

Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

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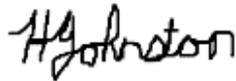
Dissertation submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Potchefstroom Campus at the North West University

Supervisor: Prof AJ Botha

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any University for a degree.



HENDRINA JOHNSTON

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SUMMARY

The long-standing history of aggressive behaviour in South Africa, not only in schools, but also in higher education institutions, is a cause of concern. Although extensive research has been done on aggression, very little of it has been done at universities. This thesis attempts to fill the gap. It uses a phenomenological approach and the lens of an interpretivist paradigm to understand and make meaning of female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences. As qualitative research, it is explanatory, descriptive, exploratory and contextual in nature.

This research study aims to i) explore and describe female on-campus residence students' conceptualisation of social aggression, ii) explore and describe female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression in their residences, iii) explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression, and iv) make suggestions on how female on-campus residence students can change social aggressive behaviour in residences.

Purposive sampling was used to select female students from female on-campus residences at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom campus, South Africa. The data generation entailed two phases: individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation-interviews. Consent to conduct the data generation process was gained from: the Dean of Students; the Chairperson of the Student Representative Council; the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences; the Primaria of each of the respective university on-campus female residences, and female students in on-campus residences.

The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method is used to analyse the data. Throughout the data generation and data analysis process the researcher made sure that due account was taken of the relevant ethical considerations. Trustworthiness was ensured by applying the following criteria: truth value (credibility); applicability (transferability); consistency (dependability); neutrality (confirmability).

Two themes were agreed on during a consensus meeting with the independent coder: Theme 1 is female students' diverse experience of social aggression in university on-campus residences. Theme 2 is female students' suggestions to change socially aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences.



The participants made the following suggestions. To deal with social aggression in their on-campus residences, female students should: seek support from others when they are subjected to negative comments; address any socially aggressive behaviour in a group context; do a Functional Behaviour Assessment to identify the type of behaviour that provokes social aggression; use strategies like tootling, which focus on the positive characteristics of others; and have open channels of communication between themselves and the House Committee (HK) so that social aggression can be dealt with in the early stages.

Key concepts: Experience; Female; Gender; On-campus residence; Students; Social aggression; University; Well-being



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CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provides the problem statement and an overview of the study. This includes the key concepts, research questions, and the research design and methodology that were used in this study. It also outlines the measures taken to ensure that ethical requirements were met.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Aggressive behaviour among people is a matter of concern, not only at national levels but also at international levels (Hauser, 2007; Stevens, 2012; De Vries, 2013; Kruger, 2013; Rademeyer, 2013; Cilliers, 2014; Louw, Hosken & Davids, 2014; Strydom, 2015). The literature survey revealed that a vast number of studies have been done on physical forms of aggression (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:176). However, the research on aggression is shifting its focus to other forms of aggression that encapsulate non-physical forms of aggression, including social aggression (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:176).

Geen (2001:3) refers to aggression as the “delivery of an aversive stimulus from one person to another, with intent to harm and with an expectation of causing such harm”. Aggression can also be described as any action or behaviour that is “experienced as harmful” (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Du Plessis, 2011:590). Therefore aggressive thoughts or behaviour that causes harm to another person unintentionally is not considered as aggression (Fiske, 2014:383). Aggression is thus behaviour intended to inflict pain or harm to others or objects (Botha, 2014a:241).

According to Duranovic and Opic (2013:779), it is not as easy to identify social aggression as physical and verbal aggression, but it can cause just as much harm as “open aggression” (overt aggression). Duranovic and Opic (2013:780) explain that social aggression occurs when a person is rejected by a peer group or the society or is intentionally excluded from group or social events. This is a kind of violence. An individual can also use “the social structure of the group to harm the victim” and is therefore not personally involved in the attack (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:780). Social aggression can take the form of direct or indirect acts,

such as spreading rumours or deliberately ignoring someone (“silent treatment”) (Ostrov, Crick & Stauffacher, 2006:242).

