthly", "every week" and "daily". The researcher obtained written permission from Morten Birkeland Nielsen of the Bergen Bullying Research Group to make use of the NAQ-R.

A formal definition of bullying was also presented and respondents were asked whether or not they considered themselves as being victims of bullying. The response categories are; "no", "yes", "to some extent" and "yes extremely".

The respondents who confirmed that they were victims of bullying (victim group) were requested to supply information about when they had been bullied (e.g. "within the last six months"), formal position of the perpetrator(s) (e.g. colleagues), and the number of male and female perpetrators. The non-bullied group were asked to indicate whether they had observed or witnessed bullying behaviour during a specified period. The internal stability of the scale is high, as a Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from α 0.84 to 0.91 was obtained (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

The researcher introduced two open-ended questions to both the victim and non-bullied groups namely; "What do you perceive as the cause(s) of bullying behaviour in your workplace?" and "What can your company do to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace?" as a means to find a solution to the problem.

- *Intention to Quit* (Price, 1997): The "intention to quit" questionnaire is a modified questionnaire that measures the strength of the respondent's intention to leave a present position. It is measured by using the four items of Price (1997) (e.g. "If I could, I would quit today."). The response alternatives ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A high score thus reflects positively on the intention to leave. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients in previous studies ranging from α = 0.70 (Isaksson, et al., 2003) to 0.79 (De Jong, 2008).

- *Job Satisfaction Questionnaire:* (Price, 1997): The "Job satisfaction" questionnaire is a modified questionnaire that measures the strength of the respondent's job satisfaction. It is measured by using the four items of Price (1997) (e.g. "I am not happy with my job."). The response alternatives ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A low score thus reflects positively on job satisfaction. Reliability of this instrument is high, as a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of α = 0.82 was obtained (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

1.4.7 Statistical analysis

The importance of the statistical analysis in this research is to present the findings in the form of tables, graphs and reports. The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, carried out the statistical analysis with the SPSS

programme (SPSS 20) which includes the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to access the validity and reliability of the research, descriptive statistics to analyse the data such as means and standard deviations. The phi coefficient (Φ) was used to determine the effect size and power for chi-square test for independence (Aron et al., 2011).

1.4.8 Research procedure

The researcher first obtained permission from all appropriate entities to conduct research in this specific IT Company with the least possible disruption of the work environment guaranteed. Thereafter the researcher personally handed out the questionnaires and collected them within 7 days of issue.

1.4.9 Ethical considerations

Permission was obtained from the company to conduct the research and approval was granted. The emphasis was placed on voluntary participation and participants were reassured about anonymity, and confidentiality of all data collected. The participants were briefed about the research and were given the opportunity to raise questions and concerns. The researcher obtained written permission from Morten Birkeland Nielsen of the Bergen Bullying Research Group to make use of the NAQ-R.

1.5 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters in this dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and research problem

Chapter 2: Article 1: The perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of workplace bullying within an IT company

Chapter 3: Article 2: The relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company

Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.6   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 provided a discussion of the problem statement and various research objectives. An explanation regarding the measuring instruments and research method was given, followed by a brief overview of the chapters to follow.

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CHAPTER 2
ARTICLE 1

THE PERCEPTIONS OF IT STAFF RELATING TO THE INCIDENCE OF BULLYING WITHIN AN IT COMPANY

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to determine the perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of workplace bullying within an IT company. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted among 200 employees who represented staff in different divisions and levels within the company. A response rate of 168 completed questionnaires was obtained. The measuring instrument that was used is the Negative Acts Questionnaire revised (NAQ-R). The results indicate that bullying is indeed prevalent in this IT company, although the perception of the majority of the respondents is that they have never been bullied (self-reported based on a definition of bullying). The negatives actions that scored the highest were task-related, rather than person-related which indicate a more subtle form of bullying. The typical perpetrator was mostly management and the more young and inexperienced workforce, the victim. The majority of the respondents perceived "low self-esteem and insecurities" and the misuse of power as the main causes of bullying behaviour , and feel that the company need to implement guidelines, policies, and procedures as a means to prevent this.

Empirical findings indicate that bullying is a serious problem in the workplace (Ortega, Høgh, & Olsen, 2009) and a relatively widespread phenomenon in many countries (Salin, 2001). In a study conducted by Hoel, Cooper, and Faragher (2001) across 70 companies within the public, private and voluntary sectors across Great Britain the results indicated that 10.6% of the respondents reported having been bullied during a 6-month period with a figure that rises to 24.7% for bullying taking the last five years into account. Niedhammer, David, and Degioanni (2007), using a sample consisting of 7 694 individuals of the French working population, found that one out of every ten employees had been exposed to bullying (9% for men and 11% for woman). Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001), on the contrary, found that only 2% to 4% of the employees at four Danish organisational settings felt that they had been bullied at work and in most cases only "now and then". Research conducted by (Bairy, et al., 2007) found that 50% of trainee doctors in India reported having been bullied. Niedhammer et al. (2007) add that some occupations and economic groups would be at an increased risk for bullying. High risk occupations for bullying include activities of services, various categories for associate professionals, lower levels of white and blue-collar employees for men, and associate professionals for woman. Salin (2001) agrees that highly-educated employees in managerial or expert positions are also subjected to bullying behaviour. A cross-sectional survey among Finnish professionals with a degree in business studies revealed that between 8.8% to 24.1% of respondents reported that they had at least occasionally been bullied during a 12-month period.

The prevalence of bullying thus not only varies by country, nation and culture, but also within occupations and economic groups. The researcher agrees with Agervold (2007) that the results of research on this topic seem to indicate very wide variations in the prevalence of bullying which may be the result of the utilisation of different categories and the "operationalisations" of the concept. Therefore, it is important to determine the perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of bullying within this IT Company.

Definition of bullying

Workplace bullying, or "Mobbing" as it is called in many Continental European Countries, as a construct is complex and very difficult to evaluate (Niedhammer et al., 2007) as somewhat different variations and concepts have been used by different researchers in the past. Although there is no single agreed-upon definition of bullying in the workplace, some

consensus in this regard has emerged in Europe (Notelaers, Einarsen, De Witte, & Vermunt, 2006). The following summarises much of bullying as a construct today.

> Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal 'strength' are in conflict (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003, p. 15).

Leymann (1996) is one of the pioneers of bullying research. In his definition of mobbing (bullying), he emphasise "hostile" and "unethical" communication which is consistently directed towards an individual which renders him/her "helpless" and "defenceless" as a result of these activities.

Other researchers such as Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, and Salem (2006, p. 312) define bullying as "prolonged and repeated hostile behaviours conducted by at least one person towards one or more individuals when they are unable to resolve their workplace conflicts on non-hostile manners and can cause health problems for the victims and can affect their performance".

Some constructs become more prominent when definitions, such as the above-mentioned, are analysed. Hoel, Rayner, and Cooper (1999) as cited by Agervold (2007) identify four elements that typically define bullying behaviour, including frequency and duration, reaction of the target, the balance of power, and the intent of the perpetrator. The researcher agrees that these characteristics form the foundation of bullying as a construct and the current research will thus focus on this.

Characteristics of bullying

Persistent conduct of perceived negative acts against an individual(s) is deemed an important (if not the most important) defining component of workplace bullying (Saunders, Huynh, & Goodman-Delahunty, 2007). Bullying behaviour as reported by Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009), entails evolving hostile workplace relationships rather than discrete and disconnected events. Leymann (1996) adds and emphasises the fact that the difference between bullying and conflict does not focus on what is done or how it is done, but more on the frequency and the duration of what is done as bullying evolves from conflict over time. Mikkelson and Einarsen (2001) agree that bullying differs from conflict in the respect that it consists of repeated and prolonged infringements aimed at an individual. Bullying can thus be seen as exaggerated conflict. There has, however, been a lot of debate among researchers as to what frequency (repetition) and duration (period of time) would constitute bullying. Jennifer, Cowie, and Ananiadou (2003) following Hoel et al. (1999) stress the fact that the incidence of bullying varies widely depending on whether the frequency of bullying is defined as "within the last six months", "over the last six months', or "ever in your career". Rayner, Hoel, and Cooper (2002) stress the importance of frequency in that bullying is often about the repetition of small negative acts which individually may not have a huge impact but together form a pattern that individuals find difficult to cope with.

The "LIPT" or Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (put forward by Leymann in 1996) consists of 45 items representing mobbing behaviours. The frequency of bullying is based on the calculation of the number of respondents exposed to at least one such behaviour for at least once a week for six months (Notelaers et al., 2006). Research conducted by Agervold (2007) which examined inter alia the delimitation of bullying behaviour found that 4.7% of victims can be defined as victims of bullying on the basis of the prevalence of at least one negative act of bullying over a six-month period opposed to 1.2% when the limit was set to at least three negative acts over the same period.

The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) developed by Einarsen et al. (1994) and Einarsen and Raknes (1997) on the other hand consists of 22 items (NAQ-R) that does not focus on counting the negative acts to determine bullying per se, but rather focuses on the frequency of these acts (never, now and then, weekly, daily) over a six month period (Notelaers et al., 2006).

Another approach, which researchers label as "self-judgement", is when respondents are presented with a definition of bullying and then indicate whether they perceive themselves as being a victim of bullying (Notelaers et al., 2006). Research in this regard indicates that respondents are more reluctant to label themselves as victims of bullying. Studies by Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, and Alberts (2007) revealed that bullying prevalence based on the number of predefined negative acts is higher (28%) as opposed to prevalence based on self-judgement (9.4%). Salin (2001) supports this in her findings but also argues that these "self-reported" individuals on average reported higher incidence rates for almost all of the specified acts of the negative acts questionnaire. Saunders et al. (2007) explain that employees may not label themselves as having been bullied if the definition provided differs from their own definition or own experiences of bullying, as a possible cause for these discrepancies.

It is clear that different measurement tools take different frequencies and durations into account. The interpretation of these results thus plays a crucial role in the outcome of measuring the prevalence of bullying.

Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) introduce degree as another feature of bullying and conceptualise this as a cumulative score reflecting intensity (number of negative acts experienced by victim), frequency and duration of the negative acts. A mid-range bullying score could thus reflect either a high number of negative acts at a low frequency or a limited number of negative acts at a high frequency. It is thus argued that if an individual is exposed to one negative act over a long period of time it has the same effect as that of an individual exposed to multiple negative acts over a short period. The researcher argues that the effect of this would greatly depend on the reaction of the target.

The reaction of the target refers to the how these negative actions are experienced, or how this is perceived, by the victim (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Meglich-Sespico, Faley, and Knapp (2007) argue that the negative impact associated with workplace bullying can be categorised as psychological (emotional), physical and work releated. Hallberg and Strandmark (2006) agree that bullying can be seen as serious psychological trauma leaving the victim with internal wounds that will never entirely heal. Namie (2007) adds that bullying is a severe form of job strain that can lead to inordinate anxiety, clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. This is further supported by Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001) with their empirical findings that a significantly high correlation exists between bullying and

psychosomatic symptoms (up to 0.39) and psychological stress symptoms (up to 0.42). In their analysis, based on empirical findings by different researchers, Zaph and Gross (2001) reported that a substantial number of bullying cases lasted longer than two years ranging between 15–46 months. It is clear that individuals subjected to negative action for such a prolonged time can suffer immense damage and trauma. It is the researcher's view that some actions, e.g. threats of violence or physical abuse, may have such an impact on an individual that even a once-off incidence alone may be enough to cause psychological trauma to the victim.

Research by Saunders et al. (2007) indicates that participants, when asked to define bullying, frequently included "perpetration that causes some form of harm to the target" in their definition of bullying. The reaction of the target thus refers to the negative effect or "harm" of bullying behaviour perceived and experienced by the victim. Intent of the perpetrator as opposed to the reaction of the target would then specifically refer to the intention of the perpetrator to cause harm to the individual per se. Agervold (2007) feels that it is exactly the intent to cause injury that lies at the core of the serious consequences of bullying. Hodson, Roscigno, and Lopez (2006) agree and add the defining characteristic of bullying as its unidirectional nature and its use as an intentional weapon to hurt others.

The implication with regard to both the reaction of the target and intent of the perpetrator lies in the fact that individuals differ from one another and personality types play an important role as some individuals can tolerate more "negative actions" or react differently to stressors in the workplace than others. Impossible deadlines can be considered a rather normal feature of work today and more highly educated employees have a higher risk of doing work below their level of competence (Salin, 2001). This would indicate no intention by manager/supervisor to "harm" or to bully. Zaph (1999) argues that individuals do not take responsibility for personal reasons that can contribute to them being "victims" of bullying. Deficits in social skills, low performance, being difficult or aggressive are defining traits. Therefore one can hold the view that the rationale behind this would be that if for instance, your performance is below average an individual may continuously be reprimanded or reminded of errors or mistakes. A supervisor may, on the other hand, intentionally "persistently criticise your work and effort" even if the individual performs above average. Rayner et al. (2002) on the other hand reject intent as part of the definition of bullying and argue that if a bully denies the intent to bully, then bullying technically would not have

happened at all. The implication with this is that measuring instruments do not cater for, or cannot prove the intention of the perpetrator or personal reasons of the victim. This would be impossible, unless potential bullies and victims are indentified and interviewed to shed some light on their behaviour. This would have a major effect on the validity of perceived prevalence rates.

Bullying means that the target must feel unable to stop or prevent abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) which is the result of a power imbalance. Leymann (1996) and Jennifer et al. (2003) respectively label this as "helpless", "defenceless" and an "inferior" position for the victim. This power imbalance, according to Einarsen et al. (2009), is considered central to the bullying experience as this may limit the target's ability to retaliate and successfully defend himself. Zaph and Gross (2001) agree that bullying in an advanced stage is a situation over which the victim no longer has any control. Salin's (2001) research highlighted the fact that employees in lower hierarchy positions experienced considerably more bullying than employees in managerial and expert positions and supervisors are more often pointed out as perpetrators. This highlights the influence of formal power and the misuse of this power in a company. Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) conclude that the struggle for power is the result of interplay between factors such as poor working conditions, incompetent leaders, personalities and work expectations. Individuals, for instance, who described themselves as strong, competent and driven and those who describe themselves as vulnerable and sensitive were seen as deviating from the group norm of the workplace. This would result in a struggle for power when those involved failed to resolve these value conflicts.
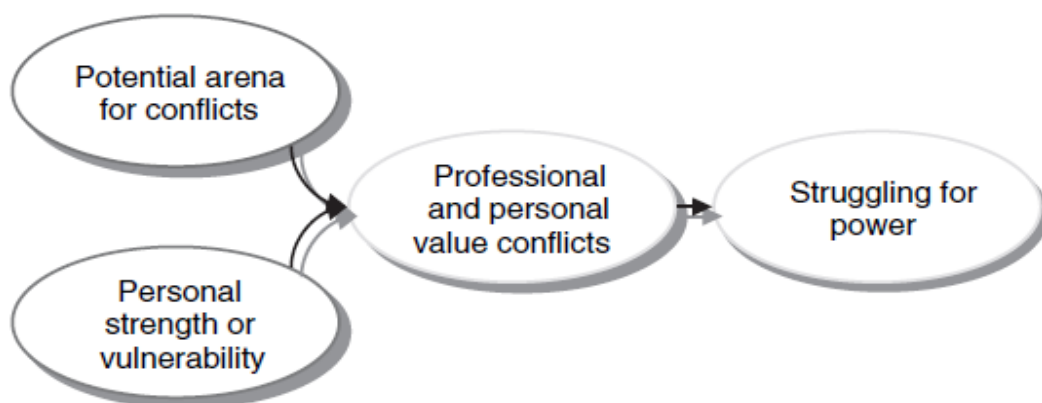
Figure 1 A conceptual model of struggling for power – a preliminary stage of bullying
Source: Strandmark and Hallberg (2007)

Reports by Leymann (1996), based on research analysis, agree that extremely poor and disorganised production and/or working methods and ineffective management are stereotypical in companies where bullying exist. Hodson et al. (2006), however, argue that even in stable work environments some employees may have more power than others which may provide them with a limited protective shield, but leave those with less power all the more vulnerable to bullying. It is the researcher's view that in instances were bullying exists between employees and a higher authority, collective action may restore this power imbalance. In South-Africa it is common practice nowadays for employees to engage in strike action when they feel that they are being treated unfairly in the workplace. Lutgen-Sandvik (2006) agrees that resistance to bullying can re-theorise power, meaning that this may lead to "fruitful paths of communication" to intervene in these abusive workplaces.

