THE EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE GIRLS REGARDING
VERBAL BULLYING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ruwayda Jacobs

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. J STRÜMPHER
CO-SUPERVISOR: MRS. JW BOUWER

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, Jawayer Moolow and my children Zakkiyya, Shakeela and Anwar for being patient and supportive.
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Abstract
The experience of verbal bullying at school may cause a female adolescent much distress. This distress can result in the adolescent experiencing life as traumatic and may influence her sense of well being negatively. Verbal bullying usually takes the form of name-calling, put-downs and insults. This can be very traumatic for adolescents and can lower their self-esteem, which may eventually lead to mental illness. The parents of adolescent learners often have the misconception that bullying is a normal part of a teenager’s life and are unaware of the distress it may cause the adolescent. The victimized adolescent should, therefore, be provided with support in order to avert the occurrence of mental illness.

The goals of this study were to:
• Explore and describe the experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary school settings.
• Develop guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in secondary schools.

The researcher used a qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual design with a phenomenological approach. The research population consisted of female learners in a secondary school setting. Purposive sampling was used in this study to identify participants. Data was collected by means of naïve sketches, one-to-one-interviews and field notes based on observations. Data was analyzed using Tesch’s method (in Creswell, 1994:190) of descriptive analysis. The identified themes were compared to available literature. The data collected from this study was used to develop guidelines to aid mental health nursing specialists to help adolescents to cope with verbal bullying.

Keywords Mental health, Mental illness, aggression, aggressive behaviour, verbal and physical aggression, bullying, bully, verbal and physical bullying, Mental nursing specialists, school and secondary school
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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Television and newspaper reports reveal the continuing prevalence towards violence in the South African community. The crime rate statistics in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world. Aggression appears to be seen as a normal part of life. In both primary and secondary schools, acts of aggression may be reported. The aggression may be overt or covert; it may be verbal or physical. This means that learners may be exposed to physical and/or psychological bullying by their peers.

The researcher experienced bullying when she was a learner and has remained aware of the trauma of such experiences. There are learners who report the same experiences of being verbally or physically bullied by either one individual or a group of individuals. According to Thompson, Arora and Sharp (2002:71), there is a link between bullying and low self-esteem, anxiety, impaired concentration, truancy, depression and suicidal thoughts. Hawker and Boulton (2000 as cited in Thompson et al., 2002:71), found that the victims of bullying had more negative feelings and thoughts than non-bullied people. This was found to be the case across both genders and all age groups. A strong relationship was found between bullying and depression. Reid (in Thompson et al., 2002:7) investigated the reasons for truancy and found that persistent absenteeism was linked to bullying. This study will concentrate on adolescent girls who have been verbally bullied in a secondary school environment.

The National Youth Policy (2000:5, as cited in Pretorius, 2004:1) says Youth constitute a significant percentage of South African society. Due to the high levels of violence in South Africa today, adolescents may be susceptible to many different influences. These influences may encourage them to act in an inconsiderate manner towards other learners or they may become aggressive and verbally and/or physically bully a peer. A bullied learner may experience this as stressful and consequently suffer from anxiety, depression or aggression. Violence and aggression is related to bullying.

Ken Rigby (1996:15) describes bullying as an intolerable social evil. Bullying is the repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. Heald (1994:3, as cited in Thompson et al., 2002:4) defines bullying as a long-standing violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and
directed at an individual who is not able to defend him/herself in the actual situation with a conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten that individual or put him under stress.

According to literature, there are many types of bullying. Direct verbal bullying can be done face to face and examples of this include name-calling, put-downs, insults and harassment. Deliberately excluding certain people from groups or not talking to them is another form of direct verbal bullying. Verbal abuse may send the message to adolescents that they have negative personal attributes. An example of this is calling the victim stupid or ugly, which could lead to self-blaming attributions that could, in turn, lead to low-self-esteem, perceived incompetence and depression (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:42). Direct bullying includes psychological bullying. Examples of this include making a mean face, dirty looks, threats, coercion or distortion. Indirect verbal bullying or social aggression occurs when a bully tends to damage a victim’s relationship with others, which includes spreading false rumours about a person or telling someone not to be friends with the victim. Indirect verbal bullying is done behind a person’s back and includes acts such as gossiping, which can result in lowered self-esteem and influence the opinion of other’s about the victim (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm).

According to Banks (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm 15/10/2005@10h30), physical bullying tends to decrease with age but verbal abuse remains constant. Physical bullying includes shoving, pushing, hitting, kicking and assaulting. Physical bullying may arouse perceptions of weakness and vulnerability within the victims and generate feelings of fearfulness of their bigger and stronger peers (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm15/10/2005@10h30). The victims may also perceive school as an unsafe place, become anxious and seek to avoid such situations (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:42-43). As quoted on the internet by Olweus (1993) and Batshe and Knoff (1994), being bullied leads to depression and low self-esteem and these problems carry on into later adulthood (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm).

There are different types of bullies. Aggressive bullies generally initiate aggression and tend to be belligerent, fearless, coercive, confident, tough and impulsive. They direct their aggression against teachers, parents and other children. They may be involved in antisocial behaviour (Elliot, 2002:75), which comes from the desire to dominate others. Passive bullies are more common than aggressive bullies. They rarely provoke others but take the initiative while the aggressive bully is in the process of bullying a victim. A passive bully will also bully the victim in order to gain approval. Bully victims are the victims of bullying who resort to bullying others out of frustration because of the bullying they have endured. A relational bully is a fourth type of bully that is found more commonly among girls, although this behaviour is not limited to females. This type of bully tries to gain power through the exclusion and manipulation of others (http://www April 2005 @ 10.20 hamfish.org/topics bulling.html).
There are certain differences in the bullying behaviour of boys and girls. Boys tend to start bullying at a very young age. Hartup, as cited in Thompson *et al* (2002:26), says that boys as young as two years old seem to exhibit aggressive behaviour. When boys get older, they tend to use aggression as a means of acquiring status whereas girls do not. Girls tend to feel guilty if they use direct aggression towards somebody. They are more likely to become involved in verbal bullying, including actions such as spreading rumours, social exclusion and gossiping. Kidscape is a programme in the United Kingdom that deals with the prevention of bullying and child abuse. Cases assembled through Kidscape indicated that boys were more likely to be physical when bullying their victims, whereas girls tended more towards verbal abuse. According to Dan Olweus (1993), as cited in (Elliot, 2002:3), girls were more exposed to harassment such as slandering, spreading of rumours and exclusion from groups than physical attacks. While boys tend to be more involved in physical bullying, girls tend to become the victims of verbal bullying. There are many instances of learners being bullied in schools. Being the victim of bullying can lead to low self-esteem and, thus, to mental illness (Elliot, 2002:3).

According to Michele Elliot (2002:4), there are telltale signs that a child portrays when he or she is being bullied, such as:

- Being unwilling to go to school and making continual excuses to avoid going.
- Begging to be driven to school.
- Changing his/her route to school everyday.
- Beginning to do poorly in schoolwork.
- Regularly having clothes, books, or schoolwork torn or destroyed.
- Coming home starving (because dinner money was taken).
- Becoming withdrawn.
- Starting to stammer.
- Starting to hit other children (as a reaction to being called ‘fatty’ or ‘dirty’).
- Developing stomachaches or headaches due to stress.
- Attempting suicide.
- Crying him-/herself to sleep.
- Beginning to wet the bed.
- Having nightmares.
- Having unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts.
- Having their possessions go ‘missing’.
- Asking for money or beginning to steal money (to pay the bully).
- Continuously ‘losing’ his/her pockets money.
- Refusing to say what is wrong and giving improbable excuses to explain any of the above.
A Metropolitan Life survey among North American teachers in 1993, presented in Hoffmann (1996:8), states that factors contributing to violence in youth are numerous and complex and, for the most part, community related. Kopka (1997:12) identified socio-economic factors such as domestic violence and poverty as a probable cause. Children who grow up under these conditions experience depression, anxiety and rage. What children experience in relationships with their role models is what they tend to practise in their relationships with other people. Substance abuse may result in child neglect. Children born out of wedlock often do not have an authority figure or role model to teach them socially acceptable behaviour and tend to exhibit aggressive behaviour. About a third of the babies in North America are born to unwed mothers. Seventy-nine percent of juvenile court cases involve children from single-parent families. Broken homes and two-income families, where one or both parents work, tend to result in children being left at home alone after school and suffering neglect due to lack of parental involvement. About 50% of all school executives cited lack of parental involvement as a probable cause of aggressive behaviour. This is confirmed by Hoffman (1996:9) who identified that the major factors contributing to student violence were lack of parental supervision at home (71%), lack of family involvement with the school (66%) and exposure to violence in the mass media (55%). Hoffman (1996:9) also stated that children receive mixed messages from parents and other adults about what is right or wrong.

Neser, Ovens, Van der Merwe and Morodi (2003:127-157) conducted a study in secondary schools in Tswane in South Africa that targeted grade 6-11 learners. The researchers found that learners believed that bullying was a reality in daily life. Most of the learners reported milder forms of bullying, such as being called hurtful names (35, 7%) and being teased in an unpleasant way (34.8%), on a regular basis. The most common locations in which bullying occurred were the playground (24, 6%), the classroom (11, 6%) and while walking to and from school. More than half of the female respondents in the sample of Neser et al (2003:127-157) stated that they had been teased in an unpleasant way (53, 4%); called hurtful names (54, 5%); left out of activities deliberately (57, 9%). The study also highlighted the taboo regarding telling other persons about being bullied. Of the participants who told someone about the situation, 43% indicated an improvement while 11.6% reported no change at all.

The information presented in this literature survey indicates that bullying tends to occur frequently. Bullying is seen to be a serious problem worldwide. According to Dan Soen (Soen@macam98.ac.il_10/08/2005@15h30), ten to fifteen percent of children are bullied regularly. In the Nelson Mandela Metropole Municipality area (NMMM) there are 106 065 adolescents between the ages of 15-19 years (Census, 2001). According to the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (2001:1), it was found that 41% of youth in the Eastern Cape were bullied. The researcher knows from both personal experience and talking to teachers that the incidence of bullying in South African schools is high. However, it appears that research being done in South Africa on this topic is limited.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The local state psychiatric hospital has noted an increase in the number of adolescents being admitted with mental illness over the past few years. These figures are depicted in figure 1.1.

![Adolescents admitted to Local Psychiatric Hospital 1995-2003](image)

**FIGURE 1: ADOLESCENTS ADMITTED TO A LOCAL PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL**

Most of the adolescents admitted present with serious mental disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar mood disorder, schizophrenia, and cannabis and alcohol abuse. Figure 1 displays how many adolescents were admitted between 1995 and 2003. There appears to have been an increase in the admission rate during the period of 2000-2003, the reason for which is not known. It is speculated that there is a link between the serious mental illness experienced by adolescents and the stress they experience in their lives. Some of the stress may include exposure to aggression, of which bullying could be an example.

The teachers, learners and parents associated with the secondary school report that bullying does occur in secondary schools. They report that name-calling and spreading of rumours about some learners does happen. This may lead to stress. The parents of adolescent learners often have the misconception that bullying is a normal part of a teenager’s life and are unaware of the distress it may cause the adolescent. However, the statements made have not been verified and little is known about the experience of adolescent learners regarding verbal bullying in secondary schools. This led the researcher to explore the occurrence of verbal bullying in secondary schools. Professor M Poggenpoel, during a personal interview in March 2005, identified that there has not been much research done regarding bullying of adolescent girls in South Africa. This, therefore, will be the focus of the study.
For adolescents, the school experience intensifies and accelerates. Although family is very important to the adolescent, relationships with persons of similar age and interests are equally important. Adolescents often view themselves through the eyes of their peers and any deviation in appearance, dress code or behaviour can result in diminished self-esteem. According to the homicide rate in New York City between the period of 1998-2000, homicides were the second leading cause of death among persons aged 15-25, while accidents were the first cause and suicide the third (Saddock & Saddock, 2003 :38-39).

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher would like the following questions answered:

- What are the experiences of adolescent girls with regard to verbal bullying in secondary school settings?
- What can be done by a mental health nursing specialist to help adolescent girls cope with verbal bullying in a secondary school setting?

1.4 GOALS OF THE STUDY

This study has a primary and a secondary goal.

Primary Goal
The primary goal is to explore and describe the experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary school settings.

Secondary Goal
The secondary goal is to develop guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in a secondary school.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study will be explorative, descriptive and contextual in design with a phenomenological approach. The research design will be discussed in detail in chapter 2
1.6 TERMINOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the following key concepts will be defined as follows:

- **Adolescent**: This refers to a youth, a juvenile, a minor, a teenager, a youngster (Collin’s, Cross, Gilmor, Holmes, Mackie, & Weber, 2005:12). The term adolescence is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means growth into adulthood. It begins with the onset of puberty and ends with the assumption of adult responsibilities. The term puberty refers to the first phase of adolescence (Mussen, Conger, Kagan & Huston, 1990:569). In this study, the term adolescent will refer to a secondary school-going female individual between the ages of 15–18 years of age.

- **Aggressive behaviour**: Collins dictionary refers to aggressive behavior as being hostile, belligerent, destructive, offensive and pugnacious behaviour (Collin’, Cross, Gilmor, Holmes, Mackie & Weber, 2005:17). Aggressive behaviour may be described as a forceful goal-directed action that may include verbal or physical aggression. It is the behaviour that is motivated by emotions such as rage, hostility and anger (Uys & Middleton, 2004:747).

- **Aggression**: This is the intentional infliction of some form of harm upon others; it may be seen as an all too common form of social behaviour (Baron & Byrne, 1994:464). Aggression means starting an attack or aggressive behaviour (Hawkins, 1996:10).

- **Verbal aggression**: This refers to spoken words or verbal statements that are motivated by anger. Verbal aggression refers to verbal behaviour used to express aggression (Hawkins, 1996:496).

- **Physical aggression**: This involves hitting, punching, kicking and the use of weapons by an individual towards their victims (Baron & Byrne, 1994: 464).

- **Bullying**: This is the activity that occurs when a weaker person is being hurt, intimidated or persecuted by a stronger person (Collin’s et al; 2005:17). A stronger person can be seen as being physically powerful (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004:1430) and a weaker person as being someone who lacks physical strength and energy, liable to give way under pressure and lacking in power (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004: 1634).

- **Bully**: A bully is a person who intimidates or persecutes those who are weaker (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004:184).
• **Verbal bullying:** This includes name-calling, threatening gestures, stalking behaviour and malicious phone calls to the adolescent's house, repeatedly hiding someone's belongings, leaving people out of desired activities and spreading rumours about someone (Rigby, 2002: 20).

• **Mental health:** This is a state in which a person is simultaneously successful at working, loving and resolving conflicts by coping and adjusting to the stress of everyday life (Uys & Middleton, 2004:753). When confronted with a stressful event, the person will be able to cope with the distress. The Mental Health Care Act (Act 17 of 2002) refers to mental health as being in a mentally healthy status. It means the level of mental well being of an individual as affected by physical, social and psychological factors that may result in a psychiatric diagnosis (Mental Health Care Act, 2002 [Act 17 of 2002]).

• **Mental illness:** This refers to the other side of the continuum; it is the state in which the individual shows deficits in functioning, cannot view self clearly, is unable to maintain personal relationships and cannot adapt to an environment (Frisch & Frisch, 1998:804). In the Mental Health Care Act, mental illness refers to a positive diagnosis of an illness related to a dysfunction in the individual’s mental health in terms of accepted diagnostic criteria made by a mental health care practitioner authorized to make such a diagnosis (Mental Health Care Act, 2002 [Act 17 of 2002]).

• **Mental health nursing specialist:** This person has specialized knowledge regarding the subject of mental health nursing. He/she has an advanced qualification in psychiatric nursing and may be registered with the South African Nursing Council as a mental health nursing specialist (Stuart & Laria, 2001:13). According to Frisch and Frisch (1998:770), the mental health nursing specialist may be able to use individual, group, family and child psychotherapy. The mental health nursing specialist is able to assist patients in fostering mental health, preventing mental illness and disability and improving or regaining previous mental health status and functioning.

• **School:** This refers to a place where children are taught or instruction given in a subject (Collin’s et al; 2005:676).

• **Secondary school:** Secondary education is a period that follows directly after primary education and usually occurs during the adolescent /teenage years [http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/secondaryschool](http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/secondaryschool). In the South African context, secondary school begins with Grade 8 and concludes with Grade 12.
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of qualitative research is to discover and understand patterns and themes in the life experiences of the participants. The study will be conducted in a secondary school and all teachers will be invited to participate in the study.

1.7.1 Research Population and Sampling

The research population and the sampling and data collection methods used must be relevant to the information sought as well as to the population being studied. The research population constitutes the entire group that the researcher is interested in studying (Brink, 2002:132) and will comprise learners from a public secondary school in the northern areas of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan area. The secondary school was chosen purposively as the researcher will have access to the school.

The research population for this study will include adolescent girls attending the identified secondary school who have been identified by the teachers as being the victims of verbal bullying and who meet specific inclusion criteria as set out in chapter 2.

A sample, according to Arkava and Lane (1983:27, as cited in De Vos, 2002:199) must thus comprise the elements of the population considered for the inclusion in the study. Purposive sampling, according to De Vos (2002:207), is based on the judgment of the researcher and the sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population. Purposive sampling will be utilized. The researcher, with the help of gatekeepers, will select participants who meet the criteria for inclusion in the study.

The teachers will be asked to act as gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are people who have formal and informal authority to control access to the site. Informal sites, such as sidewalks and public waiting rooms, do not have gatekeepers but formal sites, such as secondary schools, have authorities from whom permission and cooperation needs to be obtained (Neuman, 2003:372). The researcher will approach the gatekeepers who, in this study, are the teachers. The gatekeepers who know the adolescent learners will then identify girls who are being verbally bullied and these learners will comprise the sample. The gatekeepers will choose 30 participants from their grade 11 classes. These learners will each be asked to write a naïve sketch about their experiences of bullying. The gatekeepers will then approach some of the participants from this group with regard to being interviewed as well.

1.7.2 Data Collection

Data collection is the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose or specific objectives and questions of the study (Burns...
& Groves, 1993:58). Data will be collected by means of naïve sketches, one-to-one unstructured interviews, member checking and peer review.

Thirty female adolescents will be expected to each write a naïve sketch in which they will be asked the following question:

“Tell me more about your experience of being verbally bullied by your peers.”

The researcher will analyze the naïve sketches and this information will form part of the database. The database will then be analyzed and themes identified. Thereafter, ten participants will be chosen from the original group of 30 and interviews will be conducted with them. The interviews will be transcribed and will also form part of the database. The researcher will also make use of observation and field notes, namely observational, theoretical and methodological notes, as another method of data collection.

The researcher will make use of both peer reviewers, who are familiar with qualitative research and bullying, and member checking, which means going back to the participants and presenting them with the transcribed interviews. The methods of data gathering will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

1.7.3 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (1994:190), the process of data analysis involves making sense of the text and image data. The researcher will be using Tesch’s method of content analysis, as described in Creswell (1994:190). Tesch proposes eight steps to consider in data analysis. Data will be analyzed and similar themes and sub-themes identified (Creswell, 1994:193). This method of data analysis will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

The raw data will be sent to an independent coder for analysis and to validate the findings of the research conducted and to ensure trustworthiness. Thereafter, a meeting will be held with the independent coder for consensus discussion about the themes and categories identified. (De Vos, 1998:348) The themes and categories will be identified in both the naïve sketches,
interviews and field notes. A pilot study will be conducted with one participant who will be expected to do a naïve sketch and a one-to-one interview.