Archer and Coyne (2005:212) contend that females can be just as aggressive as males, but they tend to favour social aggression rather than physical aggression. The literature shows that males are more physically aggressive than females, and that females are more socially aggressive than males (Krahé, 2013:79). It seems that “[g]ender-role norms prohibiting overt aggression in girls may serve to curb aggression in girls, or may lead them to restrict their aggressive behaviour to the private sphere” (Krahé, 2013:80). In this research study, I focused on female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

In 2007 about 33 students on the University of Virginia campus were killed by a senior-level undergraduate student, who demonstrated intimidating aggressive and violent behaviour towards the other students (Hauser, 2007). Qian, Tian, Yang and Zhang (2013:1) argue that aggressive and violent behaviour is mainly caused by exposure to violence by the media. However, Geen (2001:17) suggests that although aggression is sometimes provoked by certain situations or experiences, the intensity of the behaviour is determined by the “nature of the provocation” and “the level of potential for aggression”.

South Africa has a long history of aggressive and violent behaviour partly because of apartheid (Abrahams, 2010; Botha, 2014a). According to Petersen (2009:2), the apartheid era can be described as the time when a “minority-ruled white government and a political system socially engineered the oppression and ethnic fragmentation of the vast majority of the country’s black population”. Although the system of apartheid formally ended in 1994, Lane (2014:2) states that South Africa is still “convulsed by violence”. In similar vein, Vecchiatto (2013) contends that violence and aggression are more prevalent in South Africa now than during the apartheid era.

Aggression and violence among South African students is escalating. In 2013, close to 100 students engaged in public violence, including plundering the buildings at the Belhar campus of the Northlink College because the students had not yet received their promised R300 (Three hundred rand: SA currency) travel allowance from the college (De Vries, 2013). Rademeyer (2013) also reported that violence between two organisations, the Daso and Sasco of the Tswane University of Technology (TUT), broke out and resulted in stab wounds. According to Rademeyer (2013), the violent behaviour between these two organisations was caused by issues related to voting for the next student representative council (SRC) at TUT. In 2014, the racist attitudes of some of the students towards a certain cultural group on the North-West University Potchefstroom campus led to destructive and aggressive behaviour.

According to Cilliers (2014), a pamphlet proclaiming, “Kill the Boer, Kill the Racist, Kill Afrikaans”, distributed on the Potchefstroom campus provoked aggression and violence among students. Kruger (2013) reported that 12 senior students, including two house committee members of an on-campus residence at the North-West University Potchefstroom campus, were suspended for two years after second year students were beaten with cricket bats. In this report, he noted that the beating of second year students was a tradition at this residence (Kruger, 2013). Strydom (2015) reported that a staff member of the North West University had injured his back in an incident involving first year students in an on-campus residence traditional practice.

None of these reports refers to social aggression. The reason for this may be that this type of aggressive behaviour (social aggression) is usually covert or indirect in nature (Krahé, 2013:11). The victim is not always aware of the harm being caused to him or her and often does not always know the identity of the perpetrators, as in the case of gossiping (Krahé, 2013:11). It is thus possible for indirect harm to be done to friendships and social relationships as a result of social aggression by students. Social aggression may cause “peer rejection, lower social acceptance, lower social preference and fewer mutual friends” (Longa, 2011:12). Longa (2011:13) also posits that individuals who engage in social aggression usually have more social intelligence and status, which makes their actions difficult to detect. While physical aggression is strongly associated related to “emotional deregulation and conduct problems”, social aggression is mainly related to internalised problems such as depression (Longa, 2011:16). Du Plessis (2013) argue that there are several factors that have an influence on social aggression such as gender, ethnic identity, socio-economic status and age. Stauffacher and DeHart (2006:237) explain that gender alone cannot predict the presence of social aggression as it can be exhibited by females and males. Botha (2014a:245) supports this view and adds that “social context, the situation and the environment [of an individual]” have a significant influence on a person’s behaviour rather than his or her gender.

This discussion highlights the negative influence that social aggression has on socialisation, academic performance, and the well-being of individuals.