Zaph (1999) argues that there are potentially multiple causes of mobbing/bullying that are interrelated between the company, perpetrator, social system of the work group and the victim. No one of these constructs can be a single cause of bullying, for instance, it is easier to harass someone where organisational problems exist, but such working conditions may force an individual to commit multiple errors which in turn can be used as ammunition against that individual. Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) support this and their findings indicate that job stressors may influence employees' behaviour in ways that may lead others to attack them. Liefooghe and Davey (2001) research indicates a power shift from individual status differences to organisational power systems. The rationale behind this is that superiors are equally oppressed by mechanisms of operational control within the hierarchal structure of the organisation. Following this Jennifer et al. (2003) agree that "while personality characteristics may play some part, bullying can only be fully understood in the wider context of the organisation, and not simply as an interpersonal phenomenon". Hauge et al. (2007) also support the work environment hypotheses and found role conflict, leadership behaviour and interpersonal conflict to be the strongest predictors of bullying in the workplace. It is thus clear that conflict and the balance of power play an important role in the development of bullying.

It is my view that bullying behaviour in South Africa is a fairly new term, and the working population are still reluctant to recognise this phenomenon. The information technology industry is a highly stressful and demanding occupation. Tipton (2009) feels that the modern-

day IT professional is expected to work faster, better, cheaper, do more with less, be innovative, cost-effective, adaptable, competitive and be a strong return on investment.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

- Conceptualise workplace bullying and its effect on employment relations from literature.

- Determine the perceptions of IT staff relating to the incidence of workplace bullying within this IT company.

METHOD

Research design

The aim of a research design according to Mouton and Marais (1996, p. 32) is "to align the pursuit of a research goal with the practical consideration and limitation of the research project". A cross-sectional survey design was used to achieve the research objectives. The researcher collected data by means of questionnaires as this was the most effective method to obtain adequate information to aid in the achievement of the research objectives. Based on the nature of the study a confidentiality clause was included in conjunction with the North-West University. These questionnaires were delivered by hand. The data was collected from the participants within 7 days of issue. A random sample of about 200 employees, representative of the entire company, was given the opportunity to participate.

Study population

The participants who took part in this study represented IT personnel (N = 200) from different divisions and levels within the company. A response rate of 84% (n=168) was achieved.

The biographical characteristics of the study population are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	53.0
	Female	79	47.0
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Population group	African	50	29.7
	Asian	19	11.3
	Coloured	8	4.8
	White	91	54.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Home language	Afrikaans	80	47.6
	English	41	24.4
	African Language	47	28.0
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Age	30 years and younger	58	34.5
	31 – 39 years	50	29.8
	40 - 49 years	41	24.4
	50 – 59 years	17	10.1
	60 – and older	2	1.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Marital status	Married	100	59.5
	Divorced / separated	14	8.3
	Widowed	3	1.8
	Single, Never married	51	30.4
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Education level	Grade 12	25	14.9
	Diploma/Post-matric qualification	91	54.2
	Bachelor's degree	36	21.4
	Post-graduate	16	9.5
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Employment status	Permanent	139	82.7
	Contractor	29	17.3
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Service years	Less than 2 years	86	51.1
	2 – 4 years	46	27.4
	5 – 7 years	5	3.0
	8 – 10 years	18	10.7
	11 – 13 years	8	4.8
	14 – 16 years	2	1.2
	17 – 19 years	1	0.6
	20 years and more	2	1.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows that gender is more or less equally distributed with 47.0% females and 53.0% males who participated in this study. The majority of the participants are White (54.2%), followed by Africans (29.7%) and Asians (11.3%). Only 4.8% Coloured people participated in this study.

Respondents of the age group, 30 years and younger represent 34.5% of the study population, and the age group between 31 and 39 years, 28.8% of the study population. The study also indicates that 51.1% of the study population had been employed for two years and less.

The employment status items indicate that 17.3 % of the study population are contractors.

Measuring battery

The following measuring instruments were used in this study:

- *Biographical information*: a biographical questionnaire was constructed in order to obtain relevant biographical data about the participants in the research. This enabled the researcher to obtain different respondent profiles for the purpose of statistical analysis (e.g. age, gender, qualifications, job level, marital status and family status). The participants' anonymity was maintained throughout this process.

- *Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised* (NAQ-R)*:* The NAQ-R (Einarsen & Raknes, 2007) was specifically designed to measure perceived exposure to bullying and victimisation at work. The version of the NAQ that was used in this research consists of 22 items describing negative behaviour in the workplace, which may be perceived as bullying if it occurs persistently over a period of time (e.g. "Someone withholding information which affects your performance"). The NAQ-R contains items referring to both direct (e.g. finger-pointing) and indirect behaviours (e.g. being ignored). The response alternatives are "never", "now and then", "monthly", "every week" and "daily". The researcher obtained written permission from Morten Birkeland Nielsen of the Bergen Bullying Research Group to make use of the NAQ-R.

A formal definition of bullying was also presented and respondents were asked whether or not they considered themselves as victims of bullying. The response categories are; "no", "yes", "to some extent" and "yes extremely".

The respondents who confirmed that they had been victims of bullying (victim group) were requested to supply information about when they had been bullied (e.g. "within the last six months"), formal position of the perpetrator(s) (e.g. colleagues), and the number of male and female perpetrators. The non-bullied group were asked to indicate whether they had observed or witnessed bullying during a specified period. The internal stability of the scale is high with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from α 0.84 to 0.91 being obtained (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

The researcher introduced two open-ended questions to both the victim- and non-bullied groups namely: "What do you perceive as the cause(s) of bullying behaviour in your workplace?" and "What can your company do to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace?" as a means to find a solution to the problem.

Statistical analysis

The importance of the statistical analysis in this research is to present the findings in the form of tables, graphs and reports. The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, carried out the statistical analysis with the SPSS programme (SPSS 20) which will include the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to assess the validity and reliability of the research, descriptive statistics to analyse the data such as means and standard deviations. The phi coefficient (Φ) was used to determine the effect size and power for chi-square test for independence (Aron, Elliot, & Aron, 2011).

RESULTS

Table 2 provides an indication of the frequency of responses (%) in terms of the incidence of negative actions in an IT company.

Table 2

Frequency of Responses – Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (%)

During the last 6 months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts in your workplace?	*Never (%)*	*Now and then (%)*	*Weekly / Daily (%)*
1. Someone withholding information which affects your performance	29.76	**48.81**	**21.43**
2. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	62.28	27.54	10.18
3. Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	37.72	**40.72**	**21.56**
4. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	39.29	**42.86**	**17.85**
5. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	61.31	30.36	8.33
6. Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry' (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	54.17	27.98	17.86
7. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	77.38	14.88	7.74
8. Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	70.83	20.24	8.93
9. Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	**79.17**	14.29	6.55
10. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	**86.31**	6.55	7.14
11. Threats of violence or physical abuse	**95.83**	2.38	1.79
12. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	68.45	20.83	10.71
13. Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	67.26	24.40	8.33
14. Persistent criticism of your work and effort	72.46	15.57	11.98
15. Having your opinions and views ignored	30.36	**48.81**	**20.83**
16. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	**79.64**	14.37	5.99
17. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or Deadlines	48.81	**37.50**	**13.69**
18. Having allegations made against you	78.57	14.29	7.14
19. Excessive monitoring of your work	49.40	**26.19**	**24.40**
20. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	67.26	18.45	14.29
21. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	**83.93**	14.29	1.79
22. Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	48.81	**32.14**	**19.05**

The negative actions that were experienced most frequently *(now and then)*, are:

- **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (48.81%),
- **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** (40.72%),
- **"having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** (42.86%), and
- **"having your views and opinions ignored"** (48.81%).

The negative actions that were experienced most frequently on a "daily/weekly" basis are:

- **"Excessive monitoring of your work"** (24.40%),
- **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** (21.56%),
- **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (21.43%), and
- **"having your views and opinions ignored"** (20.83%).

It is clear that at least one out of five respondents experienced these actions on a daily or weekly basis.

The majority of the respondents never experienced:

- **"being threatened with violence or physical abuse"** (95.83%),
- **"hints or signals from others that they should quit their job"** (86.31%),
- **"experienced practical jokes carried out by people they did not get on with"** (79.64%),
- **"being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** (83.93%), and
- **"experienced intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way"** (79.17%).

About 30% of the respondents in this study claim that they are **"being ignored, excluded, or being 'sent to Coventry'"** (27.98%) and exposed to **"spreading of gossip and rumours about you"** (30.36%). These actions are directed more at the individual than at the work itself.

Table 3 provides an indication of the frequency of responses (%) based on the definition of bullying.

Table 3

Frequency of Responses based on the Definition of Bullying (%)

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months?		
No	139	82.74
Yes, very rarely	8	4.76
Yes, now and then	9	5.36
Yes, several times per month	4	2.38
Yes, several times per week	4	2.38
Yes, almost daily	4	2.38
Total	**168**	**100.00**
When did the bullying start?		
Within the last 6 months	18	**62.07**
Between 6 and 12 months ago	3	10.35
Between 1 and 2 years ago	5	17.24
More than 2 years ago	3	10.34
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many persons bullied you?		
Number of men	6	20.69
Number of woman	13	44.83
Number of men and woman	10	34.48
Total	**29**	**100.00**
Who bullied you?		
Colleague/s	7	24.14
Supervisor / Manager	9	31.03
Subordinates	0	0.00
Client / Customer	6	20.70
Colleague/s and Supervisor / Manager	3	10.34
Supervisor / Manager and Subordinates	4	13.79
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many were bullied?		
Only you	9	31.03
You and several other work colleagues	17	58.62
Everyone in your workgroup	3	10.35
Total	**29**	**100.00**

Table 3

Frequency of Responses based on the Definition of Bullying (%)(cont.)

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months?		
No	139	82.74
Yes, very rarely	8	4.76
Yes, now and then	9	5.36
Yes, several times per month	4	2.38
Yes, several times per week	4	2.38
Yes, almost daily	4	2.38
Total	**168**	**100.00**
Have you ever witnessed or observed bullying in your workplace in the last 6 months?		
No, never	100	60.24
Yes, but rarely	38	22.89
Yes, now and then	15	9.04
Yes, often	13	7.83
Total	**166**	**100.00**
Have you ever been bullied in the last 5 years?		
Yes	53	31.55
No	115	68.45
Total	**168**	**100.00**
Have you ever observed or witnessed bullying over the last 5 years?		
Yes	88	52.38
No	80	47.62
Total	**168**	**100.00**
When did the bullying start?		
Within the last 6 months	18	62.07
Between 6 and 12 months ago	3	10.35
Between 1 and 2 years ago	5	17.24
More than 2 years ago	3	10.34
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many persons bullied you?		
Number of men	6	20.69
Number of woman	13	44.83
Number of men and woman	10	34.48
Total	**29**	**100.00**
Who bullied you?		
Colleague/s	7	24.14
Supervisor / Manager	9	31.03
Subordinates	0	0.00
Client / Customer	6	20.70
Colleague/s and Supervisor / Manager	3	10.34
Supervisor / Manager and Subordinates	4	13.79
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many were bullied?		
Only you	9	31.03
You and several other work colleagues	17	58.62
Everyone in your workgroup	3	10.35
Total	**29**	**100.00**

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Table 3 indicates that 17.26 % of the respondents claim that they have been bullied (based on the definition of bullying) in the last six months. The majority of bullying actions occur very rarely and now and then. For the same period bullying was frequently observed (39.76%). Table 3 further shows that more individuals (31.55%) claim to have been bullied if the last five years were taken into account and 52.38% observed bullying over this period. More people thus experienced and observed bullying over the last five years as opposed to the last six months. Table 3 further indicates that the majority of the respondents (62.07%) claim that the bullying started within the last six months.

Women are more often found to be the bully (44.83%) than men (20.69%). When roles are taken into consideration, the supervisor/manager is more often found to be the perpetrator (31.03%), followed by colleague/s (24.14%) and then the customer/client (20.70%). Furthermore, victims mostly experience that they and several other of their work colleagues are subject to bullying (58.62%) as opposed to single individuals.

The association between the definition of bullying and negative actions in the workplace is reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Association between the Definition of Bullying and Negative Actions in the Workplace

	Φ	Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months.					
		No (%)	Very Rarely (%)	Now & Then (%)	Monthly (%)	Weekly (%)	Almost Daily (%)
Someone withholding information that affects your performance	0.52						
Never		27.38	1.79	0.00	0.00	0.60	0.00
Now and then		**47.62**	2.98	3.57	1.19	0.00	1.19
Daily / Weekly		**7.74**	0.00	1.79	1.19	1.79	1.19
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	1.00						
Never		58.08	2.40	1.20	0.00	0.00	0.60
Now and then		**23.95**	2.40	4.19	1.20	0.00	0.00
Daily / Weekly		1.20	0.00	0.00	0.60	2.40	1.80
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	0.74						
Never		35.71	1.19	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60
Now and then		**43.45**	3.57	4.17	0.60	0.60	0.00
Daily / Weekly		3.57	0.00	0.60	1.19	1.19	1.79
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	0.63						
Never		54.76	2.98	0.60	0.60	0.60	1.79
Now and then		**25.60**	1.19	3.57	1.19	1.19	0.00
Daily / Weekly		2.38	0.60	1.19	0.60	0.60	0.60
Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	0.68						
Never		50.00	2.38	0.60	0.00	0.60	0.60
Now and then		**28.57**	2.38	3.57	1.79	1.19	0.60
Daily / Weekly		4.17	0.00	1.19	0.60	0.60	1.19
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	0.88						
Never		**72.02**	2.38	1.79	0.00	0.60	0.60
Now and then		10.71	1.79	2.38	1.79	1.79	1.19
Daily / Weekly		0.00	0.60	1.19	0.60	0.00	0.60
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	0.66						
Never		**75.00**	4.76	2.38	1.79	1.19	1.19
Now and then		6.55	0.00	1.19	0.00	0.60	0.60
Daily / Weekly		1.19	0.00	1.79	0.60	0.60	0.60
Threats of violence or physical abuse	0.50						
Never		**80.36**	4.76	4.17	2.38	1.79	2.38
Now and then		2.38	0.00	0.60	0.00	0.60	0.00
Daily / Weekly		0.00	0.00	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00

(p. < 0.01)

Table 4

Association between the Definition of Bullying and Negative Actions in the Workplace (cont.)