1.8 LITERATURE CONTROL

A literature control is usually done after the data gathering and analysis have been completed. The researcher will compare her findings to that of other authors. The information obtained from the research will be used to formulate guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in dealing with verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls in secondary schools.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Guba and Lincoln’s model of trustworthiness (in Krefting, 1991:7-12) will be used to ensure rigor in the study. There are four criteria that can be used to identify trustworthiness, namely truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

1.9.1 Truth-value
Truth-value refers to the confidence the researcher has in the findings. It establishes whether the researcher is willing to draw inferences from the research design, information and context. Truth-value is also termed credibility. Truth-value is usually obtained from the descriptions of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by the informants. In order to ensure truth-value, the researcher will make use of triangulation of data, member checking and peer examination (Guba & Lincoln in Krefting, 1991:10).

1.9.2 Applicability
Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other settings or to other groups of individuals. It is the ability to generalize the findings to larger populations. Because qualitative research usually deals with small populations, findings cannot be generalized. Fittingness or transferability is an aspect of applicability. This is more the responsibility of another researcher wanting to transfer the findings to another situation than that of the researcher of the original study. The researcher should, therefore, provide description of both the process and the findings to aid the other researcher with regard to a comparison (Krefting, 1991:9).

1.9.3 Consistency
Consistency refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were repeated with the same subjects in a similar context. In qualitative research, consistency is referred to as dependability, which means the stability of data over a period. In this study, neither the participants nor the description of their experiences can be controlled. An independent coder
will be used to code the material. The triangulation strategies identified by Guba and Lincoln 
in Krefting, 1991:5) will be used. Triangulation ensures that the weaknesses of one method 
of data collection are compensated by the use of alternative data gathering methods. More 
than one method of data gathering will be used namely naïve sketches, unstructured one-to- 
one interviews and observational and field notes. Peer examination, in which peers may 
include psychiatric nurses, psychologists, social workers or teachers, will be consulted about 
the research findings.

1.9.4 Neutrality
The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is neutrality or confirmability. This is based on freedom 
from bias in research procedures and results. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the 
findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of the 
biases, motivations and perspectives of the researcher. The researcher will make use of 
strategies such as peer review, member checking and triangulation strategies to establish 
confirmability of the study (Krefting, 1991:9).

Ensuring the rigor of this study will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission should be obtained to conduct the study from the Department of Education, the 
principal, the parents of the learners and the learners themselves. The learners will be 
informed about the procedure that will be followed during the investigation, the possible 
advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the study, the risk regarding emotional 
trauma and how it will be managed should it occur and the right to withdraw from the study at 
any time. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained by not making known the 
secondary school and the participants involved in the study. The participants will be assured 
that all documents will be destroyed after the research has been completed. Ensuring high 
ethical standards will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

1.11 DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES

The researcher will develop guidelines to aid mental health nursing specialists in assisting 
adolescents to cope better with stress encountered through bullying. As the researcher is 
employed at a public psychiatric hospital in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Area, the greatest 
impact in teaching adolescents the skills to help them cope more effectively with stress should 
be made at this level.

1.12 CONCLUSION
A general overview of the study has been presented in this chapter, which includes an introduction and background to the study, the research design and methodology, a definition of terminology used and the ethical considerations to be considered. In chapter 2, the researcher will discuss the research methodology and design in more detail.

1.3 PROVISIONAL CHAPTER DIVISION

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS, GUIDELINES AND CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a problem statement was formulated, a brief literature review was presented and the research design and method, as well as a pilot study, were looked at. The research design and methodology will be discussed fully in this chapter. The researcher will focus on the description of the rationale, aims and objectives and the principles of trustworthiness.

2.2 RATIONALE

Bullying amongst the school going population is seen to be a serious problem around the world. According to Dan Soen (Soen @macam98.ac.il.10/08 2005@15h30), ten to fifteen percent of children are bullied regularly and bullying often takes place in schools (The researcher is working in a state psychiatric hospital where she comes into contact with adolescents in the units where she is working. Adolescents are admitted with various mental disorders, as mentioned in chapter 1. These mental disorders may often be accompanied by aggressive behaviour. Teachers, parents and colleagues make statements concerning the high incidence of aggression occurring in schools. They observed low self-esteem amongst learners who were being bullied. Sometimes adolescents who are exposed to bullying may even present with anxiety or suicidal ideation.

When the researcher was at secondary school, she experienced verbal bullying by both male and female peers. The researcher’s children are also being exposed to bullying at school. These factors aroused an interest in exploring the phenomenon so as to gain an understanding of bullying amongst school going girls.

2.3 GOALS OF THE STUDY

This study had a primary and a secondary goal.

Primary Goal
The primary goal was to explore and describe the experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary school settings.
Secondary Goal
The secondary goal was to develop guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in a secondary school.

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative study was conducted which was explorative, descriptive and contextual in nature and phenomenological in approach.

2.4.1 QUALITATIVE PARADIGM

Polit and Hungler (1993:19) state that qualitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of narrative materials. Qualitative research is also a systematic and subjective approach that is used to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove, 1993:777).

Babbie (1998: 270) identifies the following key features in qualitative research:

- Research is conducted in the natural setting of the social actors.
- The focus is on the process rather than the outcome.
- The actors’ perspective is emphasized.
- The primary aim is an in depth understanding of the actors and events.
- The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive) rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population.
- The research process is often an inductive approach, resulting in the generalisation in new hypothesis and theories.
- The qualitative researcher is seen as the main instrument in the research process.

Qualitative research involves qualifying words or descriptions by the participants and their experiences of their worlds (Bless & Hidgson-Smith, 2004: 37). A qualitative researcher conducts detailed examinations of cases that arise in the natural flow of the social life of participants (Neuman, 2003:139). Qualitative research is a systematic, interactive, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove, 1997:791). The focus of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary schools using qualitative methodology such as unstructured interviews, field notes and naïve sketches.

2.4.2 Phenomenological Approach

According to De Vos (2002:73), a phenomenological study aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives. In other words, the aim of phenomenology is to understand how humans experience the
world (Wilson, 1993:236). In order to accomplish this, the researcher will had to ‘put herself into the shoes’ of the subjects. Phenomenology is the scientific approach to describing experience as lived by the participants (Burns & Grove, 1993:65).

Phenomenology is a research method that is designed to describe the subjective, lived experiences of the participants and to comprehend the meanings that the participants place on their experiences (Chinn & Kramer, 1991: 147). The researcher explored and described the experiences of adolescent girls with regard to verbal bullying.

2.4.3 Descriptive Research

The purpose of descriptive research is to explore and describe the phenomenon of real life situations (Burns & Grove, 1993:51). According to Neuman (2000:22 in De Vos 2002:109) descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on how and why questions.

Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a social setting, situation or relationships. The researcher identifies a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately. The outcome of the research would be a detailed description of the subject. The researcher would, therefore, be interested in the why and how questions (Neuman, 2003:30). The researcher examines a phenomenon to more fully define it and to differentiate it from another phenomenon (Dane, 1990: 7). According to Marriner (1981, as cited in Burns & Grove, 1997: 30), descriptive research is a way: in which new meanings are discovered; to describe what exists; to determine the frequency with which something occurs; to categorize information. It is usually conducted when little is known about a phenomenon.

This study described the experiences of adolescent girls as they occurred in a natural setting, namely the secondary school setting. The findings, as well as the guidelines to aid mental health nursing specialists to help adolescents cope with verbal bullying, were described.

2.4.4 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

During the explorative stage of the research the researcher investigates a problem about which little is known (Struwig & Stead, 2001:7). According to Brink (2002:11), an explorative design involves exploring the dimensions of phenomena and the ways in which these phenomena are manifested, including other factors that are related to them.

The aim of exploratory research would be to gain a broad understanding of a situation, phenomenon, community or person (Bless-Hidgson, 2004:41). Exploratory research involves
examining a cause-effect relationship between two or more phenomena. (Dane, 1990:7). The researcher explored the experiences of adolescent girls with regard to verbal bullying. According to the literature search, the topic of bullying has not been well researched and little is known about how adolescent girls experience being verbally bullied by their peers in South Africa. In this study, the researcher focused on exploring the experiences of adolescent females in a secondary school setting.

2.4.5 CONTEXTUAL DESIGN

According to Struwig and Stead (2001:12), contextualism will provide the necessary comprehensive description of the environment or the social context of the research participants. Contextualism also explores macro and micro contexts of the individual and how these contexts dynamically interact with one another. Contextual design refers to the researcher aiming to understand and describe events within the concrete and natural context in which they occur (Babbie, 1998:272). The experiences of the adolescent girls who were verbally bullied were looked at in the context in which they occurred, namely a secondary school setting.

2.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology will now be discussed.

2.5.1. Research Population and Sampling

POPULATION

The population is the entire set of objects or people that are the focus and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2004:37). The population comprises all possible units or elements that can be included in the study (Dane, 1990:289). Universe and population are sometimes used interchangeably. The universe refers to all the attributes of the population that the researcher is interested in and population is the term that sets boundaries on the study units. The population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics (De Vos, 1998:190). The researcher, therefore, specified the unit being sampled. In this study, the target population consisted of adolescent females at a specific secondary school who were identified by the gatekeepers through purposive sampling.
The adolescent girls had to meet the following criteria for inclusion in the study; they had to:

- Be grade 11 female learners.
- Be between 16-18 years of age.
- Be able to converse comfortably in English.
- Have experienced at least one incident of verbal bullying by peers.

• **Sampling**

A sample is a portion of the elements in the population that is chosen for inclusion in the study. The participants involved in the study are chosen according to the sampling frame; that is a concrete listing of the elements in the population. Therefore, sampling involves selecting research participants for the research project (Dane, 1990:289). Sampling involves the collection of information according to which decisions can be made and conclusions can be drawn. The researcher identifies the target population and this includes the membership of a group in which the researcher is interested and from which information can be collected (Hek et al, 2003:24). The gatekeepers were the teachers involved with grade 11 in the identified secondary school. They were approached and a full explanation was given to them concerning the purpose of the study, as well as the criteria they had to use to select participants.

• **Sampling method**

There are different types of sampling methods. Purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgement sampling. A sample is selected according to the judgement of the researcher (Struwig & Stead, 2001:11). The sample is, thus, chosen because of what the researcher considers typical units of the population under investigation (Bless & Hid gson-Smith, 2004:37). The specific secondary school, as already mentioned, was chosen purposively and the gatekeepers purposively selected the participants.

The principal was asked to make teachers aware of the study and introduced the potential gatekeepers to the researcher. The gatekeepers were asked to identify 30 participants for the study. The gatekeepers knew the participants very well and, therefore, were able to choose participants that met the inclusion criteria. The learners and their parents were fully informed about the research study by the gatekeepers and permission to conduct the study was obtained from both parties. The gatekeepers ensured that the learners were not harmed (see Annexure 4-6).
2.5.2 Data Collection

Data was collected by means of naïve sketches, unstructured one-to-one interviews, observations and field notes, member checking and peer review. Before data could be gathered, permission to conduct the study had to be obtained from the following persons/authorities:

- The Department of Education (see Annexure 1).
- The identified public secondary school authorities, including the School Board and the Principal (see Annexure 2, 3).
- The parents of the participants (see Annexure 6).
- The participants (see Annexure 4).

Informed consent is when the participant is provided with sufficient knowledge to make an informed decision about his/her participation in the study (Oman, Krugman & Fink, 2003: 94). Therefore, the aforementioned persons were fully informed about the research study.

The principal was asked to approach the teachers to obtain their cooperation with regard to the study. The teachers were requested to act as gatekeepers. Gatekeepers have a say over who is and who is not included in the study. They usually have a vested interest in the well being of the potential participants (Terre Blanche & Durkheim, 1999:136). Gatekeepers are people who have a say in the research site and have access to the specific group in which the researcher is interested (Creswell, 1998:60). In this study, the gatekeepers at the secondary school were the class teachers who knew the participants very well. The gatekeepers discussed the study with the prospective participants, as well as the parents/guardians of those who agreed to participate. The gatekeepers were also asked to obtain permission from the parents/guardian for their offspring to participate in the study. Informed consent was then obtained from both the participants and their parents. The researcher or a gatekeeper explained the ethical implications of the study to the participants, including aspects such as assurance of the maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality by not writing their names on the sketches. The gatekeepers were also asked to identify a quiet venue at the school where interviews could be conducted.

- Naïve sketches
  The researcher met with the thirty participants and asked each one to write a naïve sketch about her experience of being bullied by her peers. A naïve sketch is a written document ready for analysis with rich information regarding the subject (Zeelie, Bornman & Botes, 2003:58). In this research study, a naïve sketch refers to an essay in which experiences were recorded in writing. The researcher provided participants with a pen and paper and asked them to write a naïve sketch answering the question:

  “Tell me more about your experience of being verbally bullied by your peers.”
Each participant was, therefore, asked to write about her experience of being verbally bullied by her peers. The participants were provided with refreshments once they had completed the naïve sketches. The sketches were collected and became part of the database. The naïve sketches were analyzed using descriptive analysis to identify themes.

- **Observation and field notes**

  Babbie (2004: 293) refers to simple observation in which the researcher remains an outside observer. Denzin (in Kelleher, 1993 as cited in Babbie, 2004:293) says that the researcher should take note of the following observable data: external physical signs such as clothing; expressive movements such as eye movements; facial expressions; bodily movements or posture. The researcher observed the non-verbal and verbal behaviour of the participants, such as voice tone and facial expressions, during the interviews.

  Field notes are a written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks during the course of interviewing (De Vos, 2002:304). Field notes are documents generated from observations made during interviews (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:99). After the interview the researcher wrote notes about her impressions of the interview, as well as the reaction of the participants to their experiences. These notes helped the researcher to explore the process of the interview. Field and Morse (1994, as cited in De Vos, 2004:304) note that there are a few points that should be taken into account by the researcher with regard to field notes, including: getting right to the task; not talking about an observation before it is recorded; finding a quiet place to write; setting aside adequate time to complete the notes; sequencing events in the order that they have occurred; letting the events and conversations flow from the mind to paper. The researcher considered all these factors when making field notes.

  There are three types of field notes identified by Schatzman and Strauss (in De Vos, 1998: 285-286) and a fourth type of field notes identified by Wilson (1993:223):

  - **Observational notes**: These notes give an account of what happened but provide little or no interpretation of events. They also look at the how, what, when and where of human activity. Each observational note looks at an event that can be deemed sufficiently important to be included as part of the recorded experience that is not yet known to the researcher in the context in which the participant finds herself. The researcher took note of non-verbal behaviour while interviewing the participants.

  - **Theoretical notes**: These are self-conscious and systematic attempts by the researcher to derive meaning from all of the observational notes. These notes were obtained from the relevant literature from which the researcher tried to identify
themes to relate to the experiences of adolescents girls with regard to verbal bullying during the course of the study.

- **Methodological notes**: These are mainly reminders, instructions and critical comments to the recorder or researcher. The researcher, therefore, had to make use of methodological strategies while interviewing the participants, for example reminding herself to change her position for better tape-recording (De Vos, 1998:285-286).

- **Personal notes**: These notes focus on one’s own reactions, reflections and experiences. The researcher made use of a reflective diary in which she recounted her experiences after the session (Wilson, 1993:223).

The information from the field notes was added to the database.

- **Interviewing**

  From the group of 22 individuals participated, some were invited for an interview. Eight participants were invited for an interview until data saturation took place. The gatekeepers were asked to purposively select a minimum of ten participants for this reason. The initial inclusion criteria were used. An unstructured one-to-one interview was conducted with these ten participants, according to the phenomenological approach described by Kvale (1996: 54). She stated that phenomenology focuses on the participant’s perspective of the world. The qualitative research interview is unique in that it gains access to the life world and describes the lived everyday world of the participant.

Interviewing involves both verbal and non-verbal communication between the researcher and the participant by whom information is provided. There are three different types of interviews, namely structured, unstructured and semi-structured; in this study the researcher focused on unstructured interviews. In unstructured interviews with a phenomenological approach, the researcher does not have a predetermined set of questions to pose to the participants. Rather, the questions posed depend on the answers given to the main question (Struwig & Stead, 2001:98). In an unstructured interview, the researcher must develop, adapt and generate questions appropriate to the situation at hand and the purpose of the study (Tutty, Rotherick and Grinnel, 1996:55). Kvale’s method of interviewing was used in this study. According to Kvale (1996:125), the research interview is a conversation between two persons in an interpersonal situation. Knowledge is obtained through dialogue. The conversation between interviewer and participant is not a reciprocal relationship but is one where there is a definite asymmetry of power. The researcher defines the situation, introduces the topics of conversation and through further questioning, steers the topic of conversation. The researcher may have pre-knowledge of the subject matter to be investigated. (Kvale, 1996:125-126).
Kvale identified the following seven stages of interviewing:

1. **Thematizing**: This phase takes place before the interview starts.
   
   There are three key questions that need to be looked at before an interview can take place. These are:
   
   - **What**: Obtaining knowledge of the content before the investigation starts. A body of previous knowledge needs to be obtained in order for the researcher to make a scientific contribution to the research. The researcher consulted appropriate literature before commencing the investigation.
   
   - **Why**: Clarifying the purpose of the proposed study. The researcher clarified the purpose of the study with the participants once she obtained permission to conduct the study.
   
   - **How**: Various interview techniques can be explored however, the researcher selected the unstructured interview as the most appropriate method of obtaining data for this study.

   The purpose of the interview had been formulated, namely to explore the experiences of the female adolescent learners regarding being verbally bullied by their peers. The researcher, therefore, familiarized herself with the topic so that she was not taken by surprise by what learners said during the interview.

2. **Designing**: This involves the plan of the study and taking into consideration all seven stages of the investigation before the interview starts. Designing the study involved obtaining the intended knowledge and taking into account the moral implications and the rigor of the study.

3. **Interviewing**: The interviews were unstructured, using a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the interpersonal relationship of the interview situation.

4. **Transcribing**: This involves preparing the interview material for analysis, which commonly includes a transcription from oral to written text. The researcher decided on the use of the English language medium and the method of reporting and transcribing conversations.

5. **Analyzing**: The researcher decided on the purpose and topic of the investigation and the nature of the interview material and which methods of analysis were appropriate for the interviews.

6. **Verifying**: This involved checking the validity and reliability of materials.

7. **Reporting**: This involved preparing a report to tell others what was learned (compare Kvale, 1996:88).

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**Preparation for the interview**

The researcher practised information gathering interview skills with her peers on videotape in order to become competent in these. The supervisors of the study evaluated the videotapes.
As the researcher is a trained psychiatric nurse with extensive experience in interviewing clients, she established a trusting relationship with the participants easily.

**Framing of the interview**

The researcher briefed the participants before the interview and debriefed them afterwards. The briefing before helped the researcher to define the situation for the subject. She explained the purpose of the interview and the use of the tape recorder to each participant and asked whether the latter had any questions before starting the interview.

The researcher asked the participant's permission before audio taping the interview. When a participant was unwilling to be audio taped, the researcher respected her wishes and a summary of the interview was made as soon as she left the venue. For the remaining participants, a small tape recorder was used to tape the sessions. If a participant spoke in a soft voice, the researcher positioned the tape recorder in a way in which information could still be recorded. The researcher also ensured that a good quality tape recorder was used so that no data was lost during the interview. Extra batteries were also available. Before starting the interview the researcher tested the equipment to ensure that it was in working order (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:87).

The researcher began by introducing herself to the participants and explaining what the research was all about. The participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the study or about any concerns they may have had before the interview commenced. Participants were told that they were free to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. Each participant was asked the following:

"Tell me your story about your experience of being verbally bullied by your peers."

Questioning was extended to include information about themes identified from the naïve sketches (which had been analyzed prior to the interviewing) if participants omitted to include similar information during the interviews. The participants were thanked for their co-operation at the conclusion of the interview and debriefed when this was necessary. Any participant who felt traumatized by the interview was debriefed and offered counselling. The researcher asked participants if they had any other questions they would like to ask before concluding the interview. The debriefing continued until after the interview had been completed. Debriefing is a therapeutic intervention that involves looking through the facts related to the situation and processing the response to them (Stuart, & Laria, 2001:653).