- Identified gap in the research

The problem statement pointed to various research studies on destructive behaviour such as aggression and violence in primary and secondary schools in various provinces in South Africa – including samples in different educational contexts that included teachers, learners and

management teams (Botha, 2006; Botha, 2014a; Botha, Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2012; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009; SACE, 2011). There is ample empirical research of interventions that address aggressive behaviour in school contexts (Brigell, 2012; Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2003; Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006). One such is Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART). This was developed and implemented to reduce adolescents' aggressive behaviour through a "constructive, rather than a destructive approach" (Brigell, 2012:7). There have also been interventions at pre-school level to address aggressive behaviour. Powell *et al.* (2006:26), for instance, developed a four-level intervention model to address challenging behaviour such as aggressive behaviour in toddlers and pre-schoolers. Another example is the programme implemented by Domitrovich and Greenberg (2003:3-4).

Previous research focused specifically on aggression in school contexts, leaving a gap for research on aggression, more specifically social aggression at university level. In order to respond to the problem statement, and the identified gap in the research, I decided to explore, describe, and explain female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study, was to describe, explore and to explain how female students in on-campus residences experience social aggression. I also wanted to provide suggestions to female students in on-campus residences that could help them deal with social aggression in their residences.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question that guided this study was:

How do female on-campus residence students experience social aggression?

The following subsidiary research questions supported the main research question:

- How do female on-campus residence students conceptualise social aggression?
- What are female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression?
- Why do female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression?

- What suggestions can female on-campus residence students make that could help to change socially aggressive behaviour in residences?

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the research study were:

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
- To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences.

1.6 CLARIFICATIONS OF THE CONCEPTS

In order to situate this study in the context in which it was conducted, I briefly clarify the key concepts below.

1.6.1 Gender

According to Holmes (2007:2), gender is “socially produced differences between being feminine and being masculine”. Afifi (2007:385) argues gender reflects the way women and men are expected to think and act because of the organisation of society and not because of biological differences. Gender also means that women and men act in certain ways that indicate their “sex category”, thus being female or male (Holmes, 2007:54). Esplen and Jolly (2006:2-3) add that gender refers to the roles, relationships and behaviours of men and women that are socially constructed.

1.6.1.1 Female

According to Esplen and Jolly (2006:2-3), sex is the biological and physical differences between men and women. A female is someone “belonging or relating to women, or sex that can give birth young or produce eggs” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2016). For the purpose

of this study, female refers to female students who reside in university on-campus residences designated for women.

1.6.2 Students

A student can be defined as “a person who is studying at a university or college” (Collins English Dictionary, 2016). In the context of this study, a student refers to female individuals who are enrolled at a Higher Education Institution for academic purposes who reside in an on-campus residence.

1.6.3 Experience

Elrich (2003:1126) describes experience as “the sum total of the conscious events which compose an individual life”. According to Elrich (2003:1126), knowledge, skills and techniques can be acquired through lived experiences. Lived experience can be defined as being influenced or affected by a series of events that result in the acquisition of knowledge through observations or “from what one has undergone” (Beard & Wilson, 2006:16). Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:448) add that experience is when an individual lives through an event and gains new knowledge. According to Botha and Du Preez (2014:40), “new experiences reshape an individual’s memory of related prior experience, which affects the way in which the event is interpreted”. In this study, experience refers to female students’ lived experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

1.6.4 Social aggression

According to Heilbron and Prinstein (2008:177), social aggression is when an individual intentionally tries to harm relationships or someone’s social status through covert or non-confrontational ways. Individuals in the community are usually involved in social aggression through “gossip, social exclusion, ostracism and negative facial expressions” (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:177). Social aggression includes direct and indirect behaviour towards someone as well as verbal and nonverbal “social exclusion, gossip and friendship manipulation” (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:177). Similarly, Archer and Coyne (2005:212) contend that when an individual’s acceptance in a group is manipulated or someone’s social status in a community is damaged, it can be defined as social aggression. Steyn, Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2011:125) are more specific in their definition of social aggression as “harmful in terms of friendship, social relationships, social standing, peer status and self-

concept". For the purpose of this study, social aggression refers to the intention of female on-campus residence students to harm friendships, relationships and social statuses of others in the on-campus residences in which they reside.