	Φ	*Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months.*					
		No (%)	*Very Rarely (%)*	*Now & Then (%)*	*Monthly (%)*	*Weekly (%)*	*Almost Daily (%)*
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	0.62						
Never		61.31	2.98	2.38	0.60	0.60	0.60
Now and then		**19.05**	1.79	1.79	0.60	1.19	0.00
Daily / Weekly		2.38	0.00	1.19	1.19	0.60	1.79
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	0.76						
Never		61.31	1.79	2.38	0.00	1.19	0.60
Now and then		**20.83**	2.98	1.79	1.79	1.19	0.60
Daily / Weekly		0.60	0.00	1.19	0.60	0.00	1.19
Having your opinions and views ignored	0.78						
Never		28.57	0.60	0.60	0.00	0.60	0.00
Now and then		**48.81**	4.17	3.57	0.60	1.19	0.00
Daily / Weekly		**5.36**	0.00	1.19	1.79	0.60	2.38
Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	0.68						
Never		43.45	2.98	1.19	0.60	0.00	0.60
Now and then		**36.90**	1.79	2.98	1.19	2.38	0.60
Daily / Weekly		2.38	0.00	1.19	0.60	0.00	1.19
Having allegations made against you	0.69						
Never		**70.66**	3.59	2.40	0.00	1.20	1.20
Now and then		11.98	0.60	2.40	1.20	1.20	0.60
Daily / Weekly		0.60	0.00	0.60	1.20	0.00	0.60
Excessive monitoring of your work	0.64						
Never		45.24	1.79	1.79	0.00	0.60	0.00
Now and then		**27.38**	1.19	2.38	0.00	0.00	0.60
Daily / Weekly		**10.12**	1.79	1.19	2.38	1.79	1.79
Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	0.77						
Never		**73.81**	4.17	2.38	1.19	0.60	1.79
Now and then		8.93	0.60	2.98	1.19	1.19	0.60
Daily / Weekly		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.60	0.00
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	0.76						
Never		46.43	0.60	0.60	0.00	0.60	0.60
Now and then		**33.93**	4.17	4.76	1.79	0.60	0.60
Daily / Weekly		2.38	0.00	0.00	0.60	1.19	1.19

(p. < 0.01)

The majority of the respondents who experience negative actions in the workplace on a *now and then* basis, claim that they have never been bullied, based on the definition of bullying. These negative actions include:

- **"someone withholding information that effects your performance"** (47.62)%,
- **"having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** (43.45%),
- **"having your opinions and views ignored"** (48.81%),
- **"being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines"** (36.90%), and
- **"being exposed to an unmanageable workload"** (33.93%).

The majority of the respondents who experience negative actions in the workplace on a *daily to weekly* frequency claim that they have never been bullied based on the definition of bullying. This includes:

- **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (7.74%),
- **"having your opinions and views ignored"** (5.36%), and
- **"excessive monitoring of work"** (10.12%).

The research indicates that for the respondents who *never* experience bullying (based on the definition of bullying) and never experience negative actions in the workplace, the following actions were the most prominent:

- **"having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life"** (72.02%),
- **"hints or signals from others that you should quit your job"** (75.00%),
- **"threats of violence or physical abuse"** (80.36%),
- **"having allegations made against you"** (70.66%), and
- **"being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** (73.81%).

The association between population group and negative actions in the workplace is reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Association between Population Group and Negative Actions in the Workplace

	Φ	*African*		*Asian*		*Coloured*		*White*	
		Count	*(%)*	*Count*	*(%)*	*Count*	*(%)*	*Count*	*(%)*
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	0.40								
Never		22	13.17	12	7.19	2	2.40	64	39.52
Now and then		20	**11.98**	6	3.59	4	2.40	23	**13.77**
Daily / Weekly		7	4.19	1	0.60	0	0.00	2	1.20
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence*	0.36								
Never		20	11.98	4	2.40	6	3.59	33	19.76
Now and then		17	10.18	11	6.59	1	0.60	51	**30.54**
Daily / Weekly		13	**7.78**	3	1.80	1	0.60	7	**4.19**
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	0.38								
Never		15	8.93	7	4.17	5	2.98	39	23.21
Now and then		24	14.29	11	6.55	3	1.79	50	**29.76**
Daily / Weekly		11	6.55	1	0.60	0	0.00	2	1.19
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	0.37								
Never		25	14.88	13	7.74	6	3.57	71	42.26
Now and then		16	**9.52**	5	2.98	2	1.19	18	10.71
Daily / Weekly		9	5.36	1	0.60	0	0.00	2	1.19
Persistent criticism of your work and effort*	0.42								
Never		23	13.77	15	**8.98**	7	4.19	76	45.51
Now and then		17	10.18	2	1.20	1	0.60	12	7.19
Daily / Weekly		9	5.39	2	1.20	0	0.00	3	1.80
Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	0.37								
Never		27	16.07	7	4.17	4	2.38	44	26.19
Now and then		17	10.12	11	6.55	4	2.38	45	**26.79**
Daily / Weekly		6	3.57	1	0.60	0	0.00	2	1.19

*(p. < 0.05) *(p.<0.01)*

Table 5

Association between Population Group and Negative Actions in the Workplace (cont.)

	Φ	African		Asian		Coloured		White	
		Count	(%)	Count	(%)	Count	(%)	Count	(%)
Excessive monitoring of your work*	0.46								
Never		13	7.74	10	5.95	3	1.79	57	33.93
Now and then		17	**10.12**	7	4.17	3	1.79	26	**15.48**
Daily / Weekly		20	**11.90**	2	1.19	2	1.19	8	**4.76**
Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)*	0.54								
Never		22	13.10	12	7.14	3	1.79	76	45.24
Now and then		15	8.93	6	3.57	5	2.98	14	8.33
Daily / Weekly		13	7.74	1	0.60	0	0.00	1	0.60
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload*	0.40								
Never		19	11.31	10	5.95	6	3.57	46	27.98
Now and then		25	**14.88**	8	4.76	2	1.19	42	**25.00**
Daily / Weekly		6	**3.57**	1	0.60	0	0.00	2	1.19

(p. < 0.05) *(p.<0.01)

Table 5 shows that there is a considerable statistical significance ($p < 0.10 - p < 0.50$) between the population group and the negative actions as depicted in the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised, specifically in terms of work-related tasks.

For the negative action **"being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work"**, 11.98% of the African and 13.77% of the White respondents experienced this *now and then*. However, 39.52% of White population group *never* experienced this negative action.

In the study population, 30.54% of the respondents who experienced **"being ordered to do work below their level of competence"** (*now and then*) where White. For the same negative action, more African (7.78%) than White (4.19%) respondents experience this on a *daily to weekly* basis.

For those respondents who *now and then* experience that **"key areas of responsibilities were removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** 29.76% of the respondents were White opposed to only 14.29% of the African population group.

Furthermore, more than 42.26% of the White respondents *never* experienced **"repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes"** although 10.71% of the White respondents and 9.52% of the African respondents experience this action *now and then*.

For the negative action **"persistent criticism of your work and effort"**, again more than 40% (45.51%) of the White respondents never experience this. with only 7.17% of this population group and 10.18 of the African respondents experiencing this *now and then*.

For the negative action **"given tasks with unreasonable or impossible deadlines"**, 26.76% of the White respondents experience this *now and then*. For the same population group, 15.48% experience **"excessive monitoring of work"** *now and then* appose to 10.12% of the African respondents. However, 11.90% of the African respondents experience this on a *daily to weekly* frequency.

Table 5 further indicates that 7.74% of the African respondents experience **"pressure not to claim something which by right they are entitled to"** on a *daily to weekly frequency*. A great margin of the White respondents (25.00%), and 14.88% of the African respondents feel that they are *now and then* **"exposed to an unmanageable workload"**.

The association between; Perpetrator, Victims of Bullying, Occurrence of Bullying, Age, Level of Education, and Negative Actions in the Workplace is reported in table 6.

Table 6

Association between; Perpetrator, Victims of Bullying, Occurrence of Bullying, Age, Level of Education, and Negative Actions in the Workplace

	Φ	Never (%)	Now & Then (%)	Daily - Weekly (%)
Who bullied you? (Perpetrator)	**0.98**	*Some withholding info that affects your performance*		
Colleagues		3.45	6.90	**13.79**
Supervisor		3.45	**27.59**	0.00
Client		6.90	6.90	6.90
Colleagues & Supervisor		0.00	3.45	6.90
Supervisor & Client		0.00	6.90	6.90
Who was bullied? (Victim)	**0.74**	*Some withholding info that affects your performance*		
Only You		10.34	10.34	10.34
You and several Others		3.45	**37.93**	**17.24**
Everyone in your group		0.00	3.45	6.90
When did the bullying start? (Occurrence)	**0.90**	*Hints from others that you should quit your job*		
Within the last 6 months		41.38	6.90	**13.79**
6 - 12 Months		6.90	0.00	**3.45**
1 - 2 Years ago		13.79	0.00	3.45
> 2 Years		3.45	6.90	0.00
Have you ever been bullied over the last 5 years? (Occurrence)	**0.25**	*Spreading of gossip and rumours about you*		
Yes		16.07	11.31	4.17
No		45.24	**21.43**	1.79
Age	**0.43**	*Excessive monitoring of your work*		
30 and Younger		11.31	**13.69**	**9.52**
31 – 39		17.86	5.95	**5.95**
40 – 49		15.48	7.14	1.79
50 – 59		4.76	3.57	1.79
60 and Older		0.00	1.19	0.00
Age	**0.41**	*Persistent criticism of your work and effort*		
30 and Younger		21.56	**8.38**	4.19
31 – 39		20.36	**7.19**	2.40
40 – 49		22.16	1.80	0.60
50 – 59		8.38	0.60	1.20
60 and Older		0.00	1.20	0.00
Level of education	**0.36**	*Being ordered to work below your level of competence*		
Grade 12		5.39	8.38	1.20
Diploma or post-matric qualification		23.95	**19.16**	10.78
Bachelor's Degree		4.79	**15.57**	1.20
Post Graduate		3.59	4.79	2
Gender	**0.25**	*Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes*		
Male		34.52	**14.88**	3.57
Female		33.93	9.52	3.57

(p. < 0.05)

The negative actions listed in table 5 were experienced by those respondents who claimed that they have been bullied, based on the definition of bullying.

There is a very strong (Φ = 0.98), moderately significant (p < 0.05) relation between the perpetrator of bullying and **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"**. The respondents (27.59%) who claimed that they had been bullied by their supervisor, also *now and then* experienced the action that **"someone was withholding information that affects your performance"**. The respondents (13.79%) who experienced this *daily to weekly* claimed that they had been bullied by colleagues.

There is a very strong (Φ = 0.74), moderately significant (p < 0.05) relation between the victim of bullying and **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"**. The respondents (37.93%) claim that he/she and several others in their workgroup experienced this negative action *now and then* and 17.24% experience this *daily.*

There is a very strong (Φ = 0.90), moderately significant (p < 0.05) relation between occurrence of bullying *"within the last 6 months"* and **"hints or signals from others that you should quit your job"**. The respondents (13.79%) who claimed that the bullying started within the last six months also felt that they experienced hints and signals from others that they should quit their job on a *daily to weekly* frequency.

There is a moderate (Φ = 0.25; *p.* < 0.05) statistically significant relationship between the occurrence of bullying "*over the last 5 years*" and **"spreading of gossip rumours about you"**. The respondents who claim that they have never been bullied (21.43%) believe that they experienced this negative action *now and then.*

There is a moderate positive statistical significance (Φ = 0.43; *p* < 0.05) between age and the negative action, **"excessive monitoring of your work"**. For the age group 39 and younger, 13.69% experience this action *now and then* and 9.52% on a *daily to weekly* frequency.

There is a moderate positive statistical significance (Φ = 0.41; *p* < 0.05) between age and the negative action, **"persistent criticism of your work and effort"**. Both the age groups, 39 and younger, (8.38%) and 31 -39 (7.19%) experience this action *now and then.*

There is a moderate ($\Phi = 0.36$) statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) relation between level of education and the negative action **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"**. Both the respondents who are in possession of a Diploma or post-matric qualification (19.16%), as well as the respondents who are in possession of a Bachelor's degree, experience this action *now and then*.

There is a moderate ($\Phi = 0.25$), statistically significant ($p. < 0.05$) relation between gender and the negative action **"repeated reminders of your error or mistakes"**. More male (14.88%) than female (9.52%) respondents experienced this *now and then*.

The association between bullying (observation) and negative actions in the workplace are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Association between Bullying (observation >= 5 years) and Negative Actions in the Workplace

	Φ	Have you ever observed or witnessed bullying over the last 5 years?	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	0.25		
Never		10.71	19.05
Now & Then		**31.55**	25.00
Daily – Weekly		**10.12**	3.57
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	0.26		
Never		26.95	35.33
Now & Then		**20.96**	10.78
Daily – Weekly		4.79	1.20
Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	0.50		
Never		**44.20**	9.42
Now & Then		**26.81**	**17.39**
Daily – Weekly		1.45	0.72

$p. < 0.05$

There is a moderate ($\Phi = 0.25$) statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between the negative action **"someone withholding information which affects your performance"** and observation of bullying over the last five years. From table 7 it is clear 31.55% experienced bullying action now and then and 10.12% on a daily basis.

There is a moderate ($\Phi = 0.26$) statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between the negative act **"being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work"** and observation of bullying over the last five years. Of these participants, 20.96% experienced this negative action *now and then*.

There is a moderate to strong ($\Phi = 0.50$) statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between the negative action **"being ignored, excluded or being 'send to Coventry'"** and observation of bullying over the last five years as 26.81% experienced this action *now and then* in the workplace.

The relationship between bullying (observation $>=$ 6-months) and negative actions in the workplace is reported in Table 8.

Table 8

Association between Bullying (observation (>= 6-months) and Negative Actions in the Workplace

	Φ	*No* *(%)*	*Rarely* *(%)*	*Now & Then* *(%)*	*Often* *(%)*
		Have you ever observed or witnessed bullying in your workplace in the last 6 months?			
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	0.53				
Never		23.49	6.02	0.60	0.00
Now & Then		**31.93**	**15.66**	5.42	3.01
Daily – Weekly		4.82	1.20	3.01	**4.82**
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	0.59				
Never		31.93	4.82	0.60	2.41
Now & Then		**25.90**	**16.87**	6.63	2.41
Daily – Weekly		2.41	1.20	1.81	3.01
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	0.60				
Never		**54.22**	14.46	6.63	2.41
Now & Then		6.02	7.23	2.41	3.61
Daily – Weekly		0.00	1.20	0.00	1.81
Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	0.48				
Never		**53.01**	**16.87**	**6.63**	**3.01**
Now & Then		7.23	5.42	1.81	3.01
Daily – Weekly		0.00	0.60	0.60	1.81
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	0.50				
Never		**56.02**	**19.88**	**5.42**	**4.82**
Now & Then		3.61	1.20	3.01	1.20
Daily – Weekly		0.60	1.81	0.60	1.81
Threats of violence or physical abuse	0.37				
Never		**59.64**	**21.69**	**7.83**	**7.23**
Now & Then		0.60	1.20	1.20	0.00
Daily – Weekly		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.60

(p. < 0.05)

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Table 8

Association between Bullying (observation (>= 6-months) and Negative Acts in the Workplace (cont.)

| | Φ | Have you ever observed or witnessed bullying in your workplace in the last 6 months? | | | |
| | | *No* | *Rarely* | *Now & Then* | *Often* |
		(%)	*(%)*	*(%)*	*(%)*
Having your opinions and views ignored	0.62				
Never		22.42	7.88	0.00	0.00
Now & Then		**35.76**	13.33	6.67	2.42
Daily – Weekly		2.42	1.82	1.82	**5.45**
Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	0.48				
Never		33.73	11.45	2.41	1.81
Now & Then		**25.30**	10.84	6.02	3.61
Daily – Weekly		1.20	0.60	0.60	2.41
Excessive monitoring of your work	0.47				
Never		36.14	7.83	3.01	2.41
Now & Then		18.67	9.04	2.41	1.20
Daily – Weekly		5.42	**6.02**	3.61	4.22
Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	0.41				
Never		**55.42**	**17.47**	**6.63**	**4.22**
Now & Then		4.82	5.42	1.81	3.61
Daily – Weekly		0.00	0.00	0.60	0.00
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	0.50				
Never		36.75	7.83	3.01	1.20
Now & Then		**22.29**	**14.46**	4.82	4.22
Daily – Weekly		1.20	0.60	1.20	2.41

(p. < 0.05)

There is moderate to strong (Φ = 0.37 - 0.62) statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) relations between observation of bullying in the last six months, and negative actions as depicted in Table 8.