The tape recordings were transcribed within 24 hours following the interview. After completion of the transcription, each participant was requested to read a copy of her interview and to indicate whether she agreed with the content. An opportunity to add information was granted...
if a participant felt that this was necessary. Member checking was, thus, used to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

**Communication skills**

The following interview techniques were utilized during the interviews. Kvale suggests the following types of questions (1996:133):

- **Follow-up questions:** The participants’ answers can be extended through the “curious, persistent and critical attitude” of the interviewer. Interviewers can train themselves to recognize “red lights” in the answers, such as unusual terms, strong intonations and the like, which may signal a whole complex of topics important to the participant. The researcher can have the ability to listen to what is important to the participant and, at the same time, keep the research questions and the research study in mind. Examples of this include “Can you tell me more…?” or “What happened in the episode you mentioned?”

- **Probing questions:** The researcher asks questions about what the participant has said; examples of this include “Could you say something more about that?” or “Could you give me a more detailed description of…?”

- **Specifying Questions:** The researcher makes a general statement such as “Have you experienced this yourself?”

- **Direct questions:** The researcher will directly introduce topics and dimensions, for example “Have you ever received money for good grades?” Direct questions should be left until later in the interview.

- **Indirect questions:** The interviewer may apply projective statements such as “How do you believe other pupils regard the competition of grades…..?” This may be a way of obtaining information from the participant.

- **Structuring Questions:** The researcher is responsible for the course of the interview and may indicate when the theme has been exhausted. The researcher may break off long answers to questions that are irrelevant to the topic of investigation. For example, “I would like to introduce another topic…?”

- **Silence:** The researcher has to use silence as a therapeutic measure instead of firing off questions. By allowing participants ample time to associate and reflect, they break the silence themselves for significant information.

- **Interpreting Questions:** This involves paraphrasing, clarification of the questions and there may be direct interpretations of what the participant has said (Kvale, 1996:133-135).

Okun (1982:62-63) identifies other interview techniques that were utilized by the researcher during interviewing:

- **Paraphrasing** is a verbal statement that is interchangeable with the participant’s statement.

- **Reflecting** refers to the communication with the researcher and understanding her concerns and perspectives.
- Clarifying is an attempt to focus or understand the nature of the participant’s statement.
- Confronting involves providing the researcher with honest feedback about what is really going on.
- Informing is providing factual information to the participant.
- Summarising refers to making a summary or précis of what has been said during the whole session or highlights the major themes of what has been said. (Okun, 1982:62-63).

**Duration**
The interviews did not last more than one hour, as the participants’ would have started to lose concentration had they been longer. The participants were informed of the duration period of the interviews beforehand and so were able to plan their time accordingly (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:86).

**Milieu for interviews**
The researcher conducted the interviews in a quiet venue identified by the gatekeepers where confidentiality could be ensured. She always arranged the seating in such a way that there were no barriers between her and the participant so that eye contact could be maintained throughout the interview. (Okun, 1982:85-86).

- **Member checking**
  According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Krefting, 1991:10), member checking involves continuously testing with the informants the researcher’s data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions. This rechecking of data with the participants ensured that the researcher had translated their viewpoints into words. This decreased the chances of misrepresentations. The relevant tape-recorded interview was played back to each participant and she was encouraged to read the transcriptions of the interview and make appropriate comments.

- **Peer review**
The researcher discussed the research findings with impartial colleagues with experience in qualitative research or with expertise in mental health and mental illness (Krefting, 1991:10). These peer reviewers included psychiatric nurses, psychologists, social workers or teachers who were knowledgeable about the effects of verbal abuse on adolescents. They were given a draft copy of the identified themes and encouraged to discuss the findings. They also listened to the researcher’s concerns. According to Holloway and Wheeler (1996:256), a peer review may detect bias or inappropriate subjectivity in the findings and try alternative explanations to the researcher’s personal position. They may warn the researcher against the attempt to ‘fit’ interpretations and explanations that cannot be substantiated by the data.
2.6. Data Analysis

The database for this study comprised the 30 naïve sketches, the ten transcribed interviews and the accompanying field notes, which were analyzed so that themes could be identified. The interviews were transcribed by means of a transcriptor prior to analysis.

The data was analyzed using Tesch’s method of descriptive analysis (in Creswell, 1994:190), which, according to Creswell, facilitates the process of data analysis by making sense of the text and image data. The eight steps of Tesch are:

1. Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind.
2. Start with one document: the most interesting, the shortest, and the one on top of the pile. Go through it. Think about the underlying meaning that the document conveys. Write your thoughts down in the margin.
3. When you have completed a number of interviews, make a list of all topics. Cluster similar topics together. Form these topics into columns that might be arranged as major topics, unique topics and leftovers.
4. Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if categories and codes emerge.
5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other.
6. Make a final decision on the abbreviations of each category and alphabetize these codes.
7. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8. If necessary, recode the data (Creswell, 1998:192).

Data was analyzed and similar themes and sub themes were identified (Creswell, 1994:193). An independent coder, who was given the research objectives, instructions on how to code the raw data and a raw text from which the categories were developed, was utilised to identify findings (confirm De Vos, 1998:345). As an independent coder is a person who creates categories from the raw text, she was not given any themes and categories beforehand (see Annexure 7 for Guide to Independent Coder).

The themes and categories were identified in both the naïve sketches, interviews and field notes. These focused on the experiences of adolescent girls with regards to verbal bullying.
2.7. PILOT STUDY

According to the New Dictionary of Social Work (as cited in De Vos, 2002:211), a pilot study is the process whereby the research design for a prospective survey is tested. According to Monette et al (1998:9, as cited in De Vos, 2002:211), a pilot study can be regarded as a small-scale trial run of all the aspects in the main enquiry. A pilot study was used as part of the research design to check sampling techniques, as well as the effective use of resources (Hek, Judd & Moule, 2003:25). One participant, who met the inclusion criteria, was identified by a gatekeeper to write a naïve sketch and be interviewed afterwards. The interview was transcribed and the data generated from both sources was analyzed. Themes and categories were identified with regard to verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls. Any problems encountered during the pilot study relating to data gathering methods or the analysis of the interview, were discussed and resolved with the supervisors.

2.8. LITERATURE CONTROL

A literature control is usually done after the data gathering and analysis has been completed. The researcher compared her findings to those of other authors. The information obtained from the research was used to formulate guidelines to help the mental health nurse specialists to deal with verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls in secondary schools.

2.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Guba and Lincoln’s model of trustworthiness (in Krefting, 1991:7-12) was used to ensure rigor in the study. There are four criteria that can be used to identify trustworthiness, namely truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

2.9.1 Truth-value

Truth-value refers to the confidence the researcher has in the findings. It establishes if the researcher is willing to draw inferences from the research design, information and context. Truth-value is also termed credibility. Truth-value is usually obtained from the descriptions of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by the informants (Krefting, 1991:10). The application of all strategies suggested is discussed in table 2.1.

Truth-value can be achieved through the following strategies:

- Prolonged and varied field experience: The researcher is able to check perspectives and the informants to become accustomed to the researcher. The participants will give different information (Krefting, 1991:7).
- Time sampling: According to Knafl & Breitmayer (1989, as cited in Krefting, 1991:8), use is made of a flowchart to systemize informant contacts and observation to determine if the
researcher is researching all possible situations, including different social setting, times of day, weeks, seasons and interactions among different social groupings.

- Reflexivity: This is the assessment of the influence of the researcher’s own background or interests on the qualitative research process. The personal history of the researcher is also included in this (Krefting, 1991:9). Aamodt (1982, as cited in Krefting, 1991:9) says that the researcher is part of the research process and not separate from it. The researcher must also analyze herself in the context of the research. The researcher can also monitor her relationship with the participants and her own reaction to the participants’ accounts and actions (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996: 263).

- Triangulation: According to Knafli & Breitmayer (1989, as cited in Krefting, 1991:9), triangulation is based on the idea of multiple realities for mutual confirmation of data to ensure that all aspects of a phenomenon have been investigated. There are different types of triangulation techniques. Namely -Triangulation of observers, in which multiple observers such as the gatekeepers who know these participants, and who have observed them over a time will provide multiple perspectives, backgrounds and social characteristics. In the triangulation of measures or to utilize more than one method of data gathering. The researcher takes multiple measures of the same phenomena. By measuring something in more than one way, they are likely to see all aspects of it. In this case the experience of a female adolescent who has been verbally bullied will be measured through interviews, field notes and observations. Triangulation of theory which is when the researcher uses multiple theoretical perspectives in the planning of the stages of research or when interpreting of data and the triangulation of method which involves mixing qualitative and quantitative styles of research and data. (Neuman, 2003:138).

- Peer evaluation: This is a process of engaging with a colleague, or a peer who is not involved in the study, to discuss the context of the study, findings, insights, perceptions and analyses (Babbie & Mouton, 1998: 276). In this study, the researcher approached her peers and asked their opinions on the study.

- Member checking: This is when the researcher is presented with multiple realities and presents it to the participants to verify the information that has been presented (Guba & Lincoln, 1989: 239).

- Interview technique: An unstructured interview technique leaves the wording and the questions posed to the participants to the discretion of the researcher. It is more like a conversation between the researcher and the participant. However, this conversation has a purpose as it provides the researcher with an in depth knowledge of the beliefs and attitudes of the participants (Brink, 1996: 158)

- Establishing authority of the researcher: The researcher is viewed as a measurement tool. Miles and Huberman (as cited in Krefting, 1991:11) identified the following four characteristics to assess trustworthiness of the researcher:
  - The degree of familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting.
A strong interest in conceptual or theoretical knowledge and the ability to conceptualise large amounts of qualitative data.

The ability to take a multidisciplinary approach, which is to look at the participant from a number of different theoretical perspectives.

Good investigative skills, which are developed through literature review, course work and experience in qualitative research methods.

- Structural coherence: This is the assurance that there are no unexplained inconsistencies in the data and their interpretations (Krefting 1991:11).
- Referential adequacy: The researcher makes use of observation and field notes to document findings (Babbie, 2004:77).

2.9.2 Applicability.
Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other settings or to other groups of individuals. It is the ability to generalise from the findings to larger populations. As qualitative research usually deals with small populations, findings cannot be generalised. Fittingness or transferability is an aspect of applicability. This is more the responsibility of another researcher wanting to transfer the findings to another situation than that of the researcher of the original study. The researcher can therefore, provide description of both the process and the findings to aid the other researcher in making a comparison (Krefting, 1991:9). All observations are defined in the specific contexts in which they occurred.

The following strategies will be applied to ensure applicability:
- Nominated sample: This occurs when a sample of participants, selected by a panel of judges, is representative of the phenomenon under study. Comparison of a sample to demographic data is a comparison of the characteristics of the informants to the demographic information available on that group being studied (Krefting, 1990:12)
- Time sampling: As discussed previously.
- Dense description: The researcher may provide dense background information about the informants and the research context and setting to allow others to assess how transferable the findings are (Krefting, 1991:12).

2.9.3 Consistency
Consistency refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were repeated with the same subjects in a similar context. In qualitative research, consistency is referred to as dependability, which means the stability of data over a period. The following strategies will be used for ensuring consistency
- Dependability audit: This means that another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail followed by the investigator of the study (Krefting, 1991:13). An audit trail can be utilized by the researcher that clearly documents decisions, choices and insights (Field & Morse, 1996:119).
• Dense description of research methods: The researcher will describe the methods of data gathering, analysis and interpretation in the research process. This dense description provides enough information to enable another researcher to repeat the same study in the same or in a unique situation (Krefting, 1991:13).
• Triangulation: As already mentioned previously.
• Peer examination: As already mentioned previously.
• Code-recode procedure occurs after coding a segment of the data. The researcher will wait and after two weeks will recode the same data and compare the results (Krefting, 1991:13).

2.9.4 Neutrality
The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is neutrality or confirmability. It is based on the freedom from bias in research procedures and results. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of the biases, motivations and perspectives (Krefting, 1991: 9). The researcher used the following strategies to ensure neutrality:
• Confirmability audit: This involves an external auditor attempting to follow through the natural history or progression of events to try to understand how and why decisions are made. It suggests that another researcher may arrive at the same conclusion given the same data and research context. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest six categories that can be included in the audit:
  - Raw data: Field notes and audio recordings.
  - Data reduction and analysis products.
  - Data reconstruction and synthesis products: Thematic categories, interpretations and inferences.
  - Process notes.
  - Materials related to intentions and dispositions.
  - Instrument development information (Krefting, 1991:14).
• Triangulation: As discussed previously.
• Reflexivity: As discussed previously.

These strategies to ensure trustworthiness, as applied to this research study, are summarized in table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
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<td>Credibility (Truth value)</td>
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<td>Time Sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>Peer evaluation</td>
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<td>Member checking</td>
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<td>Interview technique</td>
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<td>Structural coherence</td>
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<td>Authority of the researcher</td>
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<td>Referential adequacy</td>
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<td>Nominated sample</td>
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<td>Dense description</td>
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<td>Dependability (Consistency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dense description</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>Peer examination.</td>
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<td>Code- recode procedure</td>
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<td>Confirmability (Neutrality)</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>Reflexivity</td>
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Adapted from Krefting (1991:214-222)

### 2.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A researcher is responsible for conducting research in an ethical manner. The following ethical considerations were identified by the researcher as being important with regard to this study.

#### 2.10.1 Informed Consent

According to Dane (1990:40), the principle of informed consent refers to providing potential research participants with all the information necessary to allow them to make a decision concerning their participation. The researcher approached the Department of Education for permission to involve learners from a public school in the study (see Annexure 1). The principal (see Annexure 2) and the School Board (see Annexure 3) of the identified secondary school were asked their permission to conduct the study at the school. The principal of the school was requested to approach the teachers and encourage them to participate and to act as gatekeepers. As gatekeepers, they selected the prospective participants and their parents. The learners who agreed to participate, as well as their parents, were asked to give informed consent with regard to participation in the study (see Annexures 4, 5, 6). The researcher ensured that the aforementioned persons were fully informed about the study and that the learners were aware of the fact that they could either refuse to participate in the study or withdraw from it at any time.

All of the stakeholders associated with the study were informed about it, as discussed in 2.11.1, namely:

- The goals of the study.
- The procedure to be followed during the investigation.
• The possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the study.
• The risk regarding emotional trauma and how it would be managed should it occur.
• The right to withdraw from the study at any time.

2.10.2 No Harm to Participants
Participants can be harmed in a physical as well as an emotional way. Dane (cited in De Vos, 2002:64) claims that an ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect participants from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge, within reasonable limits. Emotional harm to participants is more difficult to predict. The right to protection from discomfort and harm is based on the ethical principle of beneficence, which states that one should do good and, above all, not to do harm (Burns & Groves, 1993: 101). Psychological harm was more likely to be encountered in this study than physical harm. The researcher was, therefore, obligated to note any form of worry, embarrassment, loss of self-esteem or mental discomfort caused to participants by the data gathering process (Dane, 1990: 44). The researcher noted these responses in participants and referred them to the nearest facility available for counseling. The researcher made arrangements for any participant who required help to obtain the necessary treatment.

2.10.3 Debriefing
Debriefing can be done to prevent the participants from suffering psychological harm. After completion of the interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to rectify any misconceptions that might have arisen in the minds of the participants. The participants had the opportunity to work through the aftermath of the interview (De Vos, 2002:73). Dane (1990:49) says that the debriefing session is an ideal time to complete the learning experience with agreeing participants.

2.10.4 No Deception
Deception involves misleading the participants in such a way that they are unaware of the nature of the study, the financial sponsoring of the study or how the results will be used. Accordingly, the researcher provided the participants, parents and teachers with sufficient information regarding the study to allow them to make an informed decision (Struwig & Stead, 2001:69).

2.10.5 Anonymity and Confidentiality
Anonymity exists when no one, including the researcher, can relate a person’s identity to any information pertaining to the research project (Dane, 1990:51). The researcher ensured anonymity of the participants by assigning a number to each of them. As the researcher kept no record regarding which participant had which number, it will be impossible to determine which data came from which participant. According to Dane (1990:51), confidentiality exists when only the researchers are aware of the participants’ identities and have promised not to
reveal those identities to others. The names and identities of the participants, as well as that of the school, were kept strictly confidential.

Permission to conduct the research study was obtained from the Human Ethics Committee of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in order to ensure that the study was conducted in a legally and ethically acceptable manner. When interviewing took place, the researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity by assigning codes and not names to the transcripts and sketches. Consequently, the researcher was not able to distinguish between any of the participants. Nobody other than the supervisors, researcher and the independent coder had access to the data. After completion of the study, the tapes and transcriptions were destroyed (or locked away in a safe place).

2.10.6 The Right to Self-determination
The research participants also have rights and are assumed to have the ability to evaluate information, weigh alternatives and make decisions for themselves. It is important for the participants to give consent before the study can take place (Dane, 1990:44). The learners who agreed to participate, as well as their parents, were asked to give informed consent with regard to participation in the study (see Annexures 4, 5, 6).

2.10.7 Plagiarism
Plagiarism means using the words of others without giving them proper acknowledgements (Struwig & Stead, 2001:70). The researcher has acknowledged everyone who has contributed to the research process and ensured that the literature sources were properly indicated.

2.10.8 Action and Competence of the Researcher
Researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake a proposed investigation (De Vos, 2002:69). The researcher worked according to the research proposal under the guidance and supervision of two experienced research supervisors. The researcher also attained a qualification in research methodology in order to acquire the necessary knowledge to conduct a research study. A pilot study was done with one participant to identify any errors in the research process, as well as the skill of the researcher in conducting interviews.

2.10.9 Publication of Findings
The findings of the study may be presented to the public in written form. An article will be written and submitted for publication in a professional journal. The report will contain all the essential information. Errors and shortcomings of the study will be mentioned in this report (De Vos, 2002:71). Participants will be informed about the journal in which the article will be published.
DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES

The researcher developed guidelines, with the help of the literature review, for mental health nursing specialists to use in assisting adolescents to cope better with stress encountered through verbal bullying. As the researcher is working in a public psychiatric hospital in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan area, the greatest impact in teaching adolescents skills to help them cope better with stress will be made at this level. A research report was written and copies sent to the relevant authorities. In-service education will be provided to psychiatric / mental health nurses so that they can become aware of the issues surrounding adolescent verbal bullying.

CONCLUSION

The researcher has described the research methodology and design in detail in this chapter and focused on data collection, data analysis, strategies to ensure trustworthiness and the ethical implications of the study. In the following chapter, the researcher will discuss the data collected and compare it to other researchers’ work.
CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology and design were discussed. The analysis of the data will be presented in this chapter and compared to relevant literature. The goals of a literature review are: firstly, to establish familiarity with the knowledge obtained; secondly, to show what has been found in prior research and how current research can be linked to those findings; thirdly, to summarize what is known about the topic; and, lastly, to learn from the research done by others (Neuman, 2003:96).

3.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNED METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Before commencing this study, a pilot study was conducted in order to assess the researcher’s interviewing techniques as well as the research question. As no problems were identified, the pilot interview and naïve sketch have been included as part of the database.

The researcher invited 30 adolescent girls in the grade 11 classes at a local secondary school in Port Elizabeth to participate in the research study. Of these 30 girls, 22 wrote naïve sketches that were collected by the researcher.

The participants were chosen by gatekeepers who were teachers at the school and who knew the adolescent girls well. The girls were aged between 15 to 18 years. The gatekeepers handed out consent forms for the participants and their guardians to complete.

All the participants in the study signed an informed consent, as did their parents/guardians. The participants came from different grade 11 classes within the local secondary school. From the 22 naïve sketches, eight (8) participants were selected by the researcher for interviewing. Seven of these girls were Coloured and one was Black.

The audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed within 24 hours of conducting the interviews. The transcriptions, naïve sketches and field notes formed the database for the research. Data were analysed using Tesch’s method (in Creswell, 1994:190) of data analysis. Field notes taken during and after interviews were analyzed in the same manner and utilized during the discussion of results where appropriate. Four themes and sub-themes were identified.
The researcher provided the independent coder with copies of the naïve sketches, transcribed interviews and field notes. After the independent coder had analyzed the data, a consensus discussion was held between her and the researcher to confirm and finalize the themes and sub-themes.

**Member checking**
Member checking could only be done with two of the participants due to time constraints. Each of these participants was provided with a transcription of her own interview and asked to elaborate on any issues that were unclear. The participants involved in member checking agreed with the copies of the transcription made by the researcher and offered no further comments.

**Peer review**
Following identification of the themes and sub-themes, a psychiatric nurse, social worker, teacher/psychologist and clinical psychologist were approached to be the peer reviewers. After they had been provided with the themes and sub-themes, the researcher had a discussion with each of these individuals on his/her own. They each agreed that the themes identified were the same issues they came across when dealing with adolescents who had been verbally abused by their peers. The psychiatric nurse and social worker felt that the morals and the values that were taught to these adolescents may be taken into account seeing that most of the learners came from a lower socioeconomic background (the participants in the study were, in fact, from working class families). These families were often compelled to live in areas where the children were frequently exposed to gang violence, alcohol and drug abuse. They reported that these adolescents may have observed family violence were their parents participated in abusive acts. The educational psychologist commented on the peer pressure experienced by adolescents. He felt that learners could actually benefit from peer counseling in which learners from any level were taught skills related to being a peer counselor. He said that girls tend to be more competitive with one another concerning grades or clothing and that there could be a lot of nastiness between them. The clinical psychologist said: Identification of themes and sub themes from your interviews of adolescent girls that have been bullied are consistent with my knowledge and experience of children having been bullied.

### 3.3 IDENTIFIED THEMES

The experiences of the adolescent schoolgirls regarding verbal bullying were categorized into four main themes with sub-themes. These are presented in table 3.1. Direct quotes from the
transcriptions and excerpts from the naïve sketches are used where appropriate to reflect the participants’ experiences. The themes are also supported by relevant literature.

Table 3.1 Themes from Naïve Sketches and Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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| 1. The adolescent girls experienced that verbal bullying affected their lives negatively | 1.1 Verbal bullying affected school-work negatively.  
1.2 They found it difficult to trust their teachers or their parents regarding these issues.  
1.3 They experienced intimidation should they reveal the bullying.  
1.4 Verbal bullying occurred inside and outside the school terrain.  
1.5 They experienced rejection and isolation.  
1.6 They were exposed to teasing, gossiping and rude remarks. |
| 2. The adolescent girls had negative emotional experiences related to verbal bullying | 2.1 They experienced stress, which manifested as helplessness, fear and anxiety related to continuous verbal bullying.  
2.2 They experienced emotional pain, low self-esteem, self-consciousness, worthlessness, sadness and depression that led to a few of them having suicidal thoughts.  
2.3 They experienced humiliation, embarrassment and anger related to verbal bullying. |
| 3. The adolescent girls had difficulty coping with verbal bullying | 3.1 They rationalized verbal bullying as jealousy and attention-seeking on the part of the bullies.  
3.2 They suppressed their emotions related to verbal bullying.  
3.3 They tried to identify with the |
1. Some of the adolescent girls tended to overcome the victimization to which they were exposed.

4.1 The participants sometimes confronted the bullies.
4.2 They compensated by putting more effort into schoolwork.
4.3 They used support systems such as talking to their mothers.
4.4 They developed their own way of coping such as praying and keeping a diary.

3.4 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

A discussion of the themes and sub-themes will now be presented.

3.4.1. THEME 1: THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS EXPERIENCED THAT VERBAL BULLYING AFFECTED THEIR LIVES NEGATIVELY

In this research study, the adolescent girls’ experiences of being verbally bullied affected their lives by lowering their self-esteem and having a negative effect on their schoolwork. The victims of bullying also found it difficult to trust adults such as their teachers in this respect, although some did trust their parents sufficiently to tell them about the issue. The participants did things against their will to protect the bully. They tended to cope with the verbal bullying by doing whatever the bully asked or by not saying anything when the bully hurt their feelings. The incidents of verbal bullying occurred both within the school environment and outside of it.

3.4.1.1 Sub theme 1.1: Verbal Bullying Affected Their Schoolwork Negatively

The adolescent girls felt self-conscious and their learning was impeded because they were unable to participate in school activities. The participants expressed that the verbal bullying affected their schoolwork negatively. The participants felt self-conscious in class because the bullies would make nasty comments such as “You are fat” or “You are ugly”. The participants reported feeling nervous about standing in front of their fellow learners to do oral presentations as they would see the bully laughing and not know what she was laughing about.

“Because I remember here in high school when we were all in the same class and it was your turn to speak up. Then you see them laughing; you would not know what they were laughing about and then when you go to sit down then she would say that you should not have said that. She would say no, you are not right and so fat and all that kinds of stuff. All the times
she used to make me feel small. I for one, I can’t stand in front of the whole class and talk, and they kept telling me that you are like this and then everybody used to tell that no you are not like this. But no, she was actually the first person to tell me that you are ugly, no you are fat, you can’t stand in front of the people and talk, or your socks is small and all that stuff and I think about it but it has impacted my learning, but it has influenced my life in a way. Because there is certain things that I can’t wear even if I wanted to wear because she told me that you can’t wear it that and you can’t wear that.”

“Yes, it broke me down emotionally. Like when you did oral, you know already what they are going to say about you and then you can’t do the oral like the way you wanted to, or maybe you planned it out by saying this. Then your words get mixed up. They might be looking at you and making funny faces and stuff like that.”

“Not everyday. Most of the days they never came to school cause they bunked but when they did come to school, they made it a duty of theirs to just say something to me to make me feel bad.”

According to Rigby (2000 in Elliot, 2002:286), the bullying has a capacity to affect the learning of the child. The topic of whether schoolwork tends to be negatively impacted seems to be relatively unexplored. An article from the internet states that the victim could feel uncomfortable at school and want to stop going to school, which could cause them to miss classes and have a negative impact on schoolwork(http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.ca/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1001944&page...07/052005 @11:30).

According to Turkel and Eth (1990 in Smith & Sharp, 1994:7), children who are worried and upset tend not to learn well and have difficulties in concentrating.

The bullying also affected the participants’ concentration and performance in the classroom, especially when the bullies were present. The bully would stare at them while making remarks such as “Teacher’s pet” or “You are fat” or “You are ugly “when they were giving oral presentations.

“Get bad dreams and thoughts and it is affecting my schoolwork. I just sit and do my work and then my mind dwells and then I just think about this then I am in a daze.”

“And that names they used to call me also affected my schoolwork. So I could never concentrate because I would think on it all the time or they would tease me in the classroom. So, I could not really concentrate on my schoolwork.”

Rigby (1996: 54) stated that he had found children who were unable to concentrate on their schoolwork because of bullying and the schoolwork of many of them was negatively affected due to them being absent from school. In the context of this study, the participants expressed
that their concentration was negatively affected by the bullies when they were performing oral presentations. Literature consulted also indicated that learners tend to stay away from school because of bullying. (Rigby, 1996:53; Sullivan, 2000:29; Elliot, 2002:92). However, this was not the case in the context of this research study as the bullies appeared to be the ones who stayed away from school.

3.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: They Found It Difficult To Trust Their Teachers Or Their Parents About These Issues

Adolescents found it difficult to tell their teachers or parents about the bullying.

**Telling teachers:** The participants reported that they did not trust teachers enough to discuss the bullying with them. They felt that the teachers were not trustworthy because they might discuss the bullying situation with other colleagues. They felt that the teachers tended to make the situation worse. There were instances in which the participants expressed that they were afraid to tell a teacher because they feared that the situation would end up out of control.

“In standard 3 one of my school friends verbally bullied me by calling me names. I wanted to answer her back but then I thought that she would go tell the teacher. I felt embarrassed cause it was in front of all my friends. I walked away and cried and never told a teacher. When I came home, my mother asked me why am I so upset, so I told her about the situation. The next day she went to the school and wanted to see the bully’s parents. My other friends were to back me up because they heard things that she said to me. Because it was not the first time and I am not the first one to hear that things from her. But when our teacher heard about it, she did not want to believe it because she was also a top student. Everyone started calling me names since then. But now everything has changed since I’m finished with primary school.”

“I didn’t tell the teacher. I was scared if I told the teachers; they would speak to them (the bullies) about it and then they going to get me afterwards and then they going to tell me ‘Why did you tell the teacher?’ And it is not good to bring in the teachers. It is not between them, it is between us.”

“Yes, I told a teacher. But she did not do a good job of it. Because she put us together, this group with that group and it broke into a big fight, I was sitting there, and she was sitting there. I was keeping quiet and she was sitting there keeping quiet. The teacher just stood there. But I really don’t trust that teacher. Because that teacher would say ‘I am going to tell you personal things about this one. But don’t go tell this one’. Then today I heard my friend came to come tell me, Teacher’s name told this person things about her, so I was listening and I was thinking that that is the same thing that she told me, maybe she is telling everybody. ‘Don’t tell this one and don’t tell this one’. Eventually everyone will know my personal business and I won’t tell her anything about my personal business.”
According to Olivier and Candappa (Childline%20DP%20Bullying%20(download)pdf. 14/10/2005@13:15), bullying was least reported to the teachers. The learners stated that if the bullying was reported, either the teachers would take no notice of the incidents or they would not keep the information to themselves. They were also not able to protect the learner if the bully retaliated. According to Whitney and Smith (1993 in Chazan, Laing & Davies, 1994:155), children were least likely to inform teachers about bullying even if it was very bad and they feared the consequences of the bullying.

In a study conducted by Neser, Ovens, Van der Merwe, Morodi, Ladikos and Prinsloo (2004:42), where the data was generated by means of a convenience sample comprising grade 6 to 11 learners from schools in Tswane, the authors reported that both male and female victims would be less inclined to report the bullying to their teachers or a best friend. The literature substantiates the findings of this study that learners are reluctant to tell teachers about their experiences of being bullied.

**Telling parents:** The participants were afraid to tell their parents because they feared that their parents would go to the school, which might make the situation worse. The bully would then learn that the participant had told an adult about the bullying and the participant feared the negative consequences. They feared being confronted by the bully and that telling their parents would lead to far worse consequences. should a confrontation occur. The participants also felt that they were not children anymore and, therefore, supposed to handle their own affairs and not involve their parents.

“I did not want to tell my mother because she would have come to the school and sort them out... and the teacher.... I was too scared just now; it is a very big thing.”

“No, I did not tell them anything because I am in high school; I am supposed to handle it and at the same time it would be an embarrassment because they would have come to school. They (referring to her parents) would have told the deputy principal and the deputy principal would ask to see her. Then she would have told the whole class and then it would come back to me and that is how I saw it and I still believe that is the way it would have went. My parents would have come to school and then ask to see her and she would talk to the deputy and she would go to class and tell all the guys what happened. Because all the guys were like drooling over her… because they would believe her and she would not ask they and me would all look at me strangely. I know that would have happened and I did not want to do that so that everyone would look at me funny and even though some of them actually experienced the same thing, they would actually not come with the same thing and so. No this had happened and this is true and stuff.”
“The parents didn’t know about it. I kept it to myself. Whereas if I told them, it would have gotten uglier. Then she (the bully) would have been sitting somewhere at this very moment. Somewhere where she didn’t want to be sitting. I thought to myself that I will keep it to myself and try and work through it on my own.”

According to Olivier and Candappa (Childline%20DP%20Bullying%20(download)pdf. 14/10/2005@13:15), learners who want to tell their parents about bullying, would have to weigh the risks and benefits. The risks are associated with actions the parents might take including: fighting with each other or blaming each other in respect of whose fault it is that the child is being bullied; confronting the bully, which may get nasty. The bully might ‘spill the beans’ about what occurred. The benefits of telling the parents are that they can provide support and give advice.

According to Rigby (1997:239), learners who are bullied often prefer to tell a friend rather than a parent. In the research study by Neser et al (2004:42), more females (53, 6%) than males (46, 7%) were willing to tell their parents about the bullying.

Telling peers: The participants reported that they might confide in friends. Peers may provide support and may protect the victimized adolescent. They reported that some peers were not to be trusted because they broke the confidence of the friendship.

“I had a friend who was bullied…, and I had to stand up for her and help her get through it and help her build up her self confidence again because bullying breaks you down.”

According to an internet article, “Tackling Bullying”: listening to the views of children and young people” (Childline%20DP%20Bullying%20(download)pdf. 14/10/2005@13:15), a large majority of the learners aged between five (5) and eight (8) years found it is easier to talk to friends if they were bullied. In the research study by Neser et al (2004:42), more females (51,7%) than males (47%) would tell their friends about the bullying.

Telling others: Some of the participants mentioned speaking to the student counselor at school or consulting a priest at church about the bullying. One of the participants also mentioned that she had told her cousin about the bullying, while another said that she had told her granny.

“At the moment I don’t need support. But if I do, I will rather see someone such as counselor or the priest at the church.”

An internet article revealed that a minority of learners felt that a counselor would be beneficial with regard to helping with bullying (Childline%20DP%Bullying%20(Download).pdf 14/10/2005@13:15). In a study conducted in South Australia, children were asked by the
researchers what they would do if they were bullied by someone bigger and stronger than themselves. Less than one in three participants said that they would ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ see a teacher or school counselor, half of them said that they would tell their parents and three out five said that they would get their friends to help (Tattum,1993:129).

**Telling nobody:** Most of the participants interviewed had told nobody that they were being bullied. They feared the negative consequences of the bully coming back to them and embarrassing them further. These participants indicated that they had not told anybody but had rather tried to cope on their own.

“No I did not tell them anything because I am in high school. I am supposed to handle it.”

According to Slee (1998 in Edwards, 2000:3), the incidents of bullying often go unreported as the victim fears retaliation. In the research study by Neser *et al* (2004:42), about 20% of the participants did not tell anybody about the bullying they were experiencing; when participants were asked whether things got better after telling someone, just over half (54.5%) reported that there was an improvement in the situation, 20% reported no change and 10% responded that the situation became worse.

According to Besag (1989:134), learners do not tell anybody about the bullying because they fear that the bully may retaliate. They may also feel humiliated, degraded and ashamed, or experience low-self esteem and helplessness. They are unable to explain the situation to others because they are afraid, confused and upset about the bullying.

Sullivan (2000:28) states that even excessive bullying often goes unreported. He says that reporting of bullying is low due to the message from peers that telling someone about it is unacceptable. Victims tend to think that, even if the incident is reported, nothing can be done to stop the bully. The bullies may also retaliate if the victims do report the incident. Hence, the victim feels hopeless about the bullying as she feels that there really is nothing that anyone can do about the situation in which she finds herself (Sullivan, 2000:28).

Available literature, therefore, substantiates that participants do not tell anybody about being bullied because they fear the negative consequences.

**3.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3 They Experienced Intimidation Should They Reveal The Verbal Bullying**

According to Gilmour *et al* (2004: 408), intimidation refers to the act of subduing or influencing a person by instilling fear. The participants reported that they experienced intimidation. The bullies used intimidation to either humiliate them or obtain favours or material objects from them; for example, the participants would bring lunch or a material
object such as money for the bully in an attempt to curb the verbal abusive aimed at them. The participants felt threatened and afraid that, may they reveal the bullying to an adult, the bully would harm them; hence the incident would go unreported.

“I thought that everytime they asked me something, I used to give it to them. Then for a while, they would stop calling me names and then after that they would again call me names. Like I had to pay them to stop calling me names.”

“And I had a jacket, a blue jacket that we wore when it was raining at school. She asked for it and then I gave it to her and then I said I want it back and then she said ‘No man, don’t mind about that jacket, I’m sure you don’t need it and your parents don’t ask about it’. Ja, but still I need it and then she said, if you need it you know what you are doing. You must go out with my brother and stuff like that and then I really never got it.”

“This girl that was expelled used to send people and she used to say that she is going to get me after school and things like that.”

An article obtained from the internet reported a longitudinal study that was conducted in the early 1990’s in the Johannesburg-Soweto area (File://A:\The transmission of violence in schools birth to ten children’s experiences of bullying) 24/10/2005 @ 13:30) in which the effects of bullying on 7 to 8 year old children were examined. The study revealed that the bullies used intimidation by threatening either physical or verbal abuse and by taking possessions. According to Thompson et al (2002:25), the bully’s threat of “I’ll get you after school” does not need to be carried out to cause distress to the learner; it also usually occurs in front of the victim’s peers. According to Besag (1989:134), learners also reported that intimidation often occurs.

In the context of this study, the participants expressed that they needed to keep the bullies happy in order to stop the bullying. They did this by making them lunch, giving them stickers and letting them take their money. They also reported that the threat of humiliation or retaliation was used by bullies.

3.4.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Verbal Bullying Occurred Inside And Outside The School Terrain

Although most of the verbal bullying occurred on the school premises, many of the participants described how the verbal abuse also continued after school.

“It was not at school really but it was around the area where I lived.”

“We all took a taxi together, because they lived all on that side and I lived in Cleary Estate and we all had to take a taxi after school. Then one day we all took a taxi home and I was so
nervous because we are all in the taxi and then I was thinking, ‘Ohh my word, what are these children going to do. Just now they may embarrass me here in the taxi’ and afterwards I started taking taxi somewhere else because I did not want something to happen. Because I did not want them to embarrass me, I rather wanted my mother to come and fetch me after school or I want to get a lift home. I just made another plan. No, I walked till another taxi stopped or I got a lift home with my friend. They did not do anything funny. They just threw comments around, but I made like I did not hear them.”

In a study by Neser et al (2004: 140) on bullying of grade 6 to 10 learners, the participants reported that bullying may occur in the playground, in the classrooms, in the school hall and while walking home from school or at the bus stop. In an Australian study, Rigby (1996 in Sullivan, 2000:19) agreed that the playground tended to be one of the areas where verbal bullying occurred. Bullying may also take place in the classroom, on the school premises or on the way home. A study conducted in Germany on violent behaviour amongst learners (Losel & Bliesner, 1999 in Sullivan, 2000:19) reported that 17,3% of learners were bullied outside school premises, 60,1% were bullied in the playground, 10,4% in school corridors and 9,2 % in the classroom.

From the literature control it appears that most bullying of learners takes place in the school playground but some does also occur outside school premises as well. These findings correspond with the reports given by the participants in this study.

3.4.1.5 Sub theme 1.5: They Experienced Rejection And Isolation
The participants in the study felt rejected by the bullies’ actions and isolated themselves from other people.

Rejection
According to the Hawkins, rejection means refusing to accept or to discard a person or an object (1996:369). The participants reported that they felt like outcasts, that they were inferior to the bully and that they did not conform to the norm in the group where the bully was the leader. They expressed being rejected for not wearing the right kind of clothes or acting in an expected manner.

“It is sad it is really sad because we were really close. We would do everything together. We had like a special connection .They used to indoctrinate her with things about me. But I never took notice of it but now it seems as if she listening and she probably thought to herself… um …why would these people being saying this and she probably started believing it afterwards.”

“It did make me feel low like because it made me feel does people think of me like that. Because I don’t communicate with them. Because I used to like be to myself and then it made me think. Must I speak or must I be more like them to fit into the group or what. Because I
didn’t know if I was doing something wrong to offend them or what. So it made me feel like an outcast."