1.6.5 University

A University can be described as "an institution of higher education having authority to award bachelors' and higher degrees, usually having research facilities" (Collins English Dictionary, 2016). Higher Education Institutions do not only provide students with teaching and learning facilities, but also provide students with opportunities to interact socially with other knowledgeable individuals such as senior students and lecturers (Boulton & Lucas, 2008:3). Weidman (2006:253) argues that the impact of Higher Education Institutions on students can be broadly explained as a process of socialisation during which students gain knowledge and skills for their future roles in society. In the context of this study, a university refers to an institution where female students socially interact with their fellow students in on-campus residences.

1.6.6 On-campus residence

According to the internal rules and regulations of the North-West University (2011:3) a campus residence is a "physical building designed and equipped" for students who require accommodation on campus or "on its satellite". For the purpose of this study, an on-campus residence refers to the buildings that provide housing for female students on the Potchefstroom campus.

1.6.7 Well-being

According to King (2007:10), "well-being" indicates that something is in "a good state". Kirsten, Van der Walt and Viljoen (2009:5) state that "well-being" refers to the positive "condition" of the different domains of health/wellness such as physical psychosocial or social domains. Similarly, La Placa, McNaught and Knight (2013:116) see "well-being" as a subset of health. Health can be explained as "the state of being bodily and mentally vigorous and free from disease" (Collins English Dictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this study, "well-being" is used to mean the absence of social aggression in female on-campus residences.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007:26) state that the literature review will “provide an overview of current, and sometimes not so current yet still sufficiently relevant, research appropriate to your research topic”. In this section, I explore the relevant literature on aggression and aggressive behaviour, before I address social aggression.

1.7.1 Aggression

Fiske (2014:382) states that “aggression entails any behaviour whose proximate intent is harm to another person” and that “accidents are not aggression because they do not intend harm”. Krahé (2013:9) broadly defines “harm” as “any form of treatment that is not wanted by the target person”. Aggression without the action cannot be seen as being aggressive (Fiske, 2014:383). Krahé (2013:8) emphasises that for behaviour to qualify as aggression, a person must behave with the intention to harm another person. Since self-harm, such as suicide, does not involve the physical harm of another person, it cannot be termed aggression (Krahé (2013:9).

According to various researchers, there are different types and forms of aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834; Fiske, 2014:384). According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:834), *forms* indicate how “the aggressive act is expressed, such as physical versus verbal, direct versus indirect, and active versus passive”. For the purpose of this research study, forms of aggression will refer to instrumental and hostile aggression and the types of aggression will refer to physical, verbal and social aggression (Fiske, 2014:383-384). Social aggression can also be classified as a type of aggression as it is sometimes referred to as a type of indirect, verbal aggression (Fiske, 2014:384; Krahé, 2013:10).

There are two forms of aggression, instrumental and hostile: instrumental aggression intends to do harm in order to reach a certain goal, whereas hostile aggression primarily aims to do harm to another person (Fiske, 2014:383). Instrumental aggression can be seen as “the aim of achieving an intended goal by means of the aggressive act” and that hostile aggression is “the desire to harm another person as an expression of negative feelings” (Krahé, 2013:11). Hostile aggression is also characterised by impulsive acts that do not receive much thought and is usually a reaction to an action (provocation) (Anderson & Bushman, 2001:29). Instrumental aggression involves using aggressive acts to reach a goal that is different from causing harm to another person and is usually proactive and not reactive as well as “premeditated and controlled” (Fiske, 2014:383).

There is a distinction between different types of aggression: physical, verbal and social aggression (Fiske, 2014:385). *Physical aggression* is when physical harm is done to another who wants to avoid any harm (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834). According to Onukwufor (2013:64), physical aggression is classified as hostile aggression because its aim is to hurt someone. Botha (2014a:241) provides examples of physical aggression, such as when someone is grabbed, pushed, slapped or when someone uses weapons like knives, guns, scissors and bottles. *Verbal aggression* is when harm is caused through the spoken word (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834). Onukwufor (2013:64) gives examples such as that shouting, teasing, threatening or insulting someone by using bad language. Fiske (2014:385) adds that aggression can manifest itself in more than one way, for example when someone exhibits physical as well as verbal aggression. There is in fact a high correlation between physical and verbal aggression, which indicates that a strong likelihood that both types of aggression will be used in the same situation (Fiske, 2014:385). Social aggression damages social relationships without the victim being aware of what is taking place, because “the costs of engaging in direct forms of aggression would be high” (Krahé, 2013:11).

