

Editorial, 3 pages, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38ns1editorial>**Editorial: The Nature and Extent of Bullying in a Developing Country Context****Guest Editors:**  Vanessa Scherman and  Rachel Annunziato

South Africa, as is the case with many countries internationally, has highlighted bullying as a priority area if schools are to be safe environments and conducive to learning. The focus on bullying is perhaps not surprising, as it is a significant form of school violence (Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Olweus, 1993) that is widespread, with devastating short- and long-term effects (Chapin & Brayack, 2016). Bullying is, in general, understood as the abuse of power, which has many lingering consequences for both mental and physical health (Cunningham, Rimas, Mielko, Cailin, Cunningham, Buchanan, Vailancourt, Chen, Deal & Marcus, 2016; Garandeanu, Lee & Salmivalli, 2014). Bullying is also seen as an intentional act to cause harm (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), and is an attempt to maintain social dominance through aggression in a manner that incapacitates the victim (Crothers & Levinson, 2004).

This special issue focuses on the nature and extent of bullying in developing world contexts. Systemically, bullying is a global epidemic that would benefit from a cross-cultural lens, using large-scale international comparative studies to explore factors influencing bullying and academic performance. Bullying can be explored by considering the influence of bullying from the perspective of learners, school management as well as parents. Taken together, the articles included here help to move the needle in regards to evidence-based approaches for addressing bullying, while keeping cultural congruency in the forefront.

Winnaar, Arends and Beku make use of secondary analysis as well as data from the South African 2015 cycle of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). TIMSS is a trend study, which assesses Mathematics and Science achievement, and is designed to measure changes in the education system over time. The participants of the study included 12,514 learners from 292 schools, where, since a national sample of schools and learners are selected, the study is nationally representative. Multiple regression is used as a means to investigate the association between school climate and the prevalence of bullying in schools, as well as to determine whether the socioeconomic status of the school is associated with incidences of bullying at the school. The results show that learners are less likely to be bullied when they feel a sense of belonging to the school they attend, they are confident, and when they are constantly engaged in the classroom. A significant gender bias exists, where boys are bullied more often than girls. It has also been found that learners who are often bullied obtain a significantly lower score in Mathematics than their counterparts. Juan, Zuze, Hannan, Govender and Reddy, also making use of TIMSS data, examine the extent and nature of bullying in schools located in different and unequal socio-economic contexts. In addition, risk factors associated with being a victim of bullying are examined, for which self-reported data from TIMSS has been used. The results reveal that different patterns of bullying victimisation and perpetration by the socio-economic status (SES) of the school, with learners attending schools with a low SES reporting higher levels of bullying. Factors resulting in higher odds of being a victim were learners' gender and psychosocial characteristics. Perpetration as a risk factor for victimisation (bully-victims) was found across bullying types.

Bullying is not just an issue in South Africa, but also in Swaziland, where particularly adolescent girls appear to be most susceptible to being bullied. Thwala, Okeke and Tshotsho attempt to explain how some personal characteristics of girls tend to expose them to incidences of bullying. They utilised a multiple case study research design in which data were obtained through focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 24 girls from three schools by purposive sampling. Results show the relevance of Routine Activities Theoretical framework in explaining the incidences of bullying among adolescent girls. Low self-esteem and the feeling of loneliness appeared as two major characteristics that make the girls more susceptible to bullying incidences by the perpetrators. Data interpretation suggests that loneliness tends to expose the girls as suitable targets. The authors argue that the schooling experiences of adolescent girls require urgent intervention in which curriculum experts ought to consider bullying lessons for both girls and boys.