According to Shuster (1999 in Elliot, 2002:285), there is a definite correlation between feelings of rejection and being bullied. Hodges and Perry (1996 in Juvonen & Graham, 2001:267) say that rejection by the peer group makes the victim a target of abuse. It can also lead to the victim experiencing loneliness. Rubin, Le Mare and Lollis (1990 in Juvonen & Graham, 2001:268) maintain that the rejected bully victims are at risk of developing low-self esteem, loneliness and depression. Rejected children are less friendly and do not socialize well (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Gottman, 1977 in Musen et al, 1990: 439). They appear to be the children who are teased. In the context of this study, the adolescent girls felt rejected and suffered from low self esteem and depression and they isolated themselves.

Isolation
According to Collins et al (2004: 413), isolation refers to segregation, seclusion and to detach oneself from the group. In the context of this study, the participants mentioned that they would not leave their houses because of the bullying.

“The people, they tend to lower you and make you look bad. In a sense that they know that it will affect you. It affected me in that kind of way that, I tried to escape. I tried not to be involved and I tried not to leave the house or anything. I tried to stay in the house and not associate with people outside and anything for that matter.”

“Because I have not had time to meet that person and communicate with that person and when I talk to other people then they say you are not normal you are crazy nobody thinks about that stuff. That is why most of the times I choose to isolate myself. Because the only time that I do come out of the house is coming to school and going to church, going to the shops and when I am going to Greenacres, I don’t really go often."

The social isolation and anxiety that victims experience could have an adverse effect on the development of their self-image and self-esteem (Rutter, 1987 in Tatum, 1993:160). The victims isolate themselves and wonder why they have been singled out by the bully. Sullivan (2000:27) states that isolation hinders children from making friends and this makes them feel self-conscious and incompetent. According to Batshe and Knoff (1994) and Olweus (1993), as cited in an internet article, (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm 15/10/2005 @10h30). learners who are bullied tend to lack social skills and friends and are inclined to isolate themselves socially; their peers are also reluctant to risk being friends with them because they do not want to lose their status by associating with the victim, which may cause an increase in the isolation of the victim (http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/bullying.htm.15/10/2005@10h30). In the context of this study, the adolescent girls did
experience isolation due to being bullied. They also felt self-conscious and had low self esteem. Smith (1999 in Sullivan, 2000:26) reports that bullied children are not popular and they isolate themselves from others. This isolation makes them vulnerable to targeting by the bullies. They are deprived of the opportunity to interact with peers because they isolate themselves (Rigby, 2002:124).

The literature consulted has, therefore, substantiated the findings regarding isolation.

3.4.1.6 Sub-theme 1.6: They Were Exposed To Teasing, Gossiping And Rude Remarks
The adolescent girls in the research study were exposed mostly to verbal bullying. One of the participants expressed that she and the bully used to be close friends; now when this person verbally abused her, it would concern secrets that she had told her in the past. Verbal abuse can take the form of swearing, making personal statements about a person’s character, making derogatory statements, making nasty statements about the person’s appearance and/or gossiping and spreading rumors about a person. In a study by Owens et al. (2000a: 74), verbal abuse of learners included calling them slut, dyke, tart and fat. In this study, verbal bullying took the form of making nasty comments to the victims.

“It is not nice for me to walk with my friends here outside. Walking with them and other people calling me names. It is like a knife and cutting you with it and everytime when they pass you and they are hurting it more and more and more. It is just something I can’t explain properly.”

“It seems that their lives revolve around being involved in other people’s business and they like to gossip so that is why when somebody says something about them, they always bring somebody’s personal issues out… They spoke in the class and that girl just said something nasty to them then they will say ‘Ja, you were pregnant and you had sex before your time’. They can always bring personal issues into other people’s faces because they are so involved in other people business that they know everything about other people that is how they are.”

“Like I am very into my school studies. I don’t still take notice of them, this partying and things like that, and they used to call me nerd because I used to wear glasses and I normally used to wear my school skirt up to here (points to her knee) and I don’t feel the need for wearing a skirt until up to here and then they would make fun of that.”

One participant related the following episode of bullying:

“I got a phone call and she was just swearing at me and then she said ‘Ek weet nie hoekom hou jy nie jou so mooi nie want jy is nie mooi nie’ and then I put the phone down. ….. I know this child’s voice, I know who she is. She told the class ‘Ja, ek stalk vir the participant en sy gaan nooit uitvind nie. Then I left everything and then my mother went to her. She told her
father that she don’t have my number. But when we went through her phone book I saw my number, we went through dialed numbers, I saw my number there so. Then her father said (the bully’s name) did you do it?’ and then she told her father, ‘No Daddy, I didn’t do it’. And then I asked her where did you get my number and why is it on dialed numbers and why is your phone on private seeing that you did not do it. So she told her father that it is her friends and then they pushed her into doing it and pressured her into doing it.”

“… throwing comments about how I look , about I have a problem with my teeth and I know that and that I mean it hurts a person. People tend to break you down, and at the end of the day are you so broken down. We very close friends (participant and the taxi driver) and there was once that he dropped me off and apparently these same girls they saw it and I was called a N***** and I do all these thing.”

“Then her friends knew this was going on and then they started spreading rumours about her and then they said that I was speaking bad about her and this boy and so I am telling people that the two of them is having sex. …. And she believed that I was speaking bad about her and this man.”

Verbal bullying is defined by Thompson, Arora and Sharp (2003:69) as name-calling and making insulting statements, repeated teasing and racist remarks. According to Owens et al (2000a:74), girls spend a lot of time talking about others. The term the participants used was bitching and the girls also used to spread rumours, break confidences, criticize other’s clothing, appearance and personality. According to an internet article consulted by the researcher, there appears to be a higher incidence of indirect or covert aggression amongst females; Macoby (1990) commented in this article that female friendship circles are more prone to conflict than male friendship circles. (Http://www.exceptionalkids.com.au./education/behaviourproblems2.htm 14/10/2005 @13:15). Sullivan (2000:11) stated that verbal bullying includes telephone calls, extorting money or material possessions, intimidation or threats of violence, racist remarks or teasing, sexually suggestive or abusive language, spiteful teasing or making cruel remarks and spreading false and malicious rumors. Hence, the literature control substantiates the findings regarding verbal bullying experienced by the participants in this study.

3.4.2 THEME 2: THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAD NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES RELATED TO VERBAL BULLYING.

According to the Soanes & Stephenson (2004: 467), the concept emotion refers to feelings such as joy, fear, anger and sadness. The adolescent girls in this study experienced various emotions related to verbal bullying, including fear, depression, helplessness, humiliation, anger, hurt, rejection and isolation, feelings of worthlessness and feelings of intimidation. According to Potterton (2005:10 ), bullying can make children feel scared, vulnerable and
alone. Matisse (in Potterton, 2005:10) says that 50% of school children are likely to experience psychological problems such as anxiety, which would affect other areas of their adult lives such as maintaining relationships in the workplace and with parenting. Owens et al (2000:368) report that the victims of bullying experience painful psychological effects, which may include embarrassment, anger, worry, fear, humiliation, loneliness, self-consciousness, betrayal and sadness.

Rigby (2002:139) has also identified emotions that individuals feel when being bullied that have been correlated with other research; these include:

- Having low self-worth or low self-esteem.
- Being non-assertive.
- Having poor social skills.
- Being psychologically introverted.
- Being physically less strong than others.
- Being relatively uncooperative.
- Not being group orientated.
- Not being competitive.
- Being stronger than average.
- Being less stable than others.
- Lacking poise, not being relaxed.
- Being lonely and isolated.
- Being prone to anxiety, depression and suicide

The various emotions will be discussed in the following sub themes.

3.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: They Experienced Stress, Which Manifested As Helplessness, Fear And Anxiety Related To Continuous Verbal Bullying

Stress is a universal experience (Varcarolis, 2002:266). Selye (1956 in Varcarolis, 2002:266) refers to stress as a General Adaptation Syndrome. The General Adaptation Syndrome has two components: firstly, how the individual deals with acute stress and, secondly, the consequences of prolonged stress. Acute stress can cause: uneasiness; concern; sadness; loss of appetite; suppression of the immune system; and increased metabolism and use of fats. Prolonged stress can cause: anxiety; panic attacks; depression or melancholia; anorexia or overeating; lowered resistance to infections, leading to increase in opportunistic viral and bacterial infections; insulin resistant diabetes; hypertension; amenorrhea or loss of sex drive; increased fatigue; irritability; decreased memory and learning; and increased risk for cardiac and respiratory problems. Stress can manifest physiologically and psychologically. Physiologically, stress can lead to the development of hypertension and diabetes mellitus. Psychological effects of stress include distress and eustress. Distress is harmful to a person’s health and the psychological effects include anxiety, depression, confusion,
helplessness and fatigue. Eustress, on the other hand, is demonstrated in a person’s ability to master tasks given with confidence and success. The psychological effects of eustress include happiness, hopefulness or peacefulness (Varcarolis, 2002:266). According to Frisch and Frisch (2002:159), stress refers to a stimulus that a person experiences as being either harmful or challenging. Rigby (2002:62) states that bullying experiences can be very stressful; some learners may experience mild levels of stress, whereas for others these may be very high.

**Helplessness**
The concept of helplessness refers to the inability to defend oneself (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004:665). The participants felt helpless towards the bully. The situation would arise where the bully was with her friends and there were a lot of people around and the victimized individual would not be able to defend herself. The participants expressed feeling helpless towards the bully because of the situation in which they found themselves. Their helplessness lay in that they were unable to defend themselves against the bully’s torments.

“No, I thought that everytime they, like asked me something I used to like give it to them. Then for a while they, like, stop calling me names and then after, they like, call me names. Like I had to pay them to stop calling me names.”

“I knew what it felt like being bullied because I had that same experience. No man, she is not bullying she is just controlling everyone. I know for a fact that others, she did not treat them the way she was treating me. I am like something that she can switch on and switch off and I know this for a fact.”

“I didn’t know if I was doing something wrong to offend them or what so it made me feel like an outcast.”

According to Rigby (1995 in Owens et al, 2000:367), feelings of helplessness and low self-esteem are associated with having few friends. Children feel helpless when they are unable to control the situation and there is nothing that they can do (Besag, 1989:55).

**Fear and anxiety**
According to the Soanes & Stevenson (2004:519), fear refers to an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, harm or pain as well as to mixed feelings of dread and reverence; the individual fears that something unwelcome could occur. Sullivan (in Antai-Ontong, 2003:138) states that anxiety is a barrier to effective communication. Therefore, it threatens one’s self-esteem and self-respect. Whereas low levels of anxiety can increase the alertness and problem solving ability of an individual, an increased level of anxiety can cause a disruption in cognitive thinking (Antai-Ontong, 2003:137-138).
The participants accepted that being part of the bullying group was better than not having any friends. They also expressed being afraid of coming to school because of the bullying. They explained that they would be so anxious of meeting the bullies, that if the latter used the same route to school, they would find an alternative route so as to avoid a confrontation with them. The bullies also threatened the participants that they would do something bad to them. The participants also mentioned that rude remarks made by the bullies during oral presentations heightened their experience of anxiety.

"Children who are bullied usually have low self-esteem and they usually feel self conscious. They dislike coming to school because of their fear of being bullied."

“I’ve been in a group where the people who were my friends treated another girl really bad, but she stuck with us because she was afraid that she wouldn’t have any other friends."

“There are a few boys at every break when we stand in the line to buy something from the tuck shop. They are always there pulling on our arms and we ask them to stop but they just don’t want to. After we asked them to stop pulling, they start swearing at us and that makes a person feel scared and it makes you sometimes feel useless and let your self-esteem drop.”

“I am scared, okay, in a way I am scared and in a way I am not scared, because sometimes I feel tense because I am not the fighting type, I never fought in my life, if they come attack me. They are a lot and I am alone. They can all hit me and then what am I going to do. I have never fought in my life and I don’t know what to do and now I am fighting and they all attack me, that is what I am scared of just one day that I do nothing and they will attack me and hit me.”

In a qualitative study done in Adelaide, South Australia on 15 year old adolescent girls, they reported that the fear they experienced carried over into adulthood (Owens et al, 2000: 369). A study done in England and Wales on learners aged 13 to 15 years who were being bullied revealed that 25% of the research population was afraid of attending school (Francis & Jones, 1994 in Rigby 2002:112). Balding, Regis, Wise and Muirden (1996 in Thompson et al, 2002: 72) conducted a survey on 11 to 16 year olds in 65 schools. They found that 21,3% boy and 28,2% girl learners were sometimes afraid to go to school (no information was included on where the study took place).
3.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: They Experienced Emotional Pain, Low Self-Esteem, Self-Consciousness, Worthlessness, Sadness And Depression That Led To A Few Of Them Having Suicidal Thoughts

Emotional pain

Emotion is a concept that refers to arousing an intense feeling (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004:466) and pain refers to mental and physical suffering (Collins et al, 2002:544). The adolescent girls involved in this study would be hurt or suffer from emotional pain due to comments made by the bullies. The participants reported that in certain instances the bully did not even know them but would make comments and swear at them. The bully would say that they were stupid, ugly and fat. These remarks of the bully made them feel self-conscious and led to feelings of worthlessness that could, in turn, have given rise to feelings of sadness and depression. A few of the participants also contemplated suicide.

“Sometimes I just sit at home and then I just think about all this stuff and then I just cry because, why must they do it to me. Because I don’t do them anything; it is not nice. It is something that you keep in your heart because the words are replaying in your mind. You can see the expression on their faces. It is always there. If I sleep then sometimes I dream about it. It is always there. It replays like a song over and over. It is not nice.”

“I just don’t seem to show people that what they are saying is doing anything to me so I just leave it because it is hurting me sometimes and to think that we were so good friends and that. But I don’t show that I sad about that.”

It is not nice for me to walk with my friends here outside. Walking with them and other people calling me names. It is like someone taking a knife and cutting you with it and everytime when they pass you and they are hurting it more and more and more. It is just something I can’t explain properly.”

In the study by Owen et al (2000:366), the victimized individuals pretended that they were not affected by what the girls were saying and also did not show the pain that they were experiencing. In a study conducted by Rigby (1996:55) in which children were asked how they felt after being bullied, some participants reported that they did not feel well. He also reported the following symptoms being experienced: nervousness; worrying; a scared feeling in the stomach; dizziness; vomiting; attempting suicide; hating school; headaches; hay fever; not being able to sleep; tiredness; and stressed out. Some reported feeling depressed and hating school. They also reported changes in behaviour such as staying at home and even attempting suicide. The participants in another study stated that it is painful for learners to come to terms with the fact that they have no friends and are alone (Besag, 1989: 53).
Low self-esteem

From the data collected it can be seen that verbal bullying had an impact on the self-esteem of the victims. Most of the participants in the study said that their self-esteem had been lowered by the situation in which they found themselves. Self-esteem is a feeling that a person has about his/her own worth and it is based on a personal judgement that the person makes about himself/ herself. Self-esteem is lowered when one does not get approval from others (Stuart & Laria, 2001:319). According to Thompson et al (2002:71), persons who where bullied were found to have a low self-esteem, were more lonely and more anxious. Rigby (2002:107) reported that research studies indicate that victimized learners from different age groups frequently have relatively low self-esteem or self-worth.

“It lowered my self-esteem as a young lady knowing how important it is for you to look good for others and trying your utmost best to impress the rest.”

“They start swearing at us and that makes a person feel scared and it makes you sometimes feel useless and it lets your self-esteem drop.”

According to Sullivan (2000:15), the self-esteem of victims of bullying may gradually be lowered until they feel worthless. This comes about because of the perception that the bully has instilled in their minds. Dooley, the director of the Family Life Centre at Famsa in Johannesburg (in Lillah, 2003:10), says that the victims of bullying may often present as loners with a low self-esteem. They do not hang out with the ‘in’ groups. Schoeman (2005:90) is also of the opinion that bullying breaks down a person’s self-esteem and makes the victim feel helpless. This could lead to psychological problems and even suicidal thoughts. She came to the conclusion that one out of five children bullied regularly had tried to harm themselves intentionally and, furthermore, that one out of nine children may have tried to commit suicide. In the study by Owens et al (2000: 78), the participants also experienced psychological pain such as hurt, fear, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, loss of self-confidence and fear of future relationships. According to Rutter (1987 in Tattum, 1993:168), social isolation and anxiety experienced by victims would have an adverse effect on the development of their self-image and self-esteem. Farrington (in Rigby, 1996:59) conducted longitudinal studies in England on bullied children who were now in their thirties. His studies suggested that the effects of bullying were long term and that the low self-esteem carried through to adulthood.

In a study conducted by Kidscape in 1999, 50% of the participants reported that they had been bullied as children. The adults in this study reported that they have lower levels of self-esteem (Elliot, 2002:252). The study showed that bullying not only affects your self-esteem as an adult, but also your ability to make friends; it may also affect your ability to advance in your work, education and social relationships (Kidscape Survey, 1999:1). Hawker and Boulton (2000 in Rigby, Smith & Pepler, 2004:1) reported that children who were victimized in school
tended to present with low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The continuous verbal abuse breaks down the self-esteem of the adolescents and they feel ashamed their inability to cope (Besag, 1989:53).

They experienced feelings of worthlessness / self-consciousness
Worthlessness is a concept that refers to a person not experiencing him-/herself as having worth (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004:1685). The participants in this study expressed feelings of worthlessness because the bullies made rude remarks and swore at them. On occasions, the bully would make the participant feel bad by belittling her in front of a group of people. Self-consciousness refers to a person who feels insecure, ill at ease with him-/herself, awkward and nervous (Collins et al, 2002:686). Bullies make their victims question their own worth by passing nasty comments. Due to the negative content of the comments, the participants experienced worthlessness.

“It made me feel sad and, how can I say, it made me look down on myself. I look at myself and I thought 'am I really this bad?' I used to look in the mirror after I had a bath; then I looked at my body. Because it was not only on my legs, it was on my hand, as you can see here on my arms (referring to discoloration in the skin).”

“Yes, sometimes it makes you wonder at night, what this person is thinking of you right now. It makes you sad and it makes you feel as if you are not a human being. It gives you another feeling in life and whereas it gives you another feeling in life, you can't do anything about it and things like that.”

“I don’t like meeting new people even though I am not a talkative person. I feel as though I am useless.”

Sullivan (2000: 15) states that victims of bullying tend to have lowered self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. As time passes, this becomes worse because the victims tend to internalize what is being said to them. Gilmartin (1987 in Smith & Sharp, 1994:7) conducted a study in the United States of America (USA) on adult males who were victimized by their peers when they were at school. He stated that low self-esteem and lack of self-worth can continue into adulthood and cause problems with close and intimate relationships with the opposite sex.

Sadness and depression
According to Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus (2002:669), sadness is a concept that refers to unhappiness, depression, grief, melancholy and sorrow. Burgess (1997:98) said that adolescents tend to form strong friendships with peers of the same sex. They seek to conform to the norm of the friendship group and try to fit in by wearing the latest fashion trends and behaving in the way expected by their peer group; they would feel sadness if they were
ostracized from such a friendship circle. In this study, the participants expressed feeling sadness when the bullies verbally abused them in front of their peers. They also reported feeling sad because of the loss of friendships that had been broken due to gossiping.

“It makes me feel, it is sad, it is really sad because we were really close. We would do everything together.”

According to Rigby (2002:63), children who are bullied on a regular basis tend to have loss of self-esteem and are sad and angry about the bullies’ behaviour toward them.

According to Collin’s et al (2002:200), depression is the concept that refers to a mental state in which the individual feels gloom and inadequacy. According to Alsop and McCaffrey (1993:35), feelings of sadness and negativity are a normal part of adolescence. When these feelings are accompanied by self-blame, worthlessness, self-depreciation and hopelessness, then there is underlying depression. Learners could be trapped in the bullying situation for long periods of time and this could result in depression. These emotional experiences may also cause depression in adulthood (Besag, 1989:54).

The participants in this study felt depressed because of the bullying situation. Sometimes this would be due to the difficulties they were experiencing both at home and at school. They experienced depression because of what the bully was doing to them and this had a negative effect on their mental state.