According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:834) *direct aggression* is when “the victim is physically present” and *indirect aggression* is when “the victim is absent”. Botha (2014a:242) notes that verbal aggression can be direct or indirect, whereas physical aggression can only be direct. *Displaced aggression* is when a “substitute aggression target is used” (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834). Botha (2014a:242) offers the example of when anger is displaced onto an individual who is innocent. Bushman and Huesmann (2010:834) state that a substitute target can sometimes do or say something that triggers the aggressor to demonstrate aggressive behaviour. This is called *triggered displaced aggression*. Triggered displaced aggression mainly happens when “the aggressor ruminates about the official offense and when the aggressor does not like the substitute target” (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834). Fiske (2014:384) argues that active and passive aggression can be seen as “doing” as opposed to “not doing”. In active aggression the aggressor can cause physical harm, whereas in passive aggression the aggressor can cause harm by failing or refusing to do something (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834).

Jordaan (2015) posits that children’s aggressive or violent behaviour initially develops when they are raised in and or exposed to aggressive environments. Domitrovich and Greenberg (2003:1) emphasise that most of the children who demonstrate challenging behaviour in preschool will continue to demonstrate the same behaviour throughout their “childhood and into early adolescence”. Therefore aggressive and violent behaviour that develops in early childhood may continue into adulthood. Fiske (2014:248) contends that the

situation or circumstance in which individuals find themselves has a direct influence on their behaviour irrespective of his/her developmental phase.

1.7.2 Social aggression

According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:834), social aggression can also be called relational aggression. However, they note that there are slight but important differences between social and relational aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2008:177). Social aggression includes concealed methods like negative facial expressions and gestures whereas relational aggression includes more “direct manipulation of friendships”, but not any negative facial expressions or gestures (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:177).

For the purpose of this study, I focused on *social aggression* that entails doing harm to “friendships, social relationships, social standing, peer status and self-concept” (Steyn *et al.*, 2011:125). According to You and Bellmore (2014:398) examples of social aggression are gossip, spreading rumours, ignoring someone (“silent treatment”) and also excluding someone from group activities. According to Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:332), the most common forms of social aggression are spreading rumours and gossiping. An individual who has been the victim of social aggression is usually lonely, has signs of depression and has low self-esteem (Bellmore & You, 2014:398). As Botha (2014:242) explains, social aggression has “a negative impact on interpersonal relationships and on effective social skills”.

Social aggression can occur face-to-face or it can be demonstrated through social media, in other words it can be direct or indirect (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2013:332). It can also be very “subtle and secret”, for example the aggressor can use or manipulate the social group to exclude the victim without being directly involved (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:780). Its usual purpose is to reach social goals and a certain social status in the group (You & Bellmore, 2014:398).

Fiske (2014:394) states that the expression of aggression is associated with gender in that girls are more likely to engage in social aggression as they develop social skills earlier than boys, thus decreasing the need for physical aggression. Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:330) add that women demonstrate social aggression at college which influence their relationships even if “they remain in college”. Women may view social aggression as the norm and expect this type of aggression to be part of their relationships (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2013:331). Therefore in this study I focused on *female students’ experiences of social aggression in their on-campus residences*.

1.7.3 Theoretical perspectives

Wacker (1998:362) explains that the use of theory in a research study is important for the following reasons: “it provides a framework for analysis; it provides an efficient method for field development and it provides clear explanations for the pragmatic world”. Reeves, Albert, Kuper and Hodges (2008:631) describe theory as providing the researcher with a “lens” through which to view complicated problems and social issues. During the literature review I became aware of some theories that helped me to understand aggression and social aggressive behaviour. These include: *Social Learning Theory*; *Social Cognitive Theory*; *Bio-ecological Theory*; *Gender Schema Theory*; *Conflict Theory* and *Conformity Theory*.