For those participants who reported now and then with regards to **"someone withholding information which affects your performance"**, 31.93% indicated that they had *never*

observed bullying over the last six months, while 15.66% *rarely* experienced this. However, 4.82% of the participants who experienced this action on a daily to weekly frequency also often observed bullying over this period.

Table 8 further indicates that 16.87% of the respondents who, now and then, experienced **"having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"**, 16.87% *rarely* and 26.90% *never* observed bullying over the last six months.

For those participants who never experienced **"having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life"**, 54.22% *never* observed bullying over the last six months while 6.63% *now and then* observed bullying over this period.

The majority of the respondents who never experienced **"intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way"** also *never* observed bullying over the last six months (53.01%), while only 16.87*% rarely* observed this. For those respondents who experienced this negative action *now and then*, 7.23% *never* observed bullying while only 5,42% observed this but *very rarely*.

For those individuals who *never* experienced **"hints or signals from others that you should quit your job"**, the majority (56.02%) never observed bullying over the last six months, while 19.88% rarely observed this.

The majority of the respondents who never experienced **"threats of violence or physical abuse",** also believed that they had *never* witnessed bullying over the last six months (59.64%), or *rarely* (21.68%) while 7.83% observed this *now and then* and 7.23% *often*.

Of those respondents who now and then experienced **"having your views and opinions ignored"**, 35.76% never observed bullying over the last six months, while 13.33% observed bullying but only rarely. For those respondents who often observed bullying, 5.54% also experienced this negative action daily to weekly.

For those respondents who *now and then* experience, **"being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines"**, 25.30% claim that they *never* observed bullying while

10.84*% rarely* observed this. Of these observers who rarely observed bullying over this period also 11.45% had never experienced this negative act.

Only 18.67% of the respondents who never observed bullying experienced **"excessive monitoring at work",** now and then.

The majority of the respondents who never experienced **"being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** also *never* observed bullying over the last six months (55.42%), while 17.47 *% rarely* observed the latter.

The respondents who now and then experienced **"being exposed to an unmanageable workload"**, rarely (14.46% to never (22.29%) observed bullying in the workplace.

The individual responses regarding the open ended question, ''What do you perceive as the cause(s) of bullying behaviour in your workplace?'' are displayed in Figure 2.
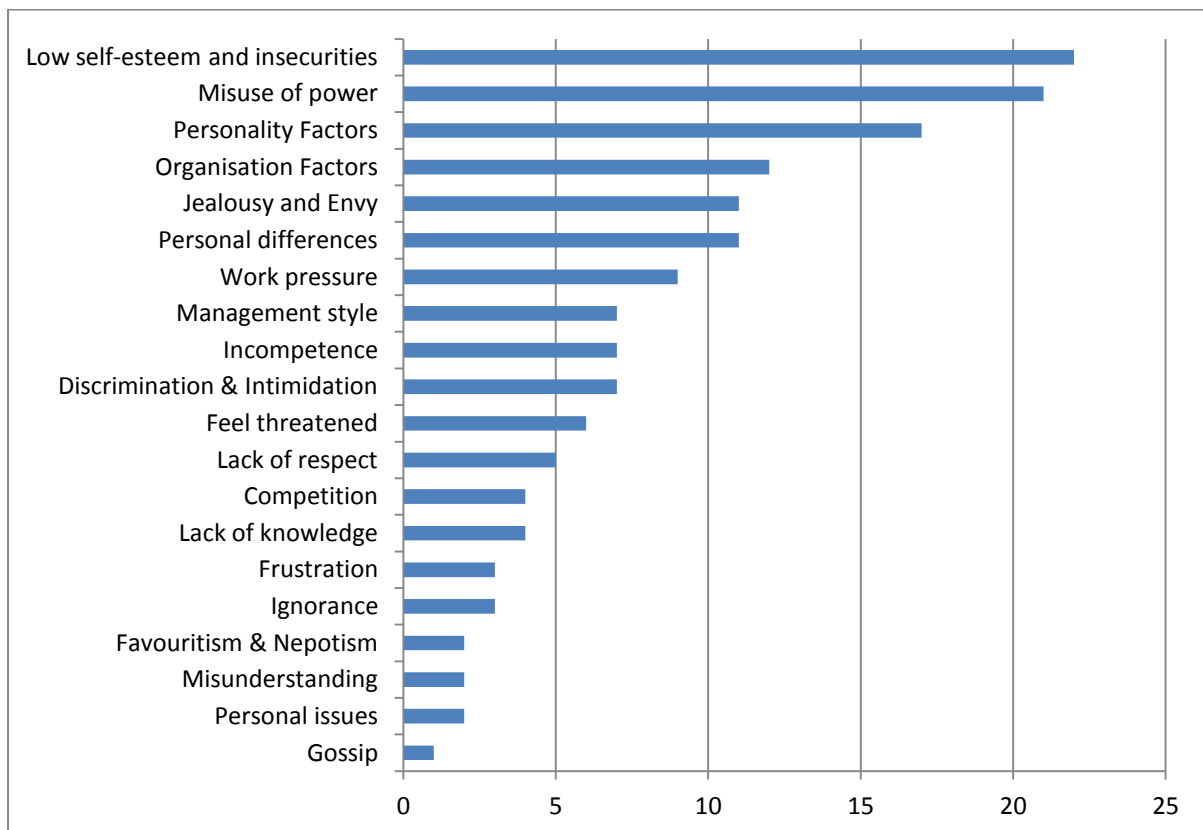

Figure 2. Responses regarding the causes of bullying behaviour in the company.

The majority of the respondents perceived "low self-esteem and insecurities" and the misuse of power as the main causes of bullying behaviour in the company.

The individual responses regarding the open ended question, "What can your company do to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace?" are displayed in Figure 3.
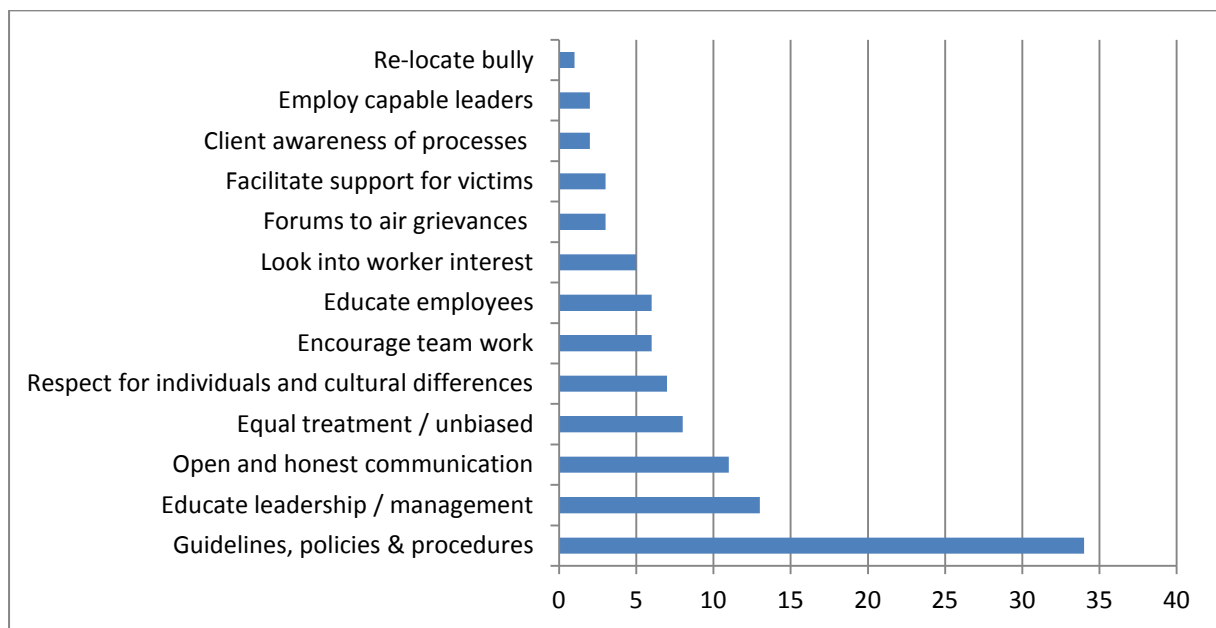
Figure 3. Responses regarding the prevention of bullying behaviour in the company.

The majority of the respondents indicated that the company need to implement guidelines, policies, and procedures as a means to combat bullying behaviour in the company.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to determine the perceptions if IT staff related to the incidence of bullying within an IT company. This company strives to be an employer of choice and in order to achieve this goal the company would need to identify and analyse obstacles such as bullying in the workplace, and find a solution to these problems. According to Lewis (2006, p. 119), "the identification and recognition of bullying in the workplace remains problematic among targets and in organisations".

Although research on workplace bullying and related constructs is very prominent internationally and much research has gone into various aspects related to this construct, very

little research has been done in South Africa. This is an unfamiliar concept for both the company and employee. Subsequently companies do not have policies drafted to deal with these demands and employees do not realise that they are victims of bullying, a situation that results in an unsatisfied workforce.

A frequency analysis of the responses (negative actions) reveals that bullying is indeed prevalent in the company (17.26%), although the perception of the majority of the respondents is that they have never been bullied (self-reported based on a definition of bullying over the last six months). When this period is extended to five years the bullying perceived increases to 31.55% and bullying observation to 52.38%. This is very much in line with Jennifer et al. (2003) and Hoel et al. (1999) who stress the fact that incidence of bullying varies widely depending on which frequency of bullying is defined e.g. "within the last six months", "over the last six months", or "ever in your career"

The negative actions that scored the highest incidence rate with both 48.81% (now and then) are **"someone withholding information that effects your performance"** followed by **"having your views and opinions ignored"**. These actions also scored high values on a daily to weekly basis with frequencies of 21.43% and 20.83% respectively. This is very much in line with studies conducted by Hoel and Cooper (2000) at UMIST. Their research indicated that 67% of the study population felt that someone was withholding information that affected their performance while 57% of the respondents felt that their views and opinions were ignored. They further reported two other items with an incidence rate of more than 50% namely, **"being exposed to an unmanageable workload"** (54%) and **"being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible deadlines"** (52%). These two items also reflect high incidence rates in the current study with both of these reflecting scores of 37.50% and 32.14% respectively for the frequency, now and then, and 19.05% and 13.69% respectively for the frequency, "daily to weekly". In both studies it seems that the "task" related activities, or what Hoel and Cooper (2000) label as "indirect" actions were responsible for most of the bullying activities. The current study also revealed that the actions **"excessive monitoring of work"**, **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"**, and **"having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** were very prominent and thus support the "task-related" model.

Task-related bullying behaviour seems to be very effective. Lee and Brotheridge (2006) explain that the most potent forms of abuse may well be subtle and ambiguous in nature and thus not always be visible e.g. withholding information that affects performance. "Person-orientated" bullying behaviour like verbal abuse is more easily perceived as aggressive behaviour which is more often met with confrontation. The researchers add that it is difficult for a victim to effectively respond to, or prove, the intents of a perpetrator when the victim's work and reputation is undermined. This may then also explain why 60.24% of the respondents (based on the definition of bullying) feel that they have never observed or witnessed bullying although the frequencies of the negative actions experienced in this study are quite high. On the other hand is it also true, as Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) suggest, that the workforce "may naturalise" negative actions such as "being exposed to an unmanageable workload" as part of their daily job and is this thus not perceive this behaviour as bullying.

In this study the actions that were the least (*never*) experienced over a six month period, refer to "person-orientated" behaviour including **"hints or signals from others that you should quit your job"** (86.31%), **"threats of violence or physical abuse"** (95.83%), and **"being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** (83.93%). The "person-orientated" actions that scored the highest incidence rate and which occur frequently (now and then), are **"spreading of gossip and rumours about you"** (30.36%) and **"being ignored, excluded or send to 'Coventry'"** (27.98%). This would again suggest the more subtle form of bullying. These are the actions that a victim cannot really prove exist, but are very effective (Brotheridge, 2006), opposed to direct confrontation such as the more intimidating behaviour or threats of violence. This is supported by Lutgen-Sandvic (2006) who found that threats of violence and physical abuse are a rare occurrence for both targets and non-targets of bullying It seems that the majority of bullying behaviour is directly applicable to the work related tasks rather than personally intended.

High percentages of individuals who claim that they have *never* been bullied (based on the definition of bullying over the last six months), were frequently exposed to numerous accounts of negative acts in the workplace including; **"someone withholding information that effects your performance"** (47.62%), **"having key areas of responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** (43.45%), and **"having your opinions and views ignored"** (48.81%). Those actions that were perceived most (daily to weekly) are **"excessive monitoring of work"** (10.12%) It is clear that a high incidence of negative

actions is prevalent in the organisation. However, respondents either do not recognise these actions as bullying behaviour, do not understand the "complexity" in the meaning of bullying, or they do not want to "self-label" themselves as victims of bullying behaviour.

A strong relationship between the negative acts and populations group was found. The White and African population groups were more prominent, mostly due to under-representation of the Asian and Coloured group. Research indicates that the White population group had the highest representation (in excess of 25%) with regards to "task-related" negative acts, including **"given tasks with unreasonable or impossible deadlines"** (26.79%), **"being exposed to unmanageable workload"** (25.00%), **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** (30.54%) and **"having key areas of responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** (29.76%) which occurred now and then. The African population on the other hand experienced the highest representation of all the population groups for negative actions that are more subtle in nature including, **"persistent criticism of your work and effort"** (15.57%), **"excessive monitoring of your work"** (22.02%) and **"pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to"** (16.76%). The result thus indicates the different population groups experience different negative actions.

The frequency analysis further indicates that the workforce is fairly young. Participants who have service periods of two years and less represent 51.19% of the study population, while 34.52% are 30 years and younger. This is further supported by the fact that almost one-third (30.36%) of the study population had never been married. This "younger" workforce are experiencing higher accounts of **"persistent criticism of your work and effort"** (8.34%) and **"excessive monitoring of your work"** (13.69%), with the highest occurrence of these negative actions found in the age group 30 years and younger (frequency now and then). This would suggest a younger and more inexperienced workforce that may not be entrusted with more "complex" work. The research further indicates that 13.79% of the respondents experienced **"hints or signals from others that you should quit your job"** daily to weekly, "within the last six months".

The relationship between *level of education* and **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** indicates that especially those with a diploma or post-matric qualification, are more capable of work, than that they are presented with. According to Salin

(2001) the higher the education, the higher the risk that some of the tasks are below the levels of confidence. This may reflect the younger, more inexperienced workforce that joined the company.

The results may therefore indicate that more experienced employees (which seems to be the White population group) may discriminate against the younger workforce, (which seems to be the African population group), but may also suggest that a bully (probably in the form of a manager) recently joined the team. On the other hand it may also be true that younger individuals may still be more sensitive to constructive criticism and thus perceive these actions as bullying. The more experienced workforce is responsible to train these recruits which may add new pressure with work falling behind and deadlines looming. This may well explain why more of the African population group experience more criticism of their work and effort. It may again be attributed to the fact that some individuals are more sensitive to constructive criticism and thus perceive these actions as bullying.