“But sometimes I feel depressed and then I feel down and then I think about this stuff.”

“I can actually say that I am depressed. But there is nothing that I can do because I think being depressed is about a feeling that you are having about yourself and on how you are actually handling it.”

“Being alone. But also it is depressing.”

Depression is an emotion that has been reported in a number of studies. In the study by Owens et al (2000; 367), teachers expressed concern that depression might lead to the participants having suicidal thoughts aimed at ending their suffering. Olweus (1992 in Rigby, 1996:59) states that victimized adults who were badly bullied as children have bouts of depression and low self-esteem. Bjorqvist (1982 in Rigby, 2002:112) conducted a research study on 110 Finnish learners aged between 14 to 16 years. He reported that the learners who had been victimized tended to be more depressed than the others. If the learner cannot see a way out of the bullying, depression can occur (Besag, 1989:55).
Some of the participants also mentioned that the bullying gave rise to thoughts of committing harm to themselves. Suicidal ideation occurs when someone has thoughts of committing suicide but does not necessarily mean that the individual has a plan to do so (Antai-Ontong, 2003:506). If the adolescent continues to have feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, it could lead to attempts to harm him-/herself (Alsop & McCaffrey, 1993:36).

The participants in this study shared the following:

“Sometimes I did want to harm myself. But I don’t remember, I felt like doing it and I felt as though no, I don’t want to be here. But then someone said that it is no use feeling sorry, so you must stand up to her.”

“Yes, I had thought of wanting to harm myself feeling but then I said, no, it should not go that way. Cause I must think of my family and my friends that I am leaving behind. So, I decided to lift myself up, give myself a high five, and give myself a pat on the back.”

Smith and Sharp (1994:7) declare that severe bullying of a child could lead to him/her contemplating suicide. According to Rigby (1996:57), in the United Kingdom there have been several cases reported of victims of bullying contemplating suicide. He also mentions that complete suicides have been reported in countries such as Norway, USA and Australia. Factors contributing to adolescents attempting suicide include the background of the person and the events leading up to it, such as breaking up with a loved one. Rigby (1996:56) states that there is persuasive evidence that suicide is linked to peer victimization. Some of the participants who contemplated self harm experienced extenuating circumstances at home such as being in foster-care or having an ill relative. The stress of coping with the home environment as well as the bullying could have given rise to suicidal thoughts.

3.4.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: They Experienced Humiliation, Embarrassment And Anger Related To The Verbal Bullying

The participants in this study reported that they felt humiliated and embarrassed with regard to the verbal bullying. They also felt anger towards the bully.

Humiliation and embarrassment

According to the Collins et al (2002:373), humiliation refers to when an individual has been degraded and shamed and their dignity has been lowered by people who hurt them. Verbal bullying may occur in front of people where the bully has the power to humiliate the victim. According to Soanes & Stevenson (2004:464), the concept of embarrassment means feeling self-conscious, awkward and ashamed.
The participants expressed that they felt humiliated and embarrassed by the bullying. The bully would choose a specific situation such as a classroom or a place where a group of teenagers had gathered. The participants expressed their embarrassment when the bullies confronted them before a lot of people. The bullies would often talk about issues that were very personal to the adolescent and, therefore, cause embarrassment when the information was revealed.

"Or maybe they drew a picture of you on the board. With your glasses and your skirt and everybody would be laughing and you just be sitting there and looking at this drawing."

"It hurt me because she made me feel belittled in front of a lot of people."

"It was as if she used to take pleasure in it, all the embarrassment that she caused me. Because even in front of guys she used to say embarrassing stuff about me. No she would…. But it was always me. I don't know why."

The inability to cope with the bullying situation is humiliating to the victim, who feels lowered in the eyes of bystanders and, therefore, becomes more vulnerable to more attacks from the bully (Rigby, 2002:223). Sullivan (2000:15) states that the humiliation and exclusion by the bully guarantees that the victim will not stand up to the abuser. This gives the bully more power over the situation.

According to Besag (1989:53), victims who have been bullied over a prolonged period of time tend to experience feelings of humiliation, degradation and shame as well as anger and fear. Burgess (1997:98) states that the victim goes through a phase where there is a disruption in self-esteem; they experience depression and are susceptible to humiliation. Sullivan (2000:15) says that bullying is humiliating and abusive.

**Anger**

According to the Soanes & Stevenson (2002:49), anger refers to an intense feeling of annoyance or displeasure. The participants in this study were angry because of how the bullies treated them. This was not verbalized by them, but anger could be heard in their voices. The participants described the bullies as being *vicious* and *ruthless* during the bullying situation. One participant mentioned that she felt *upset* after she was bullied and did not tell a teacher about the incident.

"For me to be abused verbally is worse than being raped. Because that stuff is in your face; you can feel and you can hear and you can feel the anger, like I don't know. I told my mother that I need a counselor or something to speak about this stuff."
In a study conducted in England in a nationwide survey of primary and secondary school learners by Borg (1998 in Rigby, 2001:113), the researcher reported that victims, especially girls, often expressed anger, vengefulness and self-pity regarding being bullied. The Kidscape study (in Elliot, 2002:241) conducted on adults who had been bullied as children reported that the victims were angry and bitter about the bullying that they had to endure. In a study conducted by Neser, Ladikos and Prinsloo (2004:5) on grade 6 to 11 learners, the participants experienced anger about their experience of being bullied; nine primary schools, eight secondary schools and two special schools were involved in the study. The learners reported that they were angry after the incident.

3.4.3 THEME 3: THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAD DIFFICULTY COPING WITH VERBAL BULLYING

A defense mechanism is an individual’s unconscious attempt to protect him-/herself from external and internal stress (Frisch & Frisch, 2002:98). It, therefore, helps a person to cope with internal and external stress (Stuart & Laria, 2005:268). The defense mechanisms utilized by the participants in this study were rationalization, identification, compensation and suppression. The adolescent girls rationalized verbal bullying as jealousy and attention-seeking on the part of the bullies. They used suppression by ignoring the bully when he/she directed nasty comments at them. They also tried to identify with the bullies by becoming part of the ‘in-group’ and they tried not to give in to peer pressure.

3.4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: They Rationalized Verbal Bullying As Jealousy And Attention-Seeking On The Part Of The Bullies

Rationalization refers to justifying thoughts, feelings or behaviours that are unacceptable with reasons that are logical (Shultz & Videbeck, 1998: 421). The participants expressed that the verbal bullying occurred due to jealousy on the part of the bully. There are two types of rationalization. The participants saw themselves as being different from the bullies as they viewed themselves as soft-hearted, intelligent or hardworking and, therefore, the bullies were jealous of them.

“I don’t know if she was looking for attention or what, or she was craving attention or something. Because it was just me that she was going on with and nobody else or she looking to make my life miserable.”

“In primary school I was like top student. And in standard 6 when I came here I got certificates and diplomas and achievements. I don’t know if it is maybe about that maybe. I really don’t know. Maybe they as I said I got a boyfriend as I said a lot of the issues that is going around it is because of him. You know. Maybe, I don’t also know.”

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“Ja, if I walked past other girls I don’t know if they are jealous or what. But then they call me all these funny names and stuff like that. I have no clue why they call me names like and they have no reason.”

The participants reported that they were all part of the ‘in-group’. According to the participants, the bullies were involved in wrong activities. The participants rationalized that the bullies were bad people and often the former did not retaliate because they regarded themselves as being ‘ladies’. The participants rationalized that this could have been why they were singled out by the bullies. The bullies wanted to feel important in some way and achieved this by spreading the rumours about the victims. By humiliating an individual who was functioning well, the bully could elevate her own self-esteem.

“At one point she was the leader and she was actually controlling everyone until she failed and we had to move forward and then she had to stay behind in standard 6. I know for a fact that she was because when we talk about it nowadays we say, ‘Ja, she is a control freak she likes controlling people’.”

“Last year June I had like a stalker, a girl stalked me and she called me like over the phone and she called me like these disgusting names, stuff like that. …. I told her that I am not a person that can keep grudges against others and I forgave her. If I had to do the stuff she did, I don’t think that she would be able to handle it the way I did. Ja, if I walked past other girls I don’t know if they are jealous or what. But then they call me all these funny names and stuff like that. I have no clue why they call me names like that and they have no reason. I just ignore them and it seems to them the more that I ignore them the more they seem to push and push and push. Like the one particular girl in my class every year the same time around. She always has a story. Standard 6, 7, 8 and this year she said about me to a teacher and she told the teacher that I speak bad stuff about this particular teacher.”

“It happened a long time ago and there was this girl and she failed that year and she always used to be the popular one and she used to keep her so great and stuff and maybe it was because I was a very soft person. I wasn’t going to do anything towards anybody, you know, so I wasn’t going to say anything and she saw I was like that is why she picked on me and she told me that I am not nice enough to be in there group. I mustn’t be so just the way that I am and she told me that why am I so stupid. I can see that nobody wants to be my friend and I’m really just a dumb person and that is how it started. I didn’t take notice of her a lot and people always asked me why did you let her speak to you like that and I mean I can’t do anything towards her. She is older than me and she like to fight and so I just left her to be like that.”
In the study by Owens et al. (in Juvonen & Graham, 2001:222), the victimized adolescent was described in focus groups as someone who caused the incident of bullying to occur as he/she could have been someone who was an easy target. According to Rigby (2002:139), the victims of bullying tend to be persons who are isolated, friendless and despised, which makes them the targets of bullies. According to the preceding literature findings, victims of bullies are easy targets and they are the ones who cause the incidents of bullying to occur. No other literature on rationalization could be found.

3.4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: They Suppressed Their Emotions Related To Verbal Bullying
The participants thought that the best way of stopping the bullying was to ignore the bully. However, the quietness of the victim seemed to fuel the anger of the bully. The participants hid their feelings because they did not want the bully to know that they were hurt. In this way, they made use of the defence mechanism of suppression. Suppression refers to the action an individual takes to prevent painful thoughts from entering the conscious (Huffman, 2004:458). The painful thoughts are placed at the back of one’s mind so that they can be confronted later (Uys & Middleton, 2004:23).

“She used to say that she is going to get me after school and things like that. Then I never took notice because I am not the fighting type and I don’t want…. I didn’t take notice because I didn’t do anything."

“But when I walk past them or see them, they start laughing or they start pointing fingers at me. I just ignore them or I won’t like let them know I feel down or bad about it. I just do my thing that I was doing before. So maybe I don’t show them that I am emotionally stressed out about the whole thing.”

“I am trying to ignore them. They will see that I ignore them and they should think to themselves that I am making a fool of myself because she is not even taking notice of me. I just leave them on their places and forget about them.”

A qualitative study conducted by Owens, Slee and Shute (2000:364) in a middle class co-educational school in South Australia revealed that victims used to pretend that they were not affected by the aggression of the bully. They would ignore the bully and try to pretend that they were not hurt.

3.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: They Tried To Identify With The Members Of The ‘In-Group’
Some of the participants used the defence mechanism of identification. Identification refers to the modeling of the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of others and this is usually done unconsciously (Shultz & Videbeck, 1998:421). It involves adopting characteristics of the group (such as acting like their peers) to try to avoid feeling incompetent (Morris, 1996:500). The
participants mentioned that the bullies were ‘popular girls’ and the reason why they (the participants) were targeted was because they did not behave like members of the group. This, in turn, lowered the victims’ self-esteem. The bullies appeared to be outgoing people who socialized easily with other adolescents. They also came from a lower socioeconomic background and the victim felt that she was being discriminated against and judged wrongly because there was something wrong with her appearance. One of the peer reviewers mentioned that he has a child who suffers from cerebral palsy and that teasing has had a negative impact on the child’s life. He also mentioned that the personalities of both the victim and the bully can be taken into account. The bully, according to him, was a person who was more likely to bully someone who was different to her/him. The group members would harass the participant to stay in the group and would do what the bully expected them to do even though they knew that what they were doing was wrong. If the victim failed to do what the bully expected, she would be excluded from the group’s activities. Participants said that adolescents stayed with friends because they were in need of friendship and, therefore, would tolerate whatever abuse the bully directed at them, just to have friends. Teenagers tend to wear clothes that are trendy and fashionable and being unable to do so because of peer pressure usually has a negative impact on them. One of the participants mentioned that her grandmother did not always have the finances to buy her new clothes and her friends had new clothes and she did not want to give in to peer pressure. Being accepted by the peer group meant being accepted by the ‘in-group’. Even if the participants did what the bullies expected they would still not be accepted by the ‘in-group’.

“In many groups here at school I see how learners disrespect their friends. Many try to suck up to people at the school just so that they can be part of their group. Even though their so-called friends treat them really bad. They suck up to them just to be in their friendship group. I have been in a group where the people who were my friends treated another girl really bad, but she stuck with us because she was afraid that she wouldn’t have any other friends. I am glad to say that the group of friends I have now respect each other and have a good honest relationship. The group that we left is still treating some of their friends bad, but I am glad I realized their wrongs before I became a bully.”

“They are so bitchy. Like they want to be the best and whatever they say goes. Whatever they do, others must do. I am not someone that would like to follow others and follow. I want to be a leader one day. So because I don’t want to be with them and stuff like that, they will say you are a old n********** and stuff like that.”

“I felt small and at first it felt as though it was something that I did that I caused her to react that way and I wasn’t doing what she wanted me to do and at one point I was doing what she wanted me to do. But then I found out even though I am doing what she wants me to do and that I am not really happy with what I am doing and that I was only doing it to please her and if
In the study by Owen et al (2000a:76), the girls tended to ignore a peer temporarily if there was an argument between the two parties within the group or they would exclude a peer permanently from the group; they reported that the ostracism became so bad that the girls had to escape and transfer to another school. Even there the victim would not be safe because the reputation would follow her to the next school. When adolescents become involved with a ‘gang of peers’, bullying takes place because of peer pressure. Adolescents could take part in bullying because it is a necessary part of their relationships (Smith & Sharp, 1994:7). According to Rigby (2002:164), peer pressure can lead to adolescents bullying others because they want to uphold an image of being tough; he also states that adolescents are unlikely to identify with the group that is being victimized as this could result in them being victimized.

3.4.4 THEME 4: SOME OF THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS TENDED TO OVERCOME THE VICTIMIZATION TO WHICH THEY WERE EXPOSED

Some of the participants exhibited positive coping mechanisms. A coping mechanism is the way in which an individual overcomes or manages stress by using internal and external resources. An internal resource refers to a person’s genetic makeup or learnt behavior. External resources include social support or material resources (Antai-Ontong, 2003:91). Coping mechanisms serve to influence overall morale, health and well-being; they promote growth and maturity, assist in problem-solving and influence adaptation to stress. Some participants reported confronting the bullies, focusing on their schoolwork, utilizing the support of their mothers by talking to them about the bullying situation and using other coping mechanisms such as praying and keeping a diary.

3.4.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: The Participants Sometimes Confronted The Bullies

According to Hawkins (1996:54), confrontation is a concept that refers to individuals meeting face-to-face, often in a hostile manner. Confrontation can also be seen as an assertive behaviour, where two parties try to resolve their differences. The participants sometimes confronted the bullies about their behaviour and asked for an explanation for it. The confrontation either led to an argument, with the bully still trying to ridicule the victim, or to a resolution of the conflict. After a confrontation, some bullies stopped their negative behaviour.

“Then I told her, I went to her and I said ‘What is going on?’ Then she started shouting at me and then she said what is your problem with me and then I asked what are you talking about all these things and then she started to tell me what to do. I told her that I did hear all these things but I didn’t do anything about it because I knew it wasn’t true. And if people started spreading rumors about me because I know it is not true, I am going to take notice and the
people are I am going think it is true because is getting mad and excited all over nothing. So I didn’t take notice of it and I just left it.”

“From that time our friendship, we grew apart. So from that time it became worse. So they were gossiping behind my back. I found out, and I confronted them and told them it is no need to gossip behind my back.”

“I told her also, I confronted her, I found out, and I told her that I am not a person that can keep grudges against others and I forgave her.”

Sullivan (2000:113) states that confrontation does not occur because the bullying is rejected by the learners. Confrontation is an interaction between two persons in which one confronts another by stimulating the person who is being confronted to reflect on or to change some aspect of their behaviour (Uys & Middleton, 2004:154). According to Rigby (2002:124), the adolescent who is bullied tends to try to escape the bullying situation and uses strategies such as avoiding confrontations in order to cope with the bullying. Not confronting the bully may be one of the reasons why the abusive behaviour continues. According to Wilson and Kniestl (1996:334), adolescents learn assertive communication from the adults around them. The goal of assertive communication is to help people to express themselves without fear of disapproval from others.

3.4.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: They Compensated By Putting More Effort Into Schoolwork

According to Shultz and Videbeck (1998:421), compensation refers to when an individual overachieves in one area and has a deficiency in another area. In other words, the individual makes up for a weakness by achieving in another field (Uys & Middleton, 2004: 25). The participants compensated for the stress caused by the bullying by placing more effort into their schoolwork. They would isolate themselves from friends and concentrate on their schoolwork.

“I took my schoolwork seriously because I knew I wanted to get an education and I didn’t want to do the wrong things. I wanted to be educated and get out of school. To please my mother and my father that is why I took it seriously.”

“Ja, and another thing is that my self-esteem is very low and I am not confident about myself. But in my books I am but otherwise.”

Compensation had positive and negative effects in the case of the adolescent girls. It was positive in the sense that they did well in their schoolwork and compensated for their unhappiness but it was negative in the sense that they withdrew from friendship circles and isolated themselves. Rigby (1996:54) reported that some bullied adolescents became
increasingly isolated from others and turned to an introverted lifestyle where reading and writing tended to be important.

3.4.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: They Used Support Systems Such As Talking To Their Mothers
There were a few participants who did tell their mothers about the bullying that occurred in the school. The mothers served as support systems for their victimized adolescent. The participants reported talking to their mothers even if they did not want the latter to get involved in the situation.

“I do speak to my mother a lot about it.”

“My mother was very cross and my mother said do you want me to phone her and just this thing and so I said: ‘No’. Me and my mother has an understanding that she don’t get involved in my personal business and I don’t get involved in hers. Only if I ask her for help and she ask me for help. So I told her, just please don’t.”

“Because if my mother gets involved and then her mother gets involved, then they will then come to the school and the principal and then it is going to turn out into an ugly thing.”

According to an internet reference by Olivier and Candappa (Childline%20DP%20Bullying%20(download)pdf.14/10/2005@13:15), parents provide adolescent with emotional support with regard to the bullying. It was not made known whether they spoke more to the mother or the father. Adolescents in the abovementioned did not want to discuss matters with their parents because they were afraid that their parents would not support them and would make the situation worse.

3.4.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: They Developed Their Own Way Of Coping Such As Praying And Keeping A Diary
A few of the participants reported effective coping mechanisms such as using prayer or keeping a diary. The participant would not tell anybody about the bullying but found praying or writing to be a way of coping with the stress. Some also utilized positive self-talk.

“Yes, but you see I don’t let them see so I do have a diary. I write everything in my diary.”

“Then a time came and sat down with myself and I told myself that if this is the way that I am going to go on with life, it is not going to bring me success and it is not going to make me a better person and making myself a better person is to hold my head up high, not trying to listen to what people are saying that is bad about me and not true and, um, just believing in myself and believing in God cause is through Him that I am here. There is reason why I am going through all of these things. but it is enough because it has shown me what kind of
weaknesses, I have and what kind of strengths I have and which made me realize that I am not that kind of person that people see me as... I just thought to myself that I am not going to confront them because it is not going to give me anything at the end of the day. And I prayed about it and I asked for strength each day.”