- Social Learning Theory

The *Social Learning Theory* (SLT) assumes that people demonstrate certain behaviour and are influenced by displayed behaviour in their surroundings (Smith & Berge, 2009:439). The SLT was initially introduced by Bandura (1971) who recently referred to it as the social cognitive theory (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker, 1988:176). The social cognitive theory posits that a person’s behaviour, cognition, personal characteristics and environmental factors influence each other (Bandura, 1989:2). Therefore a person’s thinking (cognition), behaviour and personality may be influenced by observing others; the environment also determines what behaviour an individual will exhibit (Bandura, 1989:2). Thus “new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others” (Bandura, 1971:3). This theory was useful as SLT explains why individuals may exhibit certain forms of aggressive behaviour when they are exposed to behaviour in an environment such as university on-campus residences.

- Social Cognitive Theory

According to Denler, Wolters and Benzon (2014:1), the social cognitive theory indicates that learning takes place when other people are observed in a social context. Schunk (2003:159) states that the social cognitive theory “postulates that achievement depends on interactions between behaviours, personal factors and environmental conditions”. Warburton and Anderson (2015:374) argue that how “people mentally construct their experiences” is very important as frequent exposure to social aggression may lead to its being adopted, because of the vast number of social aggression knowledge structures that have been built up. Conner and Norman (2005:128) note that a few factors determine the type of behaviour that an

individual exhibits. These factors include self-efficiency, expected outcomes and perceived goals (Conner & Norman, 2005:128). Therefore behaviour, as well as the individual's own beliefs and interpretation of a situation, can be shaped when an individual is exposed to certain factors.

- Bio-ecological Theory

The *bio-ecological theory* is based on Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological theory of development that includes different systems (levels) in which an individual functions and interacts, namely the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, *macrosystem* and *chronosystem*. According to Lewthwaite (2011:1), Bronfenbrenner's theory indicates that people's development is influenced by their relationships in different contexts that form the "environment" of people. Therefore the interaction of an individual with different systems (levels) of society has a direct influence on the behaviour demonstrated towards others.

- Gender schema theory

The *gender schema theory* is based on the idea that certain identities, behaviour and actions are ascribed to men and women (Bussey & Bandura, 1999:5). According to Starr and Zurbruggen (2016:2), "children develop ideas and theories about what it means to be masculine or feminine (gender schemas) from an early age and use these theories to organise information, make decisions, and regulate behaviour". Bussey and Bandura (1999:4) emphasise that a person must first be able to identify a gender, man or woman, and then link his or her knowledge about certain activities, interests, social behaviours and personalities to a specific gender. Alani, Clark-Taylor, Rogeshefsky and Cerulli (2016:20) indicate that gender schemata develop within the individual and are "reinforced by society through interpersonal relationships, communities, organisational structures and media". Parents sometimes expect their children to exhibit behaviour which is consistent with the traditional gender roles assigned to boys and girls (Bussey & Bandura, 1999:4). Therefore certain behaviour, like social aggression, may be demonstrated by individuals because this social construct is deemed the norm in specific contexts.

- Conflict theory

According to Coser, Dahrendorf and Collins (2006:213), conflict theory indicates the unequal distribution of power, class and status. Shinwari (2011:2) describes *conflict* as "the deliberate

attempt to oppose, resist or coerce the will of another or others”. This is likely to occur when different groups do not share the same goals (Medler, Fitzgerald & Magerko (2008:2). According to Tittenburn (2013:122), research indicates that society can be divided into different classes, namely the “command class” and the “obey class”. This division can result in class conflict which is an indication of “struggle between those with authority and those without” (Tittenburn, 2013:122). Coser *et al.* (2006:213) argue that the desire for *power* is the main element in all social relationships and that it also underpins the conflict theory. As a result, individuals may resort to antisocial behaviour, like social aggression, which may cause harm to someone else in order to gain superiority and power among peers.