The typical perpetrator in this study was found to be mostly the supervisor or manager with a frequency of 31.03%. Participants, who experienced **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (27.59%), claim that the perpetrator was the supervisor. There is furthermore a strong relationship between this negative action and the control variable "you and several others in your workgroup" with an incidence rate of 55.17% (frequency of daily to now and then) which would thus confirm a more senior status involvement (i.e. when the manager is the perpetrator, more individuals in a workgroup will be affected). This is further supported by the fact that 58.62% of the victims claimed that they and several others had been bullied in their workgroup over the last six months based on the definition of bullying. Research by Quine (1999) supports this with research findings that the most common bully is a senior manager, followed by someone from the same seniority and then someone less senior. Colleagues were also found to be perpetrators with a frequency of 24.14%. Lewis (2006) found that nine out of the ten victims she interviewed were bullied by managers. Salin (2001) agrees that employees in blue collar positions are noticeably more prone experiencing bullying that those employees in white collar (managerial and expert) positions. It is, however, interesting to note that victims also reported the customer/client to be the perpetrator with a frequency of 20.69%. It is the researcher's view that this kind of bullying behaviour is particularly experienced by first-line client support such as the service

desk, where these employees are usually blamed for unresolved or escalated incidents although they are not personally responsible for getting the work done.

This research indicates that although some individuals do not label themselves as observers of this bullying, the data reveals that high percentages of these individuals do indeed experience some negative actions frequently. This may indicate that these individuals do not perceive this behaviour to be directed at their work group, but rather to the individual himself/herself.

It is interesting to note that for those individuals who often observed bullying in the last six months, 4.82% also experienced **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** on a *daily to weekly* basis. This may indicate that this behaviour would be related to a group of people who both experience and observe this behaviour in the group. However, the data further reveals that some observers of bullying never experienced some or all of the negative acts which indicate that all observers may not necessarily be victims.

Niedhammer, David, and Degioanni (2006) explored the association between the characteristics of the exposure to workplace bullying and depressive symptoms in a French working population and found that observing bullying of someone else in the workplace also increased the risk of depressive symptoms. Bullying therefore also impacts negatively on observers.

The role of the observer, on the positive side, is very important as they observe the actual act in favour of the victim. Lutgen-Sandvic (2006, p. 426) summarised these advantages as follows: "Witnessing co-employees corroborate targeted employees' perceptions, build toward collective efforts at change, bring issues to the attention of organisational decision-makers, and interrupt abusive communication. When witnesses partner with target-witnesses to report bullying, it also reduces the likelihood of individual employees being pejoratively labelled". The victim is usually too afraid to speak out on bullying as he/she is afraid that he/she may be labelled as insubordinate. A collective unit on the other hand has much more power to get management's attention.

Person-orientated negative actions including **"intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasion of personal space**, **shoving, blocking/baring the way"**, **"hints or**

signals from others that you should quit your job", **"threats of violence or physical abuse"**, and **"being the subject of excessive sarcasm and teasing"** over the last six months, were *never* experienced by occasional observers (rarely, now and then, often) of bullying, further supporting the fact that these types of behaviour are not overly prominent in the workplace as perceived by individuals or groups.

The negative action **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"**, is very prominent with a moderate to strong relationship in most of the constructs discussed above, and visible (observation) over an extended period (six months vs. five years). This is in agreement with studies by Salin (2001) that found the highest occurrence of bullying behaviour belonging to the "work-related group".

The majority of the respondents perceived "low self-esteem and insecurities" and the misuse of power as the main causes of bullying behaviour, and feel that the company need to implement guidelines, policies, and procedures as a means to prevent this.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Possibly the greatest limitation of this research is that the Negative Acts Questionnaire has not been used extensively in South African research, and this makes it impossible to compare local studies and benchmark them against foreign studies for optimum analysis. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and data analysis were thus compared with those of international studies. Different countries possess different traits such as cultural differences, work ethics, and legislation to name just a few, which all add more variables to the equation.

Another limitation is the fact that the South African workforce is not familiar with the concept of workplace bullying. The perception is that workplace bullying is physical abuse, rather than more subtle forms of abuse. This may ultimately influence the way these questionnaires are answered and impact on data integrity. Respondents need to be familiarised with the concepts in order to understand the impact of this construct. User perception and personality also play an integral role in the incidence of bullying in that some individuals react differently to stressors (such as the negatives acts contained in the Negative Acts Questionnaire) than others which may also impact data integrity. This may vary between individuals, but may also vary between different culture and population groups.

A further limitation that could impact on data integrity is the response distribution. Although a response rate of 84% was achieved, this may not necessarily be a true reflection of the study population, e.g. certain departments may encounter more workplace bullying than others.

One of the goals of this company is to become an employer of choice. It is, however, apparent that bullying is indeed prevalent in the company in certain aspects of the work environment. The majority of the respondents perceived "low self-esteem and insecurities" and the misuse of power as the main causes of bullying behaviour , and feel that the company need to implement guidelines, policies, and procedures as a means to prevent this. It is thus important for the company to relook and develop new policies and models in this regards to not only prevent, but also manage such incidents in the workplace to meet this goal. The study clearly indicates that managers and supervisors are more likely to be the culprits. It is thus important that management also needs be trained and made aware of the concept of bullying and related constructs and implement corrective actions where needed. It is thus important to get the "buy-in" of senior management to lead by example and create and enforce policies in this regard.

I would recommend further studies to be taken in South Africa on workplace bullying not only to create individuals' awareness of this phenomenon, but to obtain optimum data integrity with regards to benchmarking and analysis. I would also suggest the inclusion of company departments (with permission from the company) in the questionnaire, as part of the research as this may indicate "problem departments" where corrective action may be taken (e.g. identify bullies and act) and thus not just label the company as possessing a "bullying culture". A once-off study is not sufficient to understand these phenomena, and continual studies to monitor incidence and awareness of this construct are recommended.

With the growth of information and communication technology via modern communication devices, including cell phones and iPads over the last few years, the researcher would recommend further studies related to cyber-bullying. "Cyber-bullying techniques use modern communication technology to send derogatory or threatening messages directly to the victim or indirectly to others, to forward personal and confidential communication or images of the victim for others to see, and to publicly post denigrating messages" (Privitera & Campbell, 2009, p. 396).

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH ARTICLE 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE BULLYING, JOB SATISFACTION AND THE INTENTION TO QUIT IN AN IT COMPANY

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted among 200 employees who represented staff in different divisions and levels within the company. A response rate of 84% ($n = 168$) completed questionnaires was obtained. A biographical questionnaire, the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), Intention to Quit Questionnaire and the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire were used as the measuring instruments to obtain the result. Results indicated the subtle and verbal forms of bullying to be the most prominent. However, more individuals were prone to subtle that verbal bullying. Workplace bullying greatly impacts on an individual's job satisfaction, which in turn gives rise to higher levels of intention to quit. Job satisfaction thus serves as mediator between bullying behaviour and intention to quit.

Workplace bullying is not a new concept, and a lot of research has gone into this phenomenon over the last decade with the focus shifted lately more to the individual. Agervold (2007, p. 162) summarised this as follows: "Bullying is not a new phenomenon, nor is it a growing problem in terms of frequency of occurrence, but the change in focus from a collective, social psychology to an individual personal perspective has brought out more clearly the negative consequences for its victims". Salin (2001) adds that it is exactly these severely negative outcomes of bullying that have made bullying an issue of great public interest and research.

According to Leymann (1996), stress reactions as a result of severe social stressors, caused by bullying (mobbing), in turn becomes a social stressor to other employees. Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) agree and add that the effect of bullying is triggered by definitive social stressors and social defeats causing, "biopsychosocial stress reactions" and health anomalies for those involved. According to Colligan and Higgins (2005), moderate stress can help stimulate positive productivity. However, as the intensity and duration grow due to new demands, pressures and expectations, it may lead to emotional turmoil, burnout and physical illness.

According to Zaph and Gross (2001), bullying can be described as a certain subset of conflict caused by unequal power structures due to an inability to manage these escalating conflict situations. Research by Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) indicates that unclear roles, reduction of staff and demands for higher productivity lay the ground for frustration, conflicts and a stressful work environment.

Analysis by Leymann (1996) of approximately 800 case studies where bullying was prevalent, indicates a pattern in which extremely poorly organised production and/or working environment and ineffective management thrive. Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) emphasise the influence of poor leadership in the form of a weak, indistinct or passive manager, or the absence of a manager as a whole. Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) argue that it is the responsibility of management to secure a satisfactory work environment in dealing with any conflict that might arise. The problem, however, is that management is sometimes part of the problem. Beasly and Rayner (1997) report that bullying usually filters from the top down (management), which therefore is usually accepted as the norm in the company. Research findings by Meeusen, Van Dam, Brown-Mahoney, Van Zundert, and Knape (2011) support

the notion that work climate is positively related to job satisfaction. Fisher-Blando (2008) adds that the reason bullying is embedded in organisational cultures, is because it is tolerated. It is thus clear that that bullying is the result of stressors within the working environment that lead to conflict. Conflict (cognitive and affective) thus thrives in psychosocially strenuous working environments.

Research by Strandmark and Hallberg (2007) indicates that both individuals who described themselves on the one side as strong, competent and driven (threatening to colleagues) and individuals as vulnerable and sensitive (taken advantage of by colleagues) were targets of bullying as they were "visible" and thus deviating from what appears to be the norm which resulted in conflict. This is further supported by Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, and Salem (2006) after Kivimak et al. (2003) and Coyne, Smith-Lee, Seigne, and Randall (2003) in that the victims of bullying are more often those individuals who lack the social skills in order to resolve these organisational conflicts. Beasly and Rayner (1997) report that a great deal of bullying is based on personal envy, e.g. popularity of victims amongst other colleagues, or the victim being a threat to the bully's position.

Hallberg and Strandmark (2006) agree that victims become the "scapegoat" in that all negative events that occur in the workplace were attributed to the victim, which caused the victim's self-esteem to be affected and this eventually causes the victim to blame himself/herself for the situation at work. In a study by Lewis (2006), a victim reported that she accepted colleagues' explanations of her alleged "difficulties", as post–natal depression after she returned to work from maternity leave, although she did nothing wrong. It is apparent that the blame is thus shifted from the company/perpetrator to the victim.

Researchers argue that bullying is a "vicious circle" in that mental health problems (Kivimäki et al., 2003) and ill health (Lewis, 2006), which are caused by bullying as a stressor, may again increase the susceptibility to bullying in that it may in turn be used against the victim rather than identifying problem areas within the wider context of the work Quine (1999) noted that employees who revealed mental states such as being depressed, stressed or anxious, may be more prone to become victims of bullying as they are perceived to be "weak" and thus not able to defend themselves.

Thomas (2004) reports that loss of confidence and loss of self-esteem were the highest reported syndromes as a result of bullying. Beasly and Rayner (2007) argue that undermining self-confidence leads to action including such symptoms as sleeplessness, panic attacks and depression where suicidal thoughts can sometimes lead to action. Persson et al. (2009) add that victims of bullying have a self-image dominated by worry, mistrust and embitterment, irritability and impulsiveness. This ultimately causes them to doubt their own work performance and ability to maintain good relationships at work. Lee and Brotheridge (2006) argue that being bullied is not directly related to burnout or ill-health in targets, but rather emerged through their sense of self-doubt which in turn affected the target's level of well-being. Mathisen, Einarsen, and Mykletun (2008) agree and add that victims are found to be more cynical toward their job, exhausted and generally perceived themselves as less efficient as an employee. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy reported higher levels of job satisfaction as opposed to teachers with high levels of overall stress who reported lower levels of job satisfaction.

It is clear that bullying causes a stressful work environment that affects a person self-worth and causes the victims to experience a low or plummeting morale and a sense of isolation which in turn results in loss of interest in a job that was previously enjoyed (Thomas, 2004) and thus negatively affects commitment and job satisfaction. Mathisen et al. (2008) also emphasise what they label "the reciprocal relationship" between these variables in that bullying leads to lower job satisfaction and commitment and higher levels of burnout, which in turn leads to even more bullying behaviour.

Job satisfaction refers to one's feelings or state of mind regarding the nature of their work (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011) guided by rational thoughts and emotional feelings (Stanley, 2001). Job satisfaction thus refers to an employee's attitude towards his/her work environment. Employees who are positive about their workplace have higher levels of job satisfaction which in turn mitigates the possibility of intention to quit (Stanley, 2001). Swider, Boswell, and Zimmerman (2011) also emphasise the importance of a workplace that fosters positive attitudes in retaining employees.

Bullying does not only affect job satisfaction, but due to stressful work environment can lead to ill health. Empirical research by inter alia Lewis (2006), Mikkelson and Einarsen (2001), Hallberg and Strandmark (2006), Thomas (2004) and Coyne et al. (2003), indicates that

victims of bullying result in significantly higher levels of **psychological and behavioural symptoms** (inability to concentrate and/or sleep, mood swings, anxiety, depression, despair and fear, loss of confidence and self-esteem, social withdrawal) and **psychosomatic symptoms** (headache, fatigue, stomach and bowl problems, gastric catarrh, hypersensitivity to sound, respiratory and cardiac complaints, and hypertension).

Research by Kivimäki et al. (2003) shows a clear cumulative relation between bullying and depression. The longer the victim is exposed to bullying the greater the risk of depression. Niedhammer, David, and Degioanni (2006) not only found that more frequent exposure, as well as the observation of bullying, increased the risk of depressive symptoms confirming a "dose-response relationship", but also that past exposure to bullying still had an impact on these symptoms pointing out the long-term effect of this relationship. Research by Nolfe, Petrella, Blasi, Zontini, and Nolfe (2007) where the pathogenic relationship between workplace harassment and psychiatric aspects (amongst others) was examined, indicated that depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) are the more frequent psychiatric diseases related to bullying behaviour. They found adjustment disorders to be the main clinical and psychopathological dimension with a high incidence of anxiety and mood disorders. A study by Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) where the incidence and intensity of PSTD symptoms on self-reported victims of bullying were investigated revealed a positive relationship between severity of these symptoms and the degree of bullying. The more bullying actions that were reported by victims, the more post-traumatic stress symptoms they displayed and the longer the duration experienced, the higher the level of impairment. Research by Leymann and Gustaffson (1996) revealed that PTSD reactions for bullying victims were not only statistically more severe than what train drivers encountered who killed persons on railway lines, but similar to those reactions which were experienced by raped woman. These individuals found themselves in both a prolonged stress and trauma-creating situation as these reactions, which result in extreme stress situations, are constantly renewed.

Beasly and Rayner (1997) report that bullying has a ripple effect on the victims' family and loved ones, which may include irritable and aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, losing interest in family and alcoholism. Bullied persons feel that work causes problems at home (Persson et al., 2009). A study by Thomas (2004) supports this. In an interview with a victim, she claimed that while being bullied she felt guilty and resentful that she had neglected her children as a result of depression. Victims of bullying further report more negative

assessment of various aspects of their daily work (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998), less pleasure at work, more worrying, and a higher need for recovery after work (Notelaers, Einarsen, De Witte, & Vermunt, 2006) than those who were not bullied.

It is thus not surprising that sickness absence is one of the most frequent outcomes of workplace bullying. Research by Thomas (2005) revealed that victims reported being absent from work more frequently due to illness, ranging from a few days to more than a month. The majority who took sick leave did so for short periods, which meant that no sick certificate was required. This is supported by Pranjić, Maleš-Bilić, Beganlić, and Mustajbegović (2006) who found that the median duration for sick leave, among physicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was five days - thus 3.5% higher than those individuals who did not experience bullying. Quine's (1999) research of bullying behaviour at the NHS community trust indicates that people taking time off from work as a result of bullying related illnesses amounted to 335 days being lost to absences. It is clear that bullying may have a devastating on the victim in the workplace.