No information could be obtained about adolescents using the aforementioned coping mechanisms to cope with the stress caused by bullying.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher explored the experiences of female adolescents of being verbally bullied in secondary school. Data were analyzed and described in themes. The identified themes were supported by a literature control. The verbal bullying affected the adolescent girls’ lives negatively, including their schoolwork. They found it difficult to discuss these issues with teachers or parents. The participants could not reveal the bullying because they felt intimidated. The verbal bullying occurred inside and outside the school and they felt rejected and isolated as a result. The verbal bullying to which they were exposed included teasing, gossiping and rude remarks. The negative emotions they experienced manifested as helplessness, fear and anxiety related to being continuously bullied.

The participants experienced humiliation, embarrassment, anger, emotional pain, low self-esteem, self-consciousness, worthlessness, sadness and depression and a few of them had suicidal thoughts. They had difficulty coping with the bullying situation. The participants in this study made use of rationalization, suppression and identification to cope with the bullying. Some of them managed to overcome the victimization to which they were exposed by confronting the bully, by compensating and putting more effort into schoolwork, by using their mothers as support systems and talking to them and by developing their own ways of coping such as by praying and keeping a diary.

In chapter four, recommendations, guidelines, limitations and conclusions of the study will be addressed.
CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, the findings were discussed related to the experiences of adolescent girls about verbal bullying in a secondary school setting. The findings were compared to relevant literature and similarities were discussed. This chapter will focus on a discussion of the findings, the formulation of the guideline to assist the mental health nursing specialist in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in a secondary school, limitations in the study and recommendations.

4.2. GOALS OF THE STUDY

The goals of the study were to:

- Explore and describe the experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary school setting.
- Develop guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in a secondary school.

The researcher feels that both goals have been reached. The experiences of adolescent girls regarding verbal bullying in a secondary school setting were explored and described in chapter three. Guidelines to assist mental health nursing specialists in helping adolescent girls to cope with bullying in a secondary school will now be formulated.

4.3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In chapter 3, themes and sub themes were developed. These themes and sub themes were correlated with relevant literature.

The themes that emerged during the data analysis were as follows:

- The adolescent girls experienced that verbal bullying affected their lives negatively.
- The adolescent girls had a negative emotional experience related to verbal bullying.
- The adolescent girl’s had difficulty coping with verbal bullying.
• Some of the adolescent girls tended to overcome the victimization they were exposed to.

Each theme has been divided into sub themes:
The first theme is the adolescent girls experienced that verbal bullying affected their lives negatively. The theme is divided into six sub themes:
• Verbal bullying affected schoolwork negatively
• The adolescent girls found it difficult to trust their teachers or their parents about these issues
• They experienced intimidation should they reveal the bullying.
• Verbal bullying may occur outside the school terrain as well.
• They experienced rejection and isolation
• The adolescent girls were exposed to teasing, gossiping and making rude remarks and this made them feel insignificant.

The second theme concentrated on the negative emotional experiences of the victims of bullying. This theme was discussed under the following 3 sub themes:
• They experienced stress, which manifested as helplessness, fear and anxiety related to verbal bullying.
• They experienced humiliation, embarrassment and anger.
• They experienced emotional pain, low self esteem, self-consciousness, worthlessness, sadness and depression that lead to a few of adolescent girls having suicidal thoughts.

The third theme is that adolescent girl's had difficulty coping with verbal bullying. The themes that were discussed concerned:
• They rationalized verbal bullying as jealousy and attention seeking on the part of the bully's actions.
• The adolescent girls suppressed their emotions related to verbal bullying
• They tried to identify with the members of the in-group.

The fourth theme is that some of the adolescent girls tended to overcome the victimization they were exposed to. This theme is divided into four sub themes:
• They sometimes confronted the bullies.
• They compensated by putting more effort into schoolwork.
• They used support systems such as talking to their mothers
• They developed their own way of coping such as praying and keeping a diary.

The victims of the study were between the ages of 15-17 years of age. The participants in the study were all female and their experiences of being verbally bullied were investigated. The
bullying that has been investigated in this study was verbal. The participants in the study were not physically bullied. The participants reported that the verbal bullying was painful for them.

The adolescent girls’ schoolwork was negatively affected. The participants reported that bullying led them to feeling self-conscious due to bullies making nasty comments. This in turn led adolescents not to participate in school activities. The adolescent girls found it difficult to trust their teachers about these issues. The teachers tended to discuss issues with other colleagues and were not seen to be trustworthy. Bullying was seldom reported to the teachers because the participants felt that they could not be trusted to keep the information to themselves and they feared that the situation would become worse should the teacher try to intervene. Bullying does have a negative impact on adolescents.

The adolescent girls did report the bullying to their mothers and they provided support and helped them in confronting the bully. The parents should be made aware that bullying does occur. According to Rigby (2002: 162) who conducted a study on Australian children in which a Family Functioning Assessment Questionnaire was used, that victims of bullying indicated that their families were functioning badly. Those families showed poor structure, low affect, communication was relatively poor and good values were not likely to be transmitted. The participants in this study described similar home conditions such as from single-parent families, low socioeconomic background and often a history of family violence. It can be concluded that the necessary support was not provided to the learner by the teachers and parents.

The bullying occurred inside and outside the school. The verbal bullying that occurred inside the school occurred around the playground and inside the classroom. Sometimes the verbal abuse would be in front of a teacher who did not make the effort to stop the bullying. The participants stated that the effort made by teachers often made the situation worse. The bullying in class would take place during school activities such as oral presentations. The verbal bullying that occurred outside the school was associated with the going to and coming from school, for instance, when the learners rode a taxi or walked in a shopping centre. The bullies in the study verbally abused the victimized adolescents by making rude, derogatory and nasty remarks or making statements that were of a personal nature. The participants did not have any real respite, because they encountered the bullies inside and outside of school. This lead them to withdraw into their homes.

The adolescent girls experienced negative emotions regarding verbal bullying. The verbal bullying caused feelings of anxiety for the adolescent girls as well as heightened levels of stress, anger and depression. Most of the victims in the study felt that their self-esteem had been lowered due to the verbal abuse. Those participants who were bullied consistently tended to feel depressed and expressed lack of confidence. According to Rigby (1996: 59)
children that have been bullied tended to have bouts of depression in adulthood. He also stated that children who were victimized had low self-esteem as adults. The adolescents girls expressed ways of not coping with the bullying such as feelings of worthlessness and contemplating suicide. This indicates that they did not cope with the bullying situation.

Some of the adolescents girls coped very well with the bullying by having supportive adults to talk to. Some coped by praying, using a diary or focusing on their schoolwork. The victimized adolescents sometimes coped by ignoring the victims. Sometimes the bullies were confronted by the victims and this may lead to a positive outcome.

4.4 GUIDELINES FOR MENTAL HEALTH NURSING SPECIALISTS IN HELPING ADOLESCENT GIRLS COPE WITH VERBAL BULLYING

The participants of the study verbalized that they would appreciate it if someone can do something about the verbal bullying that they were experiencing with their peers. Although not a lot can be done to stop the bullies, the victims may be helped to cope better. The school environment could be made to be more supportive.

4.4.1 The Role Of The Mental Health Nursing Specialist

According to Frisch & Frisch, (2002;16) the mental health nursing specialist is a licensed nurse educationally prepared at a masters level and nationally certified as a clinical specialist in psychiatric nursing and this can be applied to a South African context.. The Mental Health Nursing Specialist has a dual role, namely that of consultant and counselor. The consultant role of the Mental Health Nursing Specialist is to help the school authorities with the prevention and the rehabilitation of learners involved in bullying. The mental health nursing specialist may act as a consultant to schools and other professionals such as school nurses, community psychiatric nurses, primary health care nurses and social workers involved in dealing with adolescent girls. He/she can counsel individuals who maybe involved in bullying and are experiencing symptoms associated with mental distress. Both the victim, bullies and even the parents will be included in counseling. The goal of the intervention will be to prevent further mental distress or mental illness.

According to Frisch & Frisch, (1998:770) therapeutic skills needed by the mental health nursing specialist in dealing with bullying are individual, group, family and community interventions to assist individuals in maintaining mental health, preventing mental illness and regain previous health status. The mental health nursing specialist may provide individual and group interventions with the victim, bullies and parents. Community interventions will also be provided by the mental health nursing specialist such as workshops for teachers, parents or professional persons.
The groups and individual sessions with victims, bullies and parents provided by the mental health nursing specialist will now be discussed.

The Mental Health Nursing Specialist may provide the victims of bullying with skills to prevent further bullying and to strengthen their ability to cope with stress. These skills may consist of strategies that adolescents can use in the management of stress and will be discussed on page 102.

The bullies will also be provided with skills to prevent them from bullying their peers and to deal with their anger in a constructive way. The Mental Health Nursing Specialist will try and guide them into gaining insight into the consequences of their bullying actions.

The parents can also be encouraged to attend counseling sessions. The mental health nursing specialist can counsel parents about the effects of bullying, how to help their adolescents manage stress and they may be encouraged to attend programmes dealing with parental skills. One such programme is the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) as developed by Dinkmeyer & McKay (1976). The STEP programme will be discussed later under intervention for parents, page 124. The mental health nursing specialist is also able to help parents cope with the stress they themselves are experiencing.

The mental health nursing specialist can provide the teachers with skills to deal with the bullying between learners and to teach them effective counseling skills. The teaching staff in the school can be encouraged to become involved in programmes such as The Whole School Approach. This programme will be discussed on page 107.

The mental health nursing specialist may provide workshops to other professionals such as school nurses and community psychiatric nurses about the effects and consequences of verbal bullying on mental health. School nurses will be taught to identify problem cases and refer to the mental health nursing specialist, community psychiatric nurse, social worker or psychologist. The community psychiatric nurse will in turn also consult and teach the school nurses and primary health care nurses to identify mental health problems the adolescents may be experiencing.

One of the consulting roles of the mental health nursing specialist is to help schools develop and implement programmes and strategies to prevent bullying. The schools in collaboration with the mental health nursing specialist may use approaches that are discussed on page 107 to deal with the prevention and the rehabilitation of the learner exposed to bullying.

Where bullying has already occurred interventions such as follows may be adopted:
• The Whole School Approach
• The No Blame Approach
• The Method Of Shared Concern
• Implementing of the Bully Courts
• Peer Counselling

These strategies and approaches to bullying will now be discussed in more detail.

4.4.2 Strategies To Prevent The Victims From Becoming Mentally Ill.
The strategies that will be utilized by the mental health nursing specialist to prevent bullying are preventative or restorative. According to Clark (1992:10) prevention has four levels, namely: health promotion, disease prevention, restoration and rehabilitation. Disease prevention includes specific measures aimed at preventing disability. Restorative measures involves early identification for existing mental health problems. (Clark,1992:10)

Mental illness can be prevented by answering that the individual is able to cope with stress caused by bullying. Stress relieving strategies can be taught to the victim and include relaxation through music (Wilson And Kniesl, 1996:698), regular exercise, cognitive reframing, problem solving skills, deep breathing exercises and acting in an assertive way (Varcarolis,2002:271-278).

Where the adolescent experienced negative emotions from bullying the mental health nursing specialist will utilize restorative skills to promote mental health. The preventative strategies already discussed can also be taught to the learners that have already been bullied. Other strategies that the learners can use include the following namely, essay writing, journal keeping, anger management and conflict resolution skills.

A discussion will follow on the preventative and restorative strategies:

Relaxation with Music: Music enhances the release of endorphins from the brain and makes the individual feel good. The adolescents can be encouraged to listen to music that has a relaxing effect on the body. There is music that can be taken out from public libraries such as blues, jazz and classical music. They victims can be encouraged to take note of their breathing when listening to music. Slow and deep breaths can be encouraged. (Wilson & Kniesl, 1996: 698).

Regular exercise: The adolescent can be made aware of the benefit of physical exercise. Exercise decreases muscle tension and also enhances the release of endorphins. High levels of epinephrine are accumulated in an individuals muscle due to the stress response and are drained through exercise. Adolescents can be encouraged to join sport groups and or
participate in strenuous activities such as walking, jogging and swimming (Varcarolis, 2002:278).

**Cognitive reframing**: The aim of cognitive reframing is to change the adolescent’s perception of stress through cognitive restructuring, thereby changing a negative belief into a positive perception. For instance, a negative perception “I cannot perform an oral presentation when the bullies are looking at me.” can be changed to a positive perception: “I am expected to perform this task, I will try to do it to the best of my ability”. (Varcarolis, 2002:275).

**Deep Breathing Exercises**: According to Varcarolis (2002:275), deep breathing exercises is a form of learning abdominal breathing. She states that breathing exercises are helpful for patients who have anxiety disorders and it dampens down the cognitive processes which are likely to set off the stress and anxiety response.

The mental health nursing specialist will instruct the individual to do the following:
- To shift to relaxed abdominal breathing
- Breathe in by the mouth and hold for 3 seconds and breathe out slowly through the nose.
- When breathing give attention to the muscular sensations that accompany the expansion of the stomach. (Varcarolis, 2002:275).

**Problem solving skills**: The mental health nursing specialist can teach adolescent girls about problem solving skills, which entails the following steps:
- Identify the problem
- Explore alternatives
- Evaluate possible consequences
- Make a decision
- Implement the solution

The adolescent will then be able to make good judgements and decisions after being taught problem-solving skills.

**Assertiveness**: Assertiveness is when a person respects him/herself and to expect respect from others. Assertive behaviour allows others to know where they stand with the individual and prevents the victim from being manipulated and hurt by others. (Uys & Middleton, 2004:155) Assertiveness training is a way of decreasing stress, anxiety and conflict resulting from stressful interpersonal relationships (Varcarolis, 2002:275). Varcarolis, (2002:275) states that it has been demonstrated that stress and anxiety will considerably be lowered. The mental health nursing specialist can provide the adolescents with assertiveness training which includes the following actions:
• The individual has to communicate directly with another person.
• Being able to say no when the requests are unreasonable (Stuart & Laria, 2005:639).
• When an individual makes mistakes, he/she is able to take responsibility.
• To be able to ask for something that the person wants.
• To be able to be treated with respect and dignity.
• To make “I” instead of “You” statements (Uys & Middleton, 2004:154).

The mental health nursing specialist will help the individual gain insight into how to deal with the bullies.

**Role-playing** Is not a specific strategy, but is an effective method that can be used by mental health nursing specialist to teach learners to handle stress. Role-playing helps the mental health nursing specialists to teach adolescent's how to act more effectively by being more assertive or communicating more meaningfully. The teachers can make use of role-playing providing support to the victim (Rigby, 1996:149). This method can also be used in group counseling sessions to teach victims how to cope with bullying. Role-playing can be used with the bullies to help them gain insight into the effects of their behaviour.

**Essay writing:** This is a reflective method where the learner is taught to think about experiences he/she had. The writing of an essay is an approach that has been suggested by Anatol Pikas, as cited in Rigby (1996:149). In which the English teacher could ask the learners to write an essay of being bullied. The learners in class could be given an instruction that they may write an essay about bullying that is occurring in the school. This can make the teacher aware of the problems adolescents are faced with when being confronted with being bullied. The learner can be referred to a student counselor.

**Journal keeping:** The mental health nursing specialist can also utilise the above essays or can ask the victim to keep a diary. This diary can be used in counseling. The learner can be instructed to write a diary if it is too painful to talk about the bullying. According to Varcarolis, (2002:275) journal keeping is a method that could be used to find out what makes a person stressed. Keeping a diary on a daily basis can reveal information about what causes a person to become stressed. Dellasega (2001) as cited in Varcarolis (2002:275), states that writing about traumatic events significantly reduces health problems.

**Anger Management:** Anger is an emotional response to the perception of frustration of desires, threat to ones needs or challenge (Varcarolis, 2002:666). The adolescent can be made aware that anger can be used constructively. Anger cannot be ignored and should be controlled to prevent it from becoming destructive. The cause of anger can be noted and understood (Sullivan, 2000: 200). Anger management skills can be taught through role
playing in group therapy. To manage anger the mental health nursing specialist needs to develop a basic level of trust and rapport with the learner by being calm and reassuring.

According to Frisch & Frisch (1998: 725) anger management refers to facilitating the expression of anger in an adaptive and nonviolent manner.

- Some of the anger management skills that can be taught to learners include the following:
- Making “I” statement instead of “You” and therefore taking ownership of the problem.
- Getting your facts straight and being calm before confronting someone when angry.
- Making use of humor
- Recognizing that you are angry (Sullivan, 2000: 204).

Conflict Resolution Skills: This can be taught to learners in group therapy sessions. In a group therapy session there may be conflict and disagreement among members. The interviewer can teach learners to manage conflict by teaching them to identify the conflict. The learner may be made aware that the conflict is natural and can lead to growth. The members of the group may be encouraged to discuss the reasons for conflict. Successful conflict resolution will depend on the group cohesion, trust and acceptance amongst members. (Stuart & Laria, 2005: 674) According to Rigby, (2002: 255) peers who have volunteered could be taught conflict resolution skills. The peers would be able to mediate the bullying situation when it occurs. Peers that are trained in conflict resolution skills may apply them in situations when bullies and victims are able to talk about their differences (Rigby, 2002: 255).

The consultation role of the mental health nursing specialist will now be discussed.

4.4.3 Approaches To Manage Bullying In Schools
There is a variety of different approaches that could be adopted by schools and which may address prevention of bullying as well as dealing with the victims. The Mental health nursing specialists can act as a consultant with teachers and school administration. These approaches will include the following:
- A Whole School Approach:
- The No blame approach
- The Method Of Shared Concern
- Implementation of Bully Courts
- Peer Counseling

These approaches will now be discussed:
4.4.3.1. The Whole School Approach

The Whole School Approach could be adopted to prevent bullying in schools. It is suggested that the whole school becomes involved in this approach and may include both the staff, the learners, the wider community of families, community groups and social services. To start this approach, a survey needs to be conducted to explore the occurrences of bullying in the school. After feedback has been obtained from the survey, the staff, adolescents, the wider community of families can be consulted regarding developing an anti-bullying philosophy and policy. The learners who will be consulted may be either victims, bullies or observers and may be aware of most of the bullying occurring in the schools. A meeting may be convened and the purpose of the meeting may focus on:

- What is known about the bullying.
- What can be done about the bullying.
- An anti-bullying committee can be established.
- A time frame can be decided upon.
- A programme for the prevention of bullying may be developed.

An anti-bullying policy involves defining the philosophy of bullying-prevention in schools. The school administration plays an important role because they will develop an appropriate policy and will know about the legal implications of the anti-bullying policy. The teachers have to be consulted because they have to deal with the effects of bullying when it occurs. The parents may become involved from the start because they are regarded as secondary victims. In the wider community, there may be experts who can contribute their knowledge to the policy-making process. The anti-bullying policy can outline the schools attitude towards bullying. The implementing and maintaining of the anti-bullying policy would largely depend on the teachers. Teachers, learners, parents, and the wider community may be informed about the policy. (Sullivan, 2000:78). The anti-bullying policy needs to be adopted so that learners know that school is a safe and happy place to learn.

The anti-bullying programme consists of strategies that the mental health nursing specialist can help the victim, bullies, parents, peers and teachers deal with the negative emotions associated with bullying. This programme also deals with the teaching of methods that can aid in the prevention of bullying. The anti-bullying programme would have to be started at the beginning of each year. (Sullivan, 2000: 78). Unforeseen changes should be monitored and adapted on a regular basis. Preventative and restorative strategies can be included in the anti-bullying programme (Sullivan, 2000:42).These strategies was discussed on page102.
4.4.3.2 The No Blame Approach,

The No Blame approach which was created, by Barbara Maines and George Robinson in 1991 in Britain (Rigby, 1996:206). In this approach the bully is not punished but the victim is provided with support. The method aims to utilize peer pressure to work against bullying. It addresses the social context of bullying and the interpersonal interactions among learners. It focuses on developing empathy and concern for others in the context of the peer group. (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:228).