Bullying takes place in schools and normally several bullying geographic hotspots can be identified. Sikhakhane, Muthukrishna and Martin explored the spaces in which bullying takes place in KwaZulu-Natal. Grade 10 learners, four male and four female, were interviewed individually, as well as by means of focus groups. The findings indicate bullying to be a serious problem at the school, with a negative impact on the wellbeing of children. Children emerged as social actors, who were able to provide insight into the kinds of bullying they experienced, as well as how they constructed 'bullying' as a phenomenon. The study was able to capture the reality of the children's experiences of the complex power-laden spaces and places of bullying at the school. The study shows that bullying is situated in a context and an in-depth analysis of context is necessary to capture the intricacies of the phenomenon. Ngidi and Moletsane explored bullying in the learner toilets of a township secondary school. The exploratory study used focus group discussions to collect data to address the research question within the Newman's 'defensible space' framework; where learners experienced toilets as the

most dangerous areas inside their school, reporting that they regularly encountered bullying in these spaces. In particular, bullying in the school toilets was characterised by violence, including physical and sexual assaults, as well as criminal activity (mostly muggings) and threats of violence. According to learners, the toilets and what happened there were necessarily hidden from the teachers' view and supervision, leaving the victims at the mercy of the bullies and perpetrators of violence. Informed by these findings, we conclude that because of their physical design and location within the school, which made it difficult to exercise any supervisory duties or to enforce security measures and protect learners, the toilets in this school remained insecure spaces.

Masilo's work transitions this issue into intervention science. The author reports that bullying incidents amongst learners are realities that have made, and continue to make news headlines internationally, and South Africa is not immune to such incidents. This piece offers guidance to those in the trenches seeking to identify and support victims. The phenomenon of bullying not only affects the bully and the victim, but also the school, parents, as well as communities in general. In the article, the researcher highlights factors that may be associated with bullying amongst learners in the school setting. The ecosystems perspective is used to describe how the social worker can address the phenomenon of bullying using different methods of practice. The researcher relies on the literature review method, as well as his practical experience as a social worker, having previously worked with several learners.

Very often the phenomenon of bullying requires intervention from both the school and parents, where the school-parent relationship is vital to ensure the well-being of learners. Govender and Young explore the differences between learners who perpetrate cyberbullying and traditional bullying in Gauteng with regard to their sociodemographic characteristics and the level of self-reported, authoritarian parenting they experienced. Grade Six and Seven learners from four primary schools in Benoni, Gauteng ($N = 279$) participated in the study. Pupils completed an adapted version of the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (R-OBVQ) in addition to items from the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ). Both types of bullying were significantly related to self-reported, authoritarian parenting, therein suggesting that this parenting style is more prevalent in the households of bullying perpetrators. Rubbi Nunan explores victims' experiences of learner challenging behaviour in primary schools, where the parents of the perpetrators are unapologetic, defending their wrongdoing. In this scenario, there is little parents can do to address ill-disciplined learners. In effect, teacher helplessness has further intensified the problem in primary schools. To establish the way in which the victims experience challenging behaviour, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of six learners ($N = 6$). Results indicate that the victims continuously suffer at the hands, and indeed the feet, of violent learners. Furthermore, as their cries go unheard, the problem remains persistent. Since schools have been failing to respond effectively to challenging learner behaviour, this article recommends immediate intervention by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to offer a more constructive solution to this problem - one that will effect change and offer relief and protection to the victims. The article concludes that victims continue to suffer, with little or no safeguarding from teachers. Future research ought to include the role of teachers in safeguarding learners against learner victimisation and challenging behaviour in primary schools.

Finally, leadership in schools is a key component in attempting to address the issue of bullying. Smit conceptualises bullying from a relational framework, regarding both the phenomenon as well as leadership style. An instrumental case study nested in social constructivism was applied. Research participants were sampled purposively, after selecting a few schools that were part of a larger research project investigating bullying with the aim of countering this problem. To this end, they spoke to 12 principals in these schools to inquire into their leadership style, and how a relational stance might assist in combatting this social and educational dilemma in schools. Empirical data revealed that in many cases where the school principals honed values such as care and relational attributes in their daily leadership practices, learners were more likely to respond to such relational and caring practices, which they witnessed and experienced.

In conclusion, the present collection of articles provides new insights as to the individual and systemic risk factors for bullying across settings. It is exciting to note that at the same time, solutions are offered that can be juxtaposed with the illumination of these targets for clinicians and especially those based in schools. We are hopeful that translation of these findings will assist with reduction in this phenomenon, while taking into account the more limited resources available in the contexts studied.

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