According to Zaph and Gross (2001) bullying in an advanced state is a non-control situation for the victim. When victims of bullying were asked what resolutions to bullying they would suggest to employees in similar situation, they indicated that the best source of action would be to leave the company or seeking support as an alternative. This is supported by Rayner (1997) who found that the most popular coping responses to bullying were to either accept it as part of the job, consultation with colleagues or the human resources department, or leaving the company. Research, however, indicates that active strategies such as talking with the bullies or calling in the supervisor only worsened the situation (Zaph & Gross, 2001). Lutgen-Sandvik (2006, p. 425) summarised the risk of resisting bullying behaviour as follows: "Resistance is risky business for employees, and there is always the potential for unintended consequences: They want change but get punished; they report abuse but are stigmatised for reporting; they fight back and are labelled insubordinate. This means that the only solution would be to separate bully and victim or the victim leaving the company which on both parts can sometimes be a triumph on both sides".

Empirical research, however, indicates that it may not always be possible for the victim to quit the company. Hallberg and Strandmark (2006) found that victims may in early stages of bullying experience opportunities to leave the workplace voluntarily and if it were possible to

obtain good work references they would go, but as time passed this all deteriorated. Beasly and Rayner (1997) add that the majority of victims will endure the bullying, keep quiet and remain in their jobs as they have families to support and mortgages to pay. Confronting the bully can eventually lead to the victim getting the sack and most cases the victim usually feels forced to leave the company which forces the win – lose situation as the victim need to leave but the perpetrator stay. On the other hand victims sometimes just feel that there is no reason why they should leave their jobs because of a bully, although in extreme cases the victims are forced to leave the company due to ill-health (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006). One of the problems of the victim leaving the company is that when an employee quits, a company may not see a reason to investigate a departed person's reports of abuse and thus shift the blame away from the company (Lutgen-Sandvic, 2006). The costs of turnover, what Fisher-Blando (2008) labels as direct costs, are not only limited to recruitment, retraining or temporary labour, but also the loss of valuable experience and knowledge.

Moayed et al. (2006, p. 313) summarise the cost of bullying as follows: "lost workdays due to absenteeism, increased health insurance and employees' compensation due to the psychological/psychosomatic problems and chronic diseases (asthma or diabetes or cardiovascular diseases), lower productivity and poor quality due to lower job satisfaction, motivation and self-confidence, higher personnel cost due to turnover and training new employees".

In the aftermath of the recent recession the IT industry is still under immense financial pressure due to, inter alia, budget cuts from potential and current clients as projects are indefinitely put on hold or cancelled as a means to survive. Competition between companies leads to more "conservative" strategic approaches. According to Thomson (2008) companies want better return on their investments, ultimately spending money more effectively, even if this would suggest spending cuts, more off-shore resources or cheap labour in other countries. Glen (2008) stresses that IT managers are under pressure to cut costs regardless of the effect on the company and may use threats of layoffs and firings to frighten their staff into doing better. It is therefore my opinion that these pressures may foster an environment that may lead to bullying.

METHOD

Research design

The aim of a research design, according to Mouton and Marais (1996, p. 32), is "to align the pursuit of a research goal with the practical consideration and limitation of the research project". A cross-sectional survey design was used to achieve the research objectives. The researcher collected data by means of questionnaires as this was the most effective method to obtain adequate information to reach the research objectives. Based on the nature of the study a confidentiality clause was included in conjunction with the North-West University. These questionnaires were delivered by hand. The data was collected from the participants within 7 days of issue. A random sample of about 200 employees, representative of the entire company, was given the opportunity to participate.

Study population

The participants who took part in this study represented IT personnel (N = 200) from different divisions and levels within the company. A response rate of 84% (n = 168) was achieved.

The biographical characteristics of the study population are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	53.0
	Female	79	47.0
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Population group	African	50	29.7
	Asian	19	11.3
	Coloured	8	4.8
	White	91	54.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Home language	Afrikaans	80	47.6
	English	41	24.4
	African language	47	28.0
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Age	30 years and younger	58	34.5
	31 – 39 years	50	29.8
	40 - 49 years	41	24.4
	50 – 59 years	17	10.1
	60 – and older	2	1.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Marital status	Married	100	59.5
	Divorced / separated	14	8.3
	Widowed	3	1.8
	Single, never married	51	30.4
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Education level	Grade 12	25	14.9
	Diploma/Post-matric qualification	91	54.2
	Bachelor's degree	36	21.4
	Post-graduate	16	9.5
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Employment status	Permanent	139	82.7
	Contractor	29	17.3
	Total	**168**	**100.0**
Service years	Less than 2 years	86	51.1
	2 – 4 years	46	27.4
	5 – 7 years	5	3.0
	8 – 10 years	18	10.7
	11 – 13 years	8	4.8
	14 – 16 years	2	1.2
	17 – 19 years	1	0.6
	20 years and more	2	1.2
	Total	**168**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows that gender is more or less equally distributed with 47.0% females and 53.0% males who participated in this study. The majority of the participants are White (54.2%), followed by Africans (29.7%) and Asians (11.3%). Only 4.8% Coloured people participated in this study.

Respondents of the age group, 30 years and younger, represent 34.5% of the study population, and the age group between 31 and 39 years, 28.8% of the study population. The study also indicates that 51.1% of the study population had been employed for two years and less.

The employment status indicates that 17.26 % of the study population are contractors.

Measuring battery

The following measuring instruments were used in this study:

- *Biographical information*: a biographical questionnaire was constructed in order to obtain relevant biographical data about the participants in the research. This enabled the researcher to obtain different respondent profiles for purposes of statistical analysis (e.g. age, gender, qualifications, job level, marital status and family status). The participants' anonymity was maintained throughout this process.

- *Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised* (NAQ-R)*:* The NAQ-R (Einarsen & Raknes, 2007) was specifically designed to measure perceived exposure to bullying and victimisation at work. The version of the NAQ that was used in this research consists of 22 items describing negative behaviour in the workplace, which may be perceived as bullying if it occurs persistently over a period of time (e.g. "Someone withholding information which affects your performance"). The NAQ-R contains items referring to both direct (e.g. finger-pointing) and indirect behaviours (e.g. being ignored). The response alternatives are "never", "now and then", "monthly", "every week" and "daily". The researcher obtained written permission from Morten Birkeland Nielsen of the Bergen Bullying Research Group to make use of the NAQ-R.

A formal definition of bullying was also presented and respondents were asked whether or not they considered themselves as victims of bullying. The response categories are "no", "yes", "to some extent" and "yes extremely".

The respondents who confirmed that they were victims of bullying (victim group) were requested to supply information about when they had been bullied (e.g. "within the last six months"), formal position of the perpetrator(s) (e.g. colleagues), and the number of male and female perpetrators. The non-bullied group were asked to indicate whether they had observed or witnessed bullying during a specified period. The internal stability of the scale is high with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from α 0.84 to 0.91 being obtained (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

The researcher introduced two open-ended questions to both the victim and non-bullied groups, namely "What do you perceive as the cause(s) of bullying behaviour in your workplace?" and "What can your company do to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace?" as a means to find a solution to the problem.

- *Intention to Quit* (Price, 1997): The "intention to quit" questionnaire is a modified questionnaire that measures the strength of the respondent's intention to leave a present position. It is measured by using the four items of Price (1997) (e.g. "If I could, I would quit today."). The response alternatives range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A high score thus reflects positively on the intention to leave. The Cronbach's Alpha coeddicients in previous studies ranged from α = 0.70 (Isaksson, et al., 2003) to 0.79 (De Jong, 2008).

- *Job Satisfaction Questionnaire* (Price, 1997): The "Job satisfaction" questionnaire is a modified questionnaire that measures the strength of the respondent's job satisfaction. It is measured by using the four items of Price (1997) (e.g. "I am not happy with my job."). The response alternatives range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A low score thus reflects positively on job satisfaction. The reliability of this instrument is high, as a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of α = 0.82 was obtained (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

Statistical analysis

The importance of the statistical analysis in this research is to present the findings in the form of tables, graphs and reports. The Statistical Consulting Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, carried out the statistical analysis with the SPSS programme (SPSS 20) and it will include the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to access the validity and reliability of the research and descriptive statistics to analyse the data such as means and standard deviations. The phi-coefficient (Φ) was used to determine the effect size and power for the chi-square test for independence (Aron, Elliot, & Aron, 2011).

RESULTS

Table 2 provides an indication of the frequency of responses (%) based on the definition of bullying.

Table 2
Frequency of Responses based on the Definition of Bullying (%)

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months?		
No	139	82.74
Yes, very rarely	8	4.76
Yes, now and then	9	5.36
Yes, several times per month	4	2.38
Yes, sever times per week	4	2.38
Yes, almost daily	4	2.38
Total	**168**	**100.00**
When did the bullying start?		
Within the last 6 months	18	**62.07**
Between 6 and 12 months ago	3	10.35
Between 1 and 2 years ago	5	17.24
More than 2 years ago	3	10.34
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many persons bullied you?		
Number of men	6	20.69
Number of women	13	44.83
Number of men and women	10	34.48
Total	**29**	**100.00**
Who bullied you?		
Colleague/s	7	24.14
Supervisor / Manager	9	31.03
Subordinates	0	0.00
Client / Customer	6	20.70
Colleague/s and Supervisor / Manager	3	10.34
Supervisor / Manager and Subordinates	4	13.79
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many were bullied?		
Only you	9	31.03
You and several other work colleagues	17	58.62
Everyone in your workgroup	3	10.35
Total	**29**	**100.00**

Table 2

Frequency of Responses based on the Definition of Bullying (%)(cont.)

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Using the definition of bullying, please state whether you have been bullied over the last 6 months?		
No	139	82.74
Yes, very rarely	8	4.76
Yes, now and then	9	5.36
Yes, several times per month	4	2.38
Yes, sever times per week	4	2.38
Yes, almost daily	4	2.38
Total	**168**	**100.00**
Have you ever witnessed or observed bullying in your workplace in the last 6 months?		
No, never	100	60.24
Yes, but rarely	38	22.89
Yes, now and then	15	9.04
Yes, often	13	7.83
Total	**166**	**100.00**
Have you ever been bullied in the last 5 years?		
Yes	53	31.55
No	115	68.45
Total	**168**	**100.00**
Have you ever observed or witnessed bullying over the last 5 years?		
Yes	88	52.38
No	80	47.62
Total	**168**	**100.00**
When did the bullying start?		
Within the last 6 months	18	62.07
Between 6 and 12 months ago	3	10.35
Between 1 and 2 years ago	5	17.24
More than 2 years ago	3	10.34
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many persons bullied you?		
Number of men	6	20.69
Number of women	13	44.83
Number of men and women	10	34.48
Total	**29**	**100.00**
Who bullied you?		
Colleague/s	7	24.14
Supervisor / Manager	9	31.03
Subordinates	0	0.00
Client / Customer	6	20.70
Colleague/s and Supervisor / Manager	3	10.34
Supervisor / Manager and Subordinates	4	13.79
Total	**29**	**100.00**
How many were bullied?		
Only you	9	31.03
You and several other work colleagues	17	58.62
Everyone in your workgroup	3	10.35
Total	**29**	**100.00**

Table 2 indicates that 17.26 % of the respondents claim that they have been bullied (based on the definition of bullying) in the last six months. The majority of bullying occurs very rarely and now and then. For the same period bullying was frequently observed (39.76%). Table 3 further shows that more individuals (31.55%) claim to be bullied if the last five years are taken into account and 52.38% observed bullying over this period. More people thus experienced and observed bullying over the last five years as opposed to the last six months. Table 3 further indicates that the majority of the respondents (62.07%) claim that the bullying started within the last six months.

Women are more often found to be the bully (44.83%) than men (20.69%). When roles are taken into consideration, the supervisor/manager is more often found to be the perpetrator (31.03%), followed by colleague/s (24.14%) and then the customer/client (20.70%). Furthermore, victims mostly experience that they and several others of their work colleagues are subject to bullying (58.62%) as opposed to single individuals.

Table 3 provides an indication of the frequency of responses (%) based on the definition of bullying.

Table 3

Frequency of Responses – Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (%)

During the last 6 months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts in your workplace?	Never (%)	Now and then (%)	Weekly / Daily (%)
1. Someone withholding information which affects your performance	29.76	**48.81**	**21.43**
2. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	62.28	27.54	10.18
3. Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	37.72	**40.72**	**21.56**
4. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	39.29	**42.86**	**17.85**
5. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	61.31	30.36	8.33
6. Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry' (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	54.17	27.98	17.86
7. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	77.38	14.88	7.74
8. Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	70.83	20.24	8.93
9. Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	**79.17**	14.29	6.55
10. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	**86.31**	6.55	7.14
11. Threats of violence or physical abuse	**95.83**	2.38	1.79
12. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	68.45	20.83	10.71
13. Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	67.26	24.40	8.33
14. Persistent criticism of your work and effort	72.46	15.57	11.98
15. Having your opinions and views ignored	30.36	**48.81**	**20.83**
16. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	**79.64**	14.37	5.99
17. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or Deadlines	48.81	**37.50**	**13.69**
18. Having allegations made against you	78.57	14.29	7.14
19. Excessive monitoring of your work	49.40	**26.19**	**24.40**
20. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	67.26	18.45	14.29
21. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	**83.93**	14.29	1.79
22. Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	48.81	**32.14**	**19.05**

The negative actions that were experienced most frequently (*now and then*), are:

- **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (48.81%),
- **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** (40.72%),
- **"having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks"** (42.86%), and
- **"having your views and opinions ignored"** (48.81%).

The negative actions that were experienced most frequently on a "daily/weekly" basis are:

- **"Excessive monitoring of your work"** (24.40%),
- **"being ordered to do work below your level of competence"** (21.56%),
- **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"** (21.43%), and
- **"having your views and opinions ignored"** (20.83%).

It is clear that at least one out of five respondents experienced these actions on a *daily or weekly* basis.

The majority of the respondents never experienced:

- **"being threatened with violence or physical abuse"** (95.83%),
- **"hints or signals from others that they should quit their job"** (86.31%),
- **"experienced practical jokes carried out by people they did not get on with"** (79.64%),
- **"being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** (83.93%), and
- **"experienced intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way"** (79.17%).

About 30% of the respondents in this study claim that they are "being ignored, excluded, or being 'send to Coventry'" (27.98%) and exposed to "spreading of gossip and rumours about you" (30.36%). These actions are directed more at the individual than at the work itself.

The results of the Principal Factor Analysis of Negative Acts for Employees in an IT company are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Principal Factor Analysis of Negative Acts for Employees in an IT Company

		FACTOR		
		F_1	F_2	h^2
BU21	Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	**0.85**	-0.19	0.43
BU14	Persistent criticism of your work and effort	**0.71**	0.17	0.76
BU7	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you as a person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	**0.69**	0.06	0.56
BU16	Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	**0.67**	-0.81	0.02
BU9	Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	**0.65**	0.00	0.42
BU12	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	**0.62**	0.18	0.64
BU10	Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	**0.62**	0.11	0.52
BU18	Having allegations made against you	**0.55**	0.12	0.45
BU8	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	**0.53**	0.14	0.45
BU11	Threats of violence or physical abuse	**0.49**	-0.09	0.16
BU13	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	**0.44**	**0.34**	0.60
BU19	Excessive monitoring of your work	**0.43**	**0.27**	0.49
BU2	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	**0.41**	**0.38**	0.63
BU5	Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	**0.41**	0.16	0.32
BU20	Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	0.37	0.27	0.42
BU4	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	-0.01	**0.74**	0.53
BU3	Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	-0.13	**0.72**	0.35
BU15	Having your opinions and views ignored	0.24	**0.56**	0.63
BU17	Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	0.23	**0.53**	0.58
BU22	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	0.20	**0.53**	0.54
BU6	Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	0.26	**0.43**	0.47
BU1	Someone withholding information which affects your performance	0.05	**0.41**	0.21
	Percentage variance explained	45.87%	6.69%	52.60%

F1 = Bullying-Verbal F2 = Bullying-Subtle

Extraction Method: Principle Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalisation

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations

Table 4 contains loadings of variables on factors, communalities and percentage of variance explained. A principal component analysis was carried out on the 22 items of negative acts questionnaire revised (NAQ-R) and an Oblimin rotation was performed. The scree plot

showed a sharp break after the first factor, and two factors were retained. The number of factors retained for different forms of bullying behaviour was based on the pattern of item loadings. The first factor was labelled verbal bullying (15 items) and the second factor subtle bullying (7 items). Out of the 22 items, 4 items (BU13, BU19, BU2, BU20) comprise a double loading which may indicate ambiguous questions.