The No Blame Approach entails the following steps:

- **Interviews with the victim**
  The objective of the interview would be to discover what happened and who was involved. The adolescent that has been victimized can be told that he/she should not be scared for informing. It may be emphasized that the bullies will be punished. The interviewer can ask the victim to write a poem or make a drawing about the incident. The focus can be on the feelings of the adolescent that has been victimized. The interviewer may gain the permission from the victimized adolescent to tell the bullies about how she feels about the incident. The individuals involved in the incident can be investigated (Rigby, 1996:207).

- **Interview with bullies and bystanders**
  This interview should be with the bullies, as well as the bystanders that witnessed the bullying. The group should be approximately six to eight people. The victim is not included in this session. The objective of the session is to find out what happened regarding the bullying (Rigby, 1996:207). The interviewer seeks to describe how the victim feels about the bullying and thus providing graphic presentation or for example, a poem the victim wrote. The members of the meeting should not be interrogated and blamed. The aim is to share information and to produce an empathetic response (Rigby, 1996:207).

*Session 2 with the bullies*

The interviewer makes the bullies come to some consensus to improve the situation for the victim (Rigby, 1996:207).

*Session 3 with the bullies*

The interviewer should make specific suggestions on how the victim should be made happier. No promises should be made regarding the proposals made by the interviewer (Rigby, 1996:207).

*Session 4 with the bullies.*
The interviewer can tell the bullies that it is now up to them to make the situation better. The interviewer will ask if it is appropriate to have a follow-up or feedback session (Rigby, 1996:207).

- **A feedback session**
The members of the group and the victim is interviewed separately. In this way the progress can be assessed on how the individuals as well as the victim is coping (Rigby, 1996:207).

4.4.3.3 The Method of Shared Concern

The Method of Shared Concern comes from the Swedish psychologist, Anatol Pikas, which aims to stop the bullying by creating tolerance. This method focuses on the bully (Rigby et al, 2004:102-105). The Method Of Shared Concern entails the following:

- **Interviews with bullies**
The bullies are interviewed during this session. The interviewer can choose a comfortable venue so where there are no interruptions.. and where the learners do not feel interrogated. Chairs are arranged so the teacher and learner are on the same level either side by side. It would be recommended that the leader of the bullies may be interviewed first and this may be done for ten minutes. Thereafter, the other members of the group will be interviewed. The learners may be asked a broad question: “John has been really miserable lately”. The interviewer cannot really predict how the learner will answer this question. If the learner is silent, the interviewer cannot force the person to communicate further and wait a while and if there is no response then learner should be sent back to the class. The interviewer should not reveal her perception of the situation to the learner being interviewed. The class teacher may be informed so that when those that are interviewed return do not discuss what has happened. (Rigby,1996: 211). According to Rigby (1996: 211), there is normally some expression of involvement directly or indirectly. Suggestions can be asked from the learner on how to deal with the situation. The bully may be treated as a person (Rigby 1996; 211)

- **Interview with the victim**
After speaking with the bullies, the victim is interviewed. The session can start with an open ended question : “How are things going?” . The interviewer can assess if the victim has or has not played a role in the provoking the bullying. The interviewer and the victim can explore ways in which the situation can be improved , for example by not provoking the victim. In this session, The interviewer needs to be supportive throughout the interview. The victim may also accept some responsibility for the bullying. An agreed plan of action is devised and a future arrangement is made for follow-up. (Rigby ,1996: 212).
• **Preparation for a joint meeting with the victim and the bullies**

There will be repeated sessions with the bullies without the victim being present. At these sessions the teacher must note the progress and praise the learners for agreements that has been kept. The victim will be contacted and a session will be set up. The victim may be made aware that positive things will be discussed in these meetings (Rigby, 1996: 211).

• **Meeting with all participants**

The interviewer will act as a facilitator in this session and include the victim and the bullies into the meeting. Acceptable suggestions may be made on how the bullies behaviour will change in the future. The meeting is concluded on how the victims and the bullies will behave in the future (Rigby, 1996: 211).

**4.4.3.4 Implementation Of Bully Courts**

The bully courts involves learners who are selected annually to sit on this court. The court may comprise of four learners, two elected by the student body and two appointed by the teachers. The court meets once a week unless there is an emergency. The two parties involved in the bullying are listened to and a decision is made (Rigby et al, 2004:102-105). The verdict of the court should be written down and copies sent to all concerned parties. The effectiveness of the court can be assessed by parents, learners and teachers (Elliot, 1992:192).

**4.4.3.5 Peer Counseling**

Peer counseling is when one learner helps another learner. This approach is fully described by Cowie & Sharp (1996) as cited in Juvonen & Graham, (2001:228) in which learners are advised by their peers. This approach is based on the idea that learners are more comfortable talking to their peers about their problems. (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:228). According to Rigby (1996) as cited in Juvonen & Graham (2001:228) most learners are sympathetic to the plight of the victimized individual. The peers can be taught counseling skills (Elliot, 1992:107).

**4.4.4 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS**

The mental health nursing specialist may teach teachers counseling skills that can be used in bullying situations. Teachers can be made aware of the negative emotional experiences of learners and ways in which they can deal with the bullying. The teachers may be made aware of the seriousness of bullying and how to deal with bullying.

The teacher can deal with the bullying situation as follows:

- **Intervene immediately:** Stop the bullying behaviour as soon as you see it and become aware of it.
- **Talk to those involved in the bullying separately.**
- **Talk to other staff about the problem and also to alert them about the problem.**
• Inform the bullies that their parents will be informed about the situation. Make bullied individual that bullying will not occur again.
• Help the bullied individuals to socialize with peers and to make appropriate friends and to become confident about themselves.
• The bullied individuals may come to relies that their behaviour is wrong and it is therefore it important to take away privileges and give detention.
• Follow-up with parents and other teachers
• Monitor the behaviour of the bully and the victim.
• If bullying still occurs, extreme measures can be taken. (file://A:\Information on bullying for parents and teachers (1996).htm)
• The teachers can also adopt a code in classes in which learners can decide what the rules in the class are for behaviour. For example, we don’t want any name –calling or let – downs or put downs and we don’t want any hitting, punching or kicking. (file://A:\Information on bullying for parents and teachers (1996).htm)

The mental health nursing specialist can make the teachers aware of keeping confidentiality. The teachers can be made aware that learners felt hurt by them not keeping information between the two parties. Confidentiality is based on the trust relationship between the teacher and the learner. Not keeping personal information to themselves breaks this trusting relationship. According to Uys & Middleton (2004:124) the promise to respect the personal information are present in most professional codes.

4.4.5 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES WITH PARENTS

The parents can be educated about bullying and the types of bullying. They also need to know that they should report to the school authorities when bullying occurred. They can contact the teacher, vice –principal or guidance counselor. The mental health nursing specialist can teach the parents about the principles of parenting as set out in the Systematic Training of Effective Parenting (STEP) programme (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976.1) The goals of the STEP programme is to help parents effectively relate to their adolescent, adopt the principles of democracy, respect own and others rights, to help adolescent and parents accept responsibility for their own behaviour and encourage adolescent from an early age to make decisions in a responsible manner. Although the principles in the programme are not specifically related to bullying it may make both the parents and the learners deal with the negative consequences of bullying.

The parents may recognize signs that their offspring is bullied as discussed in chapter 1, page 10. The support of the parents in the time of need may help the adolescent deal with stress and develop a healthy self –esteem.
Parents can also be made aware of the reasons why adolescents become the victims of bullying. One of the reasons why adolescents sometimes become the victims of bullying is that they are overweight. Adolescent who are overweight are often teased. Parents may therefore provide adolescents with and affordable healthy diet. The parents may be provided with information on possible healthy foods. They can also be encouraged to exercise and participation in sports.

The clothing that adolescents wear can be fashionable and comfortable. Adolescents are often teased because they are different or have some visible disability such as having no front teeth.

Parents may teach adolescents skills on how to deal with the bullying. Practice ways in which the victim can assertively talk to the bully. The parents may encourage their offspring to talk about their feelings and praise the adolescent for telling about the bullying. The parent may provide support to the child when it is needed (bullying-infopack.pdf. 14/10/2005 @13:15).

If necessary, mental health nursing specialist may provide parents with counseling to deal with problems the parents are experiencing in trying to handle the bullying situation. This may include managing their own stress or the stress experienced by the adolescent. It may include discussion as already mentioned.

4.4.6 INTERVENTION WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Mental Health Nursing Specialist has to provide workshops in the community to make individuals aware of bullying and its consequences.

The community can be made aware of the bullying through:

**Awareness week at libraries:** A library is a place often visited by adolescents as well as the rest of the community. Therefore information may be available on bullying at these places. The librarian can be encouraged to provide a self for books on bullying. Posters and books will be placed on the shelf for a week for interested parties.

**Distribution of pamphlets:** The pamphlets can be designed telling the reader the following:

- What is bullying
- The tell-tale signs of bullying
- What parents can do about it
- What learners can do about the bullying
- Reporting the incident to the relevant authorities.
Pamphlets can be made available at clinics, schools, churches, libraries or any venue where the public gathers.

4.4.7 PROVIDING WORKSHOPS ON BULLYING

Providing workshops to other professionals is one of the consulting functions of the mental health nursing specialist. Workshops can be made available to school nurses, primary health care nurses and community psychiatric nurses working in the clinics. Teachers or social workers can be invited to a workshop on bullying and made aware of the occurrence and management of bullying. Similar workshops can be held for parents. The content of the workshop will be determined by the needs of the attending individuals.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the experiences of adolescent girls in a secondary school setting. The following recommendations can be made based on the study:

4.5.1 Nursing Practice

- The suggested guidelines may be implemented by mental health nursing specialists to guide school nurses and community psychiatric nurses in helping adolescents prevent and cope with bullying.
- The mental health nursing specialist will work with educational authorities and school health services in developing a whole school approach and implementing this approach in schools. He/ she will act as a consultant in this capacity.
- Workshops can be made available for both parents and teachers involved in the lives of adolescents making them aware of the consequences of bullying.

4.5.2. Nursing Education

- The suggested guidelines can be integrated into the in-service education programmes of the school nurses, psychiatric nurses and primary health care nurses working in clinics, which will assist these nurses in considering these factors when nursing adolescent patients.
- Workshops may be made available to school health nurses and psychiatric nurses emphasizing the effects of bullying on adolescents and what affect it can have on the mental health of individuals. These workshops can be facilitated by the mental health nursing specialist.
- Bullying can be included in the curriculum of the primary health care nurse and psychiatric nurses.
4.5.3. Nursing Research

- A similar study may focus on the experiences of primary school children with regards to bullying because the study that was done focused on the secondary school learners.
- The sample in this study was small and therefore a follow-up study should be done which may be a quantitative study about the occurrence of bullying in schools.
- A qualitative study similar to this study could also be conducted in other secondary schools.
- Research may focus on the experiences of parents and teachers views on bullying behaviour amongst adolescents.
- A research study can be done similar to this are on the experience of the bully.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted in a single school with a limited number of participants. Different schools may be included to gain a clear picture of the problem of bullying entails. The access to literature was limited.

4.7 CONCLUSION

From this study, the researcher has come to the conclusion that verbal bullying has negative consequences to a persons mental status, which includes low self esteem, feelings of helplessness, feelings of worthlessness and inferiority, lack of confidence, isolation and self-consciousness and lastly it could lead to suicide. The consequences of bullying therefore have a negative impact on the lives of adolescents and there is a need to know more about the phenomena and to develop preventative programmes to minimize its consequences. Through this researcher hopes to make people aware of the experiences of adolescent girls with regards to verbal bullying.
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Annexure 1

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE DISTRICT MANAGER OF EDUCATION
Annexure 1

THE DISTRICT MANAGER OF EDUCATION

Department of Education
Port Elizabeth
May 2005.

To whom it may concern

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a Registered Nurse currently working at the Elizabeth Donkin Hospital as a psychiatric nurse. I am currently registered at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) doing a Master’s Degree in Psychiatric Nursing. My research topic focuses on the experience of verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls in a secondary school. With this letter, a protocol will be attached for your perusal.

I hereby wish to formally request your permission to conduct research with learners in Grade 11 within the Gelvandale Senior Secondary School in the Northern areas of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Area.

Thanking you for your co-operation

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Ruwayda Jacobs

Contact details
(041) 4525860 (h)
0415852323(w)

________________                                        _______________
Professor J Strümpher                                     Mrs. J.W. Bouwer
Supervisor                                                       Co-Supervisor
Annexure 2

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM
THE PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL
To Whom It May Concern

Re: Permission to Conduct Research

I am a Registered Nurse currently working at the Elizabeth Donkin Hospital as a psychiatric nurse. I am doing in a Master’s Degree in Psychiatric Nursing at the NMMU. My research topic focuses on the experience of verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls in secondary schools. Attached you will find a copy of the final research proposal which has been approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the NMMU.

I hereby wish to formally request your permission to conduct research with learners in Grade 11 within your secondary school.

Thanking you for your co-operation

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Ruwayda Jacobs
Researcher

Contact details
Telephone: 0414525860
Work: 0415852323

___________________                                                           _______________
Professor J. Strümpher                                                              Mrs. J.W. Bouwer
Supervisor                                                                                   Co-Supervisor
Annexure 3

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO BE GRANTED
FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD
Annexure 3
The School Board
May 2005

To whom it may concern

**RE: Permission to Conduct Research**

I am a Registered Nurse currently working at the Elizabeth Donkin Hospital as a psychiatric nurse. I am involved in a Master’s Degree in Psychiatric Nursing at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. My research topic focuses on the experience of verbal bullying amongst adolescent girls. Attached you will find a copy of the final research proposal which has been approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the NMMU.

I hereby wish to formally request your permission to conduct research with learners in Grade 11 within your secondary school.

Thanking you for your co-operation

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Ruwayda Jacobs

Contact details:
Telephone: 0414525860
Work: 0415852323

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<td>Professor Strümpher</td>
<td>Mrs.J.W.Bouwer</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Co-Supervisor</td>
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Annexure 4

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE LEARNER
Letter Requesting Participation:

Dear Learner

Re: Participation in research study on bullying

I am a registered nurse by profession and I need to undertake this study as part of completing a Masters Degree in Psychiatric Nursing at the NMMU. I am currently working at Elizabeth Donkin Hospital as a psychiatric nurse. I am requesting your participation in the research by writing down your thoughts and experiences in the form of a ‘story’. This method has been chosen to both protect and respect your privacy, as you are not required to discuss your story with others. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, since your name will not be quoted and a code will be allocated to your ‘story.’ Thus, your name will not appear in any of the documents reporting on the research. Copies of your documents will be kept under lock and key and will be destroyed on completion of the study. A qualitative study will be conducted and the experience of adolescent girls will be looked at. Findings will be used to help me develop guidelines to aid mental health nurses in assisting adolescent girls to cope with verbal bullying.

I would like to point out to you that you have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time, that your decisions will be respected, and that no pressure will be placed on you. If you are willing to participate, please read and sign the attached consent form.

Your help with the research project will be deeply appreciated and I believe that your input is vital in informing professionals about the needs of adolescents regarding bullying behaviour and teaching victims to cope with this kind of behaviour.

Yours sincerely,

Ruwayda Jacobs
Contact details: 0414525860(h) 0415852323(w)

__________________________  ________________________
Professor J Strümpher                                 Mrs. JW Bouwer
SUPERVISOR                                           CO-SUPERVISOR
Annexure 5

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE PARENTS/ GUARDIANS
ANNEXURE 5

Letter to Parent or Guardian Requesting Participation

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Re: Participation in research study on bullying

I am a registered nurse by profession and I wish to undertake this study as part of completing a Masters Degree in Psychiatric Nursing at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I am currently working at Elizabeth Donkin Hospital as a psychiatric nurse. I hereby request permission for your child to take part in the study. Your child will be requested to write down her thoughts and experiences regarding being verbally bullied at her school. Her responses will be kept strictly confidential, since your child’s name will not appear on any of the documents reporting on the research. Copies of the research documents will be kept under lock and key and on completion of the study, they will be destroyed.

I would like to make you aware that your child has the right to withdraw from the research project at any time and this decision will be respected. No pressure will be placed on upon her to continue. Since your child is under the age of 18 years, I need you to grant me your consent as a parent/guardian to allow your child to participate in the study. Please indicate your willingness by reading and signing the attached consent form.

Your assistance in giving permission for your child to take part in the research project will be deeply appreciated. I believe that your child’s input will be vital in informing professionals about the coping needs of adolescents regarding verbal bullying behaviour and minimizing the occurrence of it.

Yours sincerely,
Ruwayda Jacobs
Contact details:
(041) 4525860
(041) 5852323

__________________________________________  ______________________________
Professor Strümpher                                                                 Mrs. JW Bouwer
Supervisor                                                                                  Co-Supervisor
Annexure 6

REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE LEARNER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY
ANNEXURE 6

Consent for participation by learner

Dear Researcher

I, ______________ HEREBY GIVE CONSENT TO VOLUNTARILY PARTICIPATE IN YOUR RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS GIRLS REGARDING VERBAL BULLYING AT SCHOOL.

I understand that all information will be kept completely confidential. I also understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that my decision to do so will be respected and no pressure placed on me to participate in the study.

Signature:…………………………
Today’s date:……………………

Consent for participation by parent/guardian

Dear Researcher

I, HEREBY GIVE CONSENT FOR MY CHILD …………………………… TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS GIRLS REGARDING VERBAL BULLYING AT SCHOOL.

I understand that all information will be kept completely confidential or if you want to withdraw your child from the study.

Signature:…………………………
Today’s date:……………………
Annexure 7

PROTOCOL FOR DATA ANALYSIS
Annexure 7

Thank you for being my independent coder
Please use the following method of Tesch to code the data
The eight steps of Tesch can be identified as following:
Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind.
To start with one document: the most interesting, the shortest, and the one on top of the pile.
Go through it. Think about the underlying meaning that the document conveys. Write your thoughts down in the margin.
When you have completed a number of interviews, make a list of all topics. Cluster similar topics together. Form these topics into columns that might be arranged as major topics, unique topics and leftovers.
Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if categories and codes emerge.
Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other
Make a final decision on the abbreviations of each category and alphabetize these codes.
Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
If necessary, recode the data (Creswell, 1998:192).

Yours sincerely
Ruwayda Jacobs
Annexure 8

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM
THE PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL
Deted: 21 November 2003

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir / Madam

This serves to confirm that Mrs. Jacobs was granted permission to conduct a study on the effects of verbal bullying on schoolgirls at the above school.

Thank you

D.L. Nickall
(Principal)
Annexure 9

PERMISSION OBTAINED FROM THE DISTRICT MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
(PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE)

PORT ELIZABETH DISTRICT OFFICE

Private Bag X2915, North End, Port Elizabeth, 6056
Ezibal Valbona Building, Sutton Street, Schotia, Port Elizabeth
Tel: (041) 453-4420 / Fax: (041) 451-0193
e-mail address: samuel.smyer@gedu.easterncape.gov.za

ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: MR M.M.A. LEONARD

Mrs R. Jacobs
C/o Professor J. Strümpfer
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
P.O. Box 77000
Port Elizabeth
6031

Dear Mrs Jacobs

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I refer to your letter dated 11 August 2005 in the above matter.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct your research on verbal bullying within the Gelvandale Senior Secondary School. This permission is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. Arrangements to conduct the research must be made through the office of the principal.
2. The permission of the parents of the girls selected must be obtained before they form part of your research.
3. All girls selected / interviewed must be willing participants in the research study.
4. Participation in the study is voluntary and girls may withdraw from the study at any time.
5. All information obtained be kept confidential and no girl may be identified.
6. All costs should be borne by yourself, unless another arrangement is arrived at with the School Governing Body, but no financial liability should accrue to the Department of Education.
7. The Department of Education be indemnified from any eventuality which may result from the conduct of the study.

I wish you every success with your research project and I trust that through your efforts we would all benefit.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

M.M.A. LEONARD
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH

24 August 2005