The results of the Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter Item Correlation Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter Item Correlation Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kutosis	α
Verbal Bullying	1.35	0.42	9.20	7.54	0.92
Behavioural Bullying	1.78	0.52	2.83	-15.24	0.83
Satisfaction	3.53	1.14	-2.76	-1.88	0.85
Turnover	2.38	1.33	3.40	-24.84	0.92

The Cronbach's Alpha values obtained for verbal bullying, subtle bullying, job satisfaction and intention to quit were all higher than the guideline of $\alpha > 0.70$. Therefore, it appears that all the measuring instruments in this study have very high levels of acceptable internal consistency.

The information reflected in Table 5 shows that the scores on all the variables have a normal distribution. The z-values for skewness are > 2.58 which indicate that the skewness confidence level is 99%. The standard deviation is about 30% of the mean in all cases, except for intention to quit where the deviation is more than 50% relative to the mean. All the constructs, except for job satisfaction, indicate skewness > 0. This means that most of the values are concentrated to the left of the mean. Job satisfaction indicates skewness < 0 which indicates that most of the data is concentrated to the right of the mean. Verbal bullying has a positive leptokurtic kurtosis (>3) which indicates a relatively peaked distribution level

opposed to the rather lower and broader peaks (platycurtic) of the other constructs where kurtosis < 3.

The results of Pearson Correlation Coefficients are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Verbal Bullying, Subtle Bullying, Satisfaction and Intention to Quit

	1	2	3	4
Verbal bullying	-			
Behavioural bullying	-0.73*++	-		
Satisfaction	-0.25*	-0.31*+	-	
Turnover intention	0.35*+	0.38*+	-0.70*++	-

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
+ Practically significant, medium effect (r > 0.30)
++ Practically significant, large effect (r > 0.50)

Table 6 indicates a practically high significant correlation coefficient (p. < 0.01) between all constructs. There is a practically negative significant correlation with a large effect (r > 0.50) between verbal bullying and subtle bullying, and also between intention to quit and job satisfaction. There is a practically significant correlation with a medium effect (r > 0.30) between subtle bullying and the satisfaction and also between subtle bullying and intention to quit. A practically negative significant correlation with a medium effect (r > 0.30) exists between subtle bullying and satisfaction.

The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis with intention to quit as dependent variable are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

Regression Analysis with Intention to Quit as Dependent Variable

	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R²	ΔR²
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	18.06	3.02		5.99	0.00*	3.16	0.38	**0.14**	0.1
	Employment status	-2.17	1.10	**-0.16**	**-1.88**	**0.05***				
2	(Constant)	12.82	3.31		3.87	0.00*	4.26	4.49	**0.20**	0.15
	Employment status	-1.86	1.07	-0.14	-1.74	0.08				
	Bullying-verbal	0.22	0.07	**0.27**	**3.37**	**0.00***				
3	(Constant)	10.94	3.34		3.28	0.00*	4.60	0.48	**0.23**	0.18
	Employment status	-1.85	1.05	-0.14	-1.77	0.08				
	Bullying-verbal	0.05	0.10	0.06	0.514	0.61				
	Bullying-subtle	0.40	0.16	**0.27**	**2.52**	**0.01***				
4	(Constant)	18.00	2.71		6.66	0.00*	15.67	0.73	**0.56**	0.50
	Employment status	-0.08	0.84	-0.01	-0.10	0.92				
	Bullying-verbal	0.101	0.074	0.120	1.36	0.177				
	Bullying-subtle	0.11	0.13	0.07	0.83	0.41				
	Satisfaction	-0.73	0.07	**-0.64**	**-9.85**	**0.00***				

Dependent variable: Intention to quit

Table 7 shows that the entry of employment status at the first step of the regression analysis produced a statistically significant model (F =3.16; p < 0.00), accounting for 14% of the variance. More specifically, employment status (β = -0.16; t = -1.88; p < 0.05) consisting of permanent or contract employees, predicts intention to quit. When verbal bullying is added in step 2, employment status no longer contributes significantly to this model. 20% of the variance in intention to quit is explained by verbal bullying with moderate standard coefficient (β = 0.27; t = 3.37; p < 0.00). In step 3, subtle bullying predicted 23% of the variance in intention to quit with a moderate standard coefficient (β = 0.27; t = 2.52; p < 0.00). Employment status and verbal bullying no longer contribute significantly to intention to quit in this model. In step 4, employment status, verbal bullying and subtle bullying do not contribute significantly to intention to quit when they are entered with satisfaction. 56% of the variant in intention to quit can be explained by satisfaction with a strong standard coefficient (β = -0.64; t = -9.85; p < 0.00). The negative value indicates that low job satisfaction will predict higher intention to quit.

The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis with satisfaction as dependent variable are depicted in Table 8.

Table 8

Regression Analysis with Satisfaction as Dependent Variable

	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R^2	ΔR^2
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	5.32	2.53		2.10	0.04*	4.68	0.44	**0.20**	0.16
	Employment status	2.56	0.92	**0.22**	**2.78**	**0.00***				
2	(Constant)	7.75	2.85		2.72	0.01*	4.59	0.46	**0.21**	0.17
	Employment status	2.42	0.92	**0.21**	**2.63**	**0.01***				
	Verbal bullying	-0.10	.	-0.14	-1.82	0.07				
3	(Constant)	9.63	2.85		3.38	0.00*	5.21	0.51	**0.26**	0.21
	Employment status	2.42	0.90	**0.20**	**2.69**	**0.01**				
	Verbal bullying	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.88	0.38				
	Subtle bullying	-0.40	0.13	**-0.31**	**-2.95**	**0.00***				
	Service	0.53	0.25	**0.17**	**20.16**	**0.03***				

Dependent variable: Satisfaction

Table 8 shows that the entry of employment status at the first step of the regression analysis produced a statistically significant model (F =4.68; p < 0.00), accounting for 20% of the variance, more specifically employment status (β = 0.22; t = 2.78; p < 0.00) consisting of permanent or contract employees, job satisfaction. Verbal bullying does not contribute significantly to job satisfaction when it is entered with employment status which can only explain 21% of the variance (step 2). In step 3, the regression coefficients of employment status (β = 20; t = 2.69; p < 0.05), subtle bullying (β = -0.31; t = -2.95, p < 0.00) and service level (β = 0.17; t = 2.16; p < 0.00) are statistically significant when subtle bullying is added to this model and contributes to 26% of the total variance of job satisfaction.

The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis with intention to quit as dependent variable are depicted in Table 9.

Table 9

Regression Analysis with Intention to Quit as Dependent Variable (excluding subtle bullying and verbal bullying)

	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R^2	ΔR^2
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	18.14	2.96		6.13	0.00*	3.81	0.40	0.16	0.12
		-	-	-	-	-				
2	(Constant)	22.55	2.29		9.84	0.00*	18.71	0.72	**0.52**	0.49
	Satisfaction	-0.78	0.07	**-0.67**	-10.76	0.00*				

Dependent variable: Intention to quit

Table 9 indicates that none of the biographical predictors were statistically significant in explaining intention to quit. 52% of the variance in intention to quit can be explained by job satisfaction which contributes significantly (β = -67; t = 9.84; p < 0.00) to this model. The negative value indicates that low job satisfaction will predict higher intention to quit.

The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis with intention to quit as dependent variable (Non – Victims) are depicted in Table 10.

Table 10

Regression Analysis with Intention to Quit as Dependent Variable (including result of bullying over 6 month period)

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R^2	ΔR^2
	B	SE	Beta						
1 (Constant)	17.45	2.94		5.93	0.00*	4.04	0.44	**0.19**	0.15
Bullying	1.13	0.36	**0.24**	**3.11**	**0.00***				
2 (Constant)	12.12	3.43	0.13	3.53	0.00*	4.39	0.44	**0.24**	0.19
Bullying	0.60	0.43		1.40	0.17				
Verbal bullying	-0.01	0.10	-0.01	-0.07	0.94				
Subtle bullying	0.39	0.16	**0.26**	**2.45**	**0.02***				
	0.39	0.16							
3 (Constant)	19.25	2.76		6.97	0.00*	4.60	0.74	**0.55**	0.51
Bullying	0.63	0.33	0.14	1.88	0.62				
Verbal bullying	-0.04	0.08	0.05	0.55	0.60				
Subtle bullying	0.09	0.13	0.06	0.50	0.46				
Satisfaction	-0.74	0.07	**-0.64**	**-9.95**	**0.00***				

Dependent variable: Intention to quit

Table 10 indicates that 19% of the variance in intention to quit can be explained by whether a person is bullied (β = 0.24; t = 3.11; p < 0.00). When the subtle and verbal bullying components are also added in step 2, 24% of the variance in intention to quit is explained by subtle bullying with a moderate standard coefficient (β = 26; t = 2.45; p < 0.05). In step 3, both the subtle and verbal bullying components no longer contributes significantly to intention to quit when they were entered with Satisfaction. In this model, satisfaction explains 55% variance of intention to quit with a stronger standard coefficient (β = -0.64; t = -9.95; p < 0.00). The negative value indicates that low job satisfaction will predict higher intention to quit.

The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis with satisfaction as dependent variable (Non – Victim) are depicted in Table 11.

Table 11

Regression Analysis with Satisfaction as Dependent Variable (including result of bullying over 6 month period)

	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	*F*	*R*	R 2	ΔR^2
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	5.50	2.53		2.17	0.03*	4.29	0.45	**0.20**	0.16
	Bullying	-0.33	0.31	-0.08	-1.05	0.28				
	Employment status	2.50	0.92	**0.21**	**2.71**	**0.01***				
2	(Constant)	9.71	2.95		3.29	0.00*	4.71	0.51	**0.26**	0.20
	Employment status	2.42	0.90	**0.20**	**2.69**	**0.01***				
	Service	0.53	0.25	**0.18**	**2.15**	**0.03***				
	Bullying	0.04	0.37	0.01	0.11	0.91				
	Verbal bullying	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.76	0.45				
	Subtle bullying	-0.40	0.14	**-0.32**	**-2.94**	**0.00***				

Dependent variable: Satisfaction

Table 11 shows that 20% of the variance in satisfaction can be explained by employment status (permanent or contractor) with a statistically significant contribution (β = 0.21; t = 2.71; p < 0.05). The verbal component of bullying does not contribute significantly to job satisfaction when it is entered in model 1 with employment status. In step 2, the regression coefficients of employment status (β = 0.20; t = 2.69; p < 0.05), subtle bullying (β = -0.32, t = -2.94; p < 0.00) and service level (β = 0.18; t = 2.15; p < 0.05) are statistically significant when the subtle component of bullying is added to this model and contribute to 26% of the total variance of job satisfaction. The negative value indicates that the subtle form of bullying will be a higher predictor of intention to quit than a verbal form of bullying.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company. One of the goals of the company that participated in the in the study is to be an employer of choice, which means that all obstacles that may prevent the company from reaching this goal, need to be identified and action taken accordingly.

International research has proven the devastating effect of bullying not just on the employees but also on the company. These may include turnover, recruitment cost, training, lower productivity, higher absenteeism, lower morale and a stressful environment (Needham, 2003). Hallberg and Strandmark (2006) also stress the fact that the longer bullying continues the more problematic it becomes to resolve the situation. Very little research has been done in South Africa. This is an unfamiliar concept for both the company and employee. Subsequently companies do not have policies drafted to deal with these demands and employees don't realise that they are victims of bullying and this results in an unsatisfied workforce.

A frequency analysis of the responses (negative actions) reveals that bullying is indeed prevalent in the company (17.26%), although the perception of the majority of the respondents is that they have never been bullied (self-reported based on a definition of bullying over the last six months). When this period is extended to five years, the level of bullying perceived increases to 31.55% and bullying observation to 52.38%. This is very much in line with Jennifer, Cowie and Ananiadou (2003) and Hoel, Rayner, and Cooper (1999) who stress the fact that the incidence of bullying varies widely depending on which frequency of bullying is defined, e.g. "within the last six months", "over the last six months", or "ever in your career".

The negative actions that scored the highest incidence rate with both 48.81% (now and then) are **"someone withholding information that effects your performance"** followed by **"having your views and opinions ignored"**. These actions also scored high values on a daily to weekly basis with frequencies of 21.43% and 20.83% respectively. This is very much in line with studies conducted by Hoel and Cooper (2000) at UMIST. Their research indicated that 67% of the study population felt that someone was withholding information

that affected their performance while 57% of the respondents felt that their views and opinions were ignored. They further reported two other items with an incidence rate of more than 50% namely, **"being exposed to an unmanageable workload"** (54%) and **"being given task with unreasonable or impossible deadlines"** (52%). These two items also reflect high incidence rates in the current study with both of these reflecting scores of 37.50% and 32.14% respectively for the frequency, now and then, and 19.05% and 13.69% respectively for the frequency, daily to weekly.

The results of this study indicate that all the measuring instruments used in this study are reliable in terms of their use ranging from ranging from α 0.84 to 0.92 as measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients.

Factor analysis was performed using principal component analysis and Oblimin rotation method. The two factors that explained 52.57% of the variance are labelled verbal bullying and subtle bullying. The verbal component of bullying refers to negative actions including but not limited to, **"threats of violence or physical abuse"**, **"repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes"**, "**being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm"** and **"being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger or rage"**. The more subtle form of abuse (behaviour) would include actions such as **"someone withholding information that affects your performance"**, **"being ordered to do below your levels of confidence"**, and **"having your views and opinions ignored"**. As discussed earlier these actions scored very high based on the frequency analysis. Lee and Brotheridge (2006) express the effectiveness of the subtle forms of bullying in that it cannot be easily detected i.e. an employee cannot really prove that someone is "withholding information that affects his performance".

A negative kurtosis (platykurtic) is detected for the constructs subtle bullying, satisfaction and intention to quit which would suggest the distribution of values that is spread more widely around the mean than that of the positive kurtosis (leptokurtic) with a sharper than normal distribution and values concentrated around the mean with a probability for extreme values. This may suggest that more individuals will be prone to the subtle form of bullying behaviour than verbal bullying. The 5-point scale for bullying behaviour ranges from 1 "never", 2 "now and then" 3 "monthly", 4 "weekly", and 5 "daily" which was converted to a 3 point scale i.e. "never", "now and then" and "weekly/daily". The negative skewness for both forms of bullying would thus suggest that most of the answers were to the right of the

mean in other words more towards the 1 "never" and 2 "now and then" frequencies. Bullying was indeed prevalent with an incidence of 17.3% over the last six months which rises to 31.5 % if this period was extended to five years. This would thus suggest that people are being bullied, but are not aware of the particular behaviour that constitutes bullying. Lutgen-Sandvic (2006) explains that this may be attributed to the fact that people may not see actions such as "being exposed to an unmanageable workload" as bullying but rather as "part of their job".

The correlation coefficient indicates a strong negative relation between both the verbal and the more subtle forms of bullying. This would suggest that perpetrators who are more likely to use subtle tactics of bullying would be less likely to use verbal forms of bullying and vice versa. This may be because verbal forms of abuse are less prevalent within in the company.

The data further indicates a moderate relation between intention to quit and subtle bullying (0.38), as well as verbal bullying (0.35). Based on the findings individuals subjected to subtle bullying will be more likely to quit than those exposed to verbal bullying. The reason for this may lie in the fact the frequencies for these negative acts were lower than that of the subtle bullying. The data further reveals that a strong negative correlation, with a strong effect, exists between intention to quit and job satisfaction (-0.70). This explains that individuals who are less satisfied with their jobs will have higher levels of intention to quit. Swider et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of a workplace that fosters positive attitudes in retaining employees, thus increased job satisfaction mitigating the possibility of intention to quit. This is supported by Hassell, Archbold, and Stichman (2011) who argue that stress leads to lower job satisfaction which makes individuals more prone to quit.

Regression analysis with intention to quit as dependent variable (excluding subtle and verbal bullying) indicates that job satisfaction is indeed a predictor of intention to quit with more than 50% of the variance explained.

Based on the regression analysis it is at first evident that employment status (permanent or contract) had a definite impact on both intention to quit and job satisfaction. The company employs a number of individuals termed, "contractors". These contractors are skilled individuals that render services to the company in the form of projects and/or support. Although a contract exist between these parties, this mainly regulate the hourly rate for a

fixed period and thus not the employment relation per sé. The contractor will bill the company for total monthly hours worked based on the agreed hourly rates. Cancellation of this working relation is subject to one month's notice for both these entities. This has numerous advantages to the employer such as the fact that these contractors are not covered under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (55 of 1997) which gives the perpetrator in the form of a manager more power in this relationship. These contractors thus always have to face the possibility of job insecurity as these contracts can be ended with one month's notice from the employer. In an analysis of employee responses to the question "what do you perceive as the causes of bullying behaviour in the workplace?" an independent contractor made the following remark: "contractors are there to do the dirty work and if they refuse stand a chance of losing their job". The subtle component of bullying further contributed to 26% of the variance for job satisfaction with employment status still statistically significant. Thus would suggest that contractors endured more subtle forms of abuse.

The same was evident when intention to quit was the dependent variable in that verbal bullying contributed 20% of the variance and when subtle bullying was added it contributed 23% of the variance respectively. However, when job satisfaction was added to the equation, both the bullying groups became insignificant with job satisfaction contributing to 56% of the variance. It was apparent that when bullying behaviour was added employment status was no longer significant and when job satisfaction was added, bullying behaviour was no longer significant. This means that employment status may at first suggest that contractors may be more prone to quit than permanent employees. It is also apparent that bullying behaviour would play a larger role in the employees' decision to leave the company. Job satisfaction, however, had a huge impact on the explained variant which will make this the predictor for intention to quit.

Bullying behaviour is thus a stressor which causes a stressful work environment. This greatly impacts on an individual's job satisfaction, which in turn gives rise to higher levels of intention to quit. Job satisfaction thus serves as mediator between bullying behaviour and intention to quit. Research by Quine (1999) supports this result. In a study where the relation between bullying and occupational health outcomes were examined, Quine found that staff experiencing bullying reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction and higher scores of propensity to leave than those who were not bullied and which had resulted in depression and anxiety.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Possibly the greatest limitation of this research is that the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised has not been used extensively in South African research, which makes it impossible to compare local studies and benchmark them against foreign studies for optimal analysis. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and data analysis were thus compared with those of international studies. Different countries possess different traits such as cultural differences, work ethics, and legislation to name just a few, which all add more variables to the equation.

Another limitation is the fact that the South African workforce is generally not familiar with the concept of workplace bullying. The perception is that workplace bullying is physical abuse, rather than more subtle forms of abuse. This may ultimately influence the way these questionnaires are answered and impact on data integrity. A further limitation that could impact on data integrity is the response distribution. Although a response rate of 84% was achieved this may not necessarily be a true reflection of the study population, e.g. certain departments may yield more workplace bullying than others.

User perception and personality also play an integral role in the incidence of bullying in that some individuals react differently to stressors (such as the negative acts contained in the Negative Acts Questionnaire) than others which may also impact on data integrity.

I would recommend that further studies be undertaken in South Africa on workplace bullying not only to create individuals' awareness of this phenomenon, but to obtain optimal data integrity with regards to benchmarking and analysis. I would also suggest the inclusion of departments within the company (with permission from the company) in the questionnaire, as part of the research as this may indicate "problem departments" where corrective action may be taken and thus not just label the company as possessing a "bullying culture".

One of the goals of this company is to become an employer of choice. It is, however, apparent that bullying is indeed prevalent in the company in certain aspects of the work environment. Bullying behaviour as a construct per sé, is not covered in any of the company policies. It is thus important for the company to relook and development new policies and models in this regard (e.g. add bullying as a specific offence to the company disciplinary code) to not only prevent, but also manage such incidents in the workplace to meet this goal.

This will then also pave the way for feedback forums and grievance procedures to protect employees and reduce this power imbalance. The study clearly indicates that managers and supervisors are more likely to be the perpetrators. It is thus important that management also needs to be trained and made aware of constructs in this regards, that they should lead by example and implement corrective actions where needed. It is thus important to get the "buy-in" of senior management to lead by example and enforce policies in this regard.

A once-off study is not sufficient to understand this phenomenon, and ongoing studies to monitor incidence and awareness of this construct are recommended.

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CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Conclusions regarding the literature and the empirical study are drawn in this chapter. Limitations of the research are discussed and recommendations are made to the management of this specific Information Technology Company. In addition, recommendations for future research are made.

4.2   CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this study was to determine the perceived incidence of bullying and to determine the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and intention to quit in a specific Information Technology Company.

The first objective was to determine the prevalence of bullying behaviour in the IT company. According to Lewis (2006) the recognition of bullying in the workplace remains problematic. This research indicated that although the perception of the majority of the respondents is that they have never been bullied (self-reported based on the definitions of bullying), the frequency analysis of the negative actions reveals that bullying is indeed prevalent in the company and thus poses a threat to both the company and the employees. Bullying did not just affect the victim but also observers/witnesses of this occurrence. Research by Niedhammer and Degioanni (2006) revealed that observers were at an increased risk of developing depressive symptoms. The research also indicates that the perpetrators of bullying are mostly managers, followed by colleagues and then customers. The findings also suggest that victims are bullied in work groups based on the victims' perception which would further support the fact that managers are more often than not the perpetrator.

The characteristics of the participants indicated that the workforce is relatively young with the majority younger than thirty and more than half the study population employed for less than two years. The findings further suggest that it may well be this young workforce that is prone to bullying.

The majority of bullying behaviour is related to the job itself and refers to more subtle forms of abuse including high frequencies of negative acts such as "someone withholding information that affects your performance", "having your views and opinions ignored", "being ordered to do below your level of competence" and "having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks". Lee and Brotheridge (2006) explained the effectiveness of subtle bullying in that it may not always be "visible".

Bullying behaviour experienced least in the company, much in line with research by Lutgen-Sandvic (2006), is more related to verbal abuse and violence and includes being "threatened with violence or physical abuse", "hints or signals from others that they should quit their job", "being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm", "experienced practical jokes carried out by people they did not get on with" and "experienced intimidating behaviour such as finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way" which support the findings that bullying in this company is more task-related than person-orientated.

The White and African population group were more prominent mostly due to under-representation of the Asian and Coloured groups. The findings indicate significant correlations between the negative acts experienced and population group. It is apparent the White population group experienced more subtle forms of bullying behaviour including "being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible deadlines", "being exposed to unmanageable workload", "being ordered to do work below your level of competence", and "having key areas of responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks". The African population group, on the other hand, experiences more person-orientated or verbal abuse including, "persistent criticism of your work and effort", "excessive monitoring of your work", and "pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to". This may indicate that the younger workforce consists of an inexperienced, though highly educated workforce thus the perception of criticism and excessive monitoring as opposed to the traditionally White population group that now perceives as important unmanageable workload and deadlines, which may be due to their seniority. These findings may also indicate that different population groups experience certain negative acts differently.

It would seem that individuals do not choose to label themselves as victims of bullying. The study revealed that based on the definition of bullying, individuals report lower levels of bullying as opposed to using the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised as an alternative measurement where users only indicate to what frequency they have experienced these negative acts.

No significant effect of gender, home language, marital status, or financial contribution was found on any of the negative acts.

The majority of the respondents perceived "low self-esteem and insecurities" and the misuse of power as the main causes of bullying behaviour, and indicated that the company need to implement guidelines, policies, and procedures (e.g. add bullying as a specific offence to the company disciplinary code) as a means to prevent this. Management are currently not aware of these problems and the company thus currently does not have effective policies and procedures in place to guide employees in dealing with such behaviour, or to prevent this behaviour from occurring. Research revealed that the cost of bullying is not only limited to the individuals which may include including psychological, behavioural and psychosomatic symptoms such as (but not limited to), ill health (Lewis, 2006; Thomas, 2005) depression (Kivimäki et al., 2003), post-traumatic stress disorder (Nolfe, Petrella, Blasi, Zontini, & Nolfe, 2007), anxiety (Quine, 1999), loss of self-esteem (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006) and respiratory and cardiac complaints (Mikkelson & Einarsen, 2001) but also greatly impacts on the company which may include turnover and recruitment costs (Fisher-Blando, 2008), training, lower productivity, higher absenteeism, lower morale and a stressful environment (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006).

Another objective was to examine the reliability of the measuring instruments. The findings indicate that all measuring instruments (Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised, Job Satisfaction Questionnaire and Intention to Quit Questionnaire) were very reliable with the following values depicted as measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients:

- Verbal bullying (0.95)
- Subtle bullying (0.83)
- Satisfaction (0.85)

- Turnover (0.92)

The last research goal was to determine the relationship between workplace bullying, job satisfaction and the intention to quit in an IT company based on victims being exposed to bullying as opposed to victims not being exposed to bullying.

Factor analysis, using the principle component analysis, identified two factors that explained 52.57% of the variance. These were labelled verbal bullying and subtle bullying. The verbal construct of bullying, as mentioned earlier, includes negative acts such "threats of violence or physical abuse" and "repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes" while the more subtle forms of abuse would include acts such as "someone withholding information that affects your performance" and "being ordered to do below your levels of confidence". The subtle forms of abuse are those actions that cannot readily be detected.

Significant negative correlations were found between:
- verbal bullying and subtle bullying, and
- intention to quit and job satisfaction

This would suggest that the perpetrators who make use of more subtle forms of bullying tactics were less likely to use verbal abuse and vice versa.

Secondly these correlations indicated that intention to quit is directly linked to job satisfaction rather than the bullying behaviour or negative actions experienced. The higher the perception of the individual's job satisfaction the lower his/her intentions are to leave the company and vice versa. Job satisfaction thus functions as a mediator in the relationship between the negative acts (or workplace bullying) experienced and intention to quit in the company.

4.3   LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Possibly the greatest limitation of this research is that the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised has not been used extensively in South African research, which makes it impossible to compare local studies and benchmark them against foreign studies for optimal analysis.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and data analysis were thus compared with those of international studies. Different countries possess different traits such as cultural differences, work ethics, and legislation to name just a few, which all add more variables to the equation.

A further limitation that could impact data integrity is the response distribution. Although a response rate of 84% was achieved this may not necessarily be a true reflection of the study population, e.g. certain departments may encounter more workplace bullying than others. This is supported by Agervolt (2007) as one of the biggest pitfalls of this research method. The results of this study may be limited by the distribution of the population groups within the IT company. Some departments, like service desk support, have an unequal distribution of population group with much more African employees than the other population group. Other departments like ERP support, on the other hand, have a distribution of more White employees. This unequal distribution as well as the fact that the Asian and Coloured communities were under-represented and White people over-represented will definitely impact on the results of the study.

Some participants also do not always have time to participate in research like this, which resulted in them completing the questionnaire in a hurry without really thinking about the question and behaviour involved, which may result in incorrect data.

Bullying in certain departments may also be more prevalent than in others. Not all individuals in all departments completed the questionnaires which may thus result in incorrect or skew data. *Department* was not part of the biographical information requested. Therefore I was thus not able to draw conclusions with regards to bullying prevalence in different departments which might have pinpointed the source of bullying.

Another limitation is that bullying is a fairly new concept, which may suggest that different individuals may have different notions of this construct. Individuals may also interpret bullying definitions and negative acts differently based on constructs such as different backgrounds, educational levels, cultures and languages. Research results do not account for differences in linguistic and meanings that respondents may attribute to words and phrases of survey tools (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts (2007). The perception is that workplace bullying is physical abuse rather than more subtle forms of abuse. This may ultimately influence the way these questionnaires are answered and impact on data integrity.

Further limitations are related to the lack of similar studies in South Africa which makes it difficult to place the data in perspective and compare the results to South African companies with similar cultural traits.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations should be contemplated.

4.4.1 Recommendation to solve the research problem

One of the goals of the company in this research, is to become an employer of choice. The benefits of this according to Herman and Gioia (2000) is that the employer will find better resources, people will choose to stay as they will endure less stress and have more fun, which ultimately result in reduced turnover, enhanced loyalty, increased performance and increased attractiveness to potential investors and clients. It is, however, apparent that bullying is indeed prevalent in this company, impacting certain areas of the work environment which may ultimately hamper the company's goal.

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) conducted an online poll in 2012 and found that some of the reasons why bullying occurs were mainly attributed to the following:

- Bullies are not punished and thrive
- Laws to stop it are either absent or too weak to be useful
- No one in the company has the will to stop it
- Co-workers stand idly by & fail to stop it
- The workplace culture reward cutthroat behaviours
- Executives/owners/senior managers are the bullies

Companies thus need to be made aware of bullying behaviour and practices, and understand this phenomenon from a South African ideological framework. Companies need to formulate processes and policies in this regard and give clear guidelines to employees on how to address these issues and for the companies to resolve issues in this regard that might arise. It is thus important for the companies to relook and development new policies and models in

this regards to not only prevent, but also manage such incidents in the workplace to meet this goal. Namie (2007, p. 49) suggest the following blueprint for a "bullying free workplace" :

- create an explicit anti-bullying policy,
- design credible enforcement procedures,
- provide restorative interventions for bullied individuals and affected work teams, and
- education and training is critical

The study clearly indicates that managers and supervisors are more likely to be the culprits. It is thus important that management also needs to be trained and made aware of constructs in this regards, that managers should lead by example and implement corrective actions where needed. It is thus important to get the "buy-in" of senior management to lead by example and enforce policies in this regard. Bullies need to be aware that the companies will not tolerate such behaviour.

South African companies need to be made aware of the impact of bullying behaviour not only on the company but also on individuals. In the competitive environment where companies need to thrive, it is important to keep employees motivated, protected and committed and thus satisfied which will again lead to lower levels of intention to quit.

4.4.2 Recommendation for future research

A once-off study is not sufficient to understand this phenomenon, and continual studies to monitor and manage incidence and awareness of this construct are recommended and to determine the impact on of workplace bullying on both the company and individual in the South African context. I would therefore recommend further studies to be undertaken in South Africa on workplace bullying, not only to create individual awareness of this phenomenon, but to obtain optimal data integrity with regards to benchmarking and analysis.

The researcher would further suggests the inclusion of departments within the company (with permission from the company) in the questionnaire, as part of the research as this may indicate "problem departments" where corrective action may be taken and thus not just label the company as displaying a "bullying culture". There is a need to examine organisations structures and cultures that reward and trigger bullying (Lutgen-Sandvic et al., 2007)

It is recommended that further studies should also incorporate and investigate the role and impact of cyber-bullying in South African companies. Privitera and Campbell (2009) stress the importance of the use of modern communication devices, including cell phones and iPads as a means to bully.

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