- Conformity theory

According to Cialdini and Goldstein (2004:606), conformity refers to “the act of changing one’s behaviour to match the responses of others”. Bernheim (1994:842) states that conformity can be influenced by the following factors: prestige, esteem, popularity and acceptance. Zink (2015:21) adds that the main reasons for conformity are “the need for security provided by the group, the level of discomfort that non-conformity will cause, and the availability of alternatives to avoiding conformity in the face of disagreement”. Society often criticises individuals when they differ from the norms that are commonly accepted in that particular society (Bernheim, 1994:842). Although individuals may decide to deviate from their established norms, they may conform to social norms in order to gain popularity or acceptance from a group (Bernheim, 1994:844). This theory helped me to make sense of why individuals conform to the behaviour and social norms of other individuals in order to be accepted.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

According to Harwell (2012:148), a research design can be defined in various ways. In some studies a research design includes the entire research process, while in other studies a research design refers only to the methodology followed in the research study (Harwell, 2012:148). Creswell, Hanson, Plano and Morales (2007:237) take the former view and so describe a research design in a qualitative study as “approaches to qualitative research that encompass formulating research questions and procedures for collecting, analysing, and reporting findings”.

In this research study a qualitative research design was used. According to Harwell (2012:148), a qualitative study seeks to describe and give meaning to participants' experiences of a phenomenon. Similarly, Nieuwenhuis (2007a:50) describes qualitative research as the process of gathering relevant data about a phenomenon with the aim of gaining a complete understanding of what is being studied. It focuses on describing the phenomenon in its natural context by using words and descriptions and not statistics or numbers (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:51). According to Creswell *et al.* (2007:237), there are five types of qualitative designs: narrative research, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology and participatory action research. For the purpose of this research study a phenomenological approach was used which will be discussed in more detail in section 1.8.3.

Gray (2009:36) argues that research studies are classified not only according to the research methodology adopted, but also according to the purpose or nature of the research study. This qualitative research study was exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and contextual in nature with the aim of gaining a better understanding of female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

1.8.2 The nature of the study

- Exploratory

Gray (2009:36) explains that research is described as exploratory when the researcher explores a little-known phenomenon with the aim of fully understanding it. The exploratory nature of this research study is evident in (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:35):

- its in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, social aggression; and
- the identification or discovering of important categories of meaning.

In this exploratory study I made use of individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews in order to gather and explore information from the research participants about social aggression in university on-campus residences.

- Descriptive

According to Gray (2009:36) a descriptive research study aims to “draw a picture of a situation, person or event or show how things are related to each other”. Its purpose is to “describe” the research phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:35). In qualitative research studies the word “description” indicates that the phenomenon is described more broadly and more

intensively (Rubin & Babbie, 2005:125). This study was descriptive in nature as it aimed to describe the research participants' lived experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

- Explanatory

Gray (2009:36) states that the explanatory nature of a research study “sets out to explain and account for the descriptive information”. Jansen (2007:11) adds that explanatory questions seek to explain something (phenomenon) and not only to describe it. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006:35), the purpose of an explanatory research study is to explain what “events, beliefs, attitudes or policies” are related to the research phenomenon. This research study is explanatory in nature as it not only describes the participants' lived experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences, but also suggests reasons why some female residents resort to social aggression within residences and the meanings they attach to their experiences.

- Contextual

According to Gray (2009:36) an interpretive study aims to “explore” the participants' lived experiences and their perceptions of these. Babbie and Mouton (2001:28) state that an interpretive paradigm includes the process of reaching as complete an understanding as possible of the participants' experiences gained through the interaction in their natural context. Neuman (2003:76) adds that the researcher can make use of transcripts and other recordings to make sense of the participants' interaction in their real context. In this research study the lived experiences of female on-campus residents were explored in their natural contexts of university on-campus residences.

1.8.3 Methodological approach

In this research study a phenomenological approach was chosen to explore and describe female students' lived experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:28), the phenomenological approach aims at understanding people in their natural context. Therefore the researcher describes the research phenomenon through the eyes of the research participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:140). Creswell describes phenomenological research as identifying “the essence of human experience concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study” (Creswell,

2003:15). Groenewald (2004:5) emphasises that researchers set out to describe the phenomenon accurately while “remaining true to the facts”. I chose a phenomenological approach as I strive for a complete understanding of the phenomenon through an exploration of the lived experiences of the participants.

1.8.4 Site, sample and sampling strategy

According to Johl and Renganathan (2010:42), gaining access to research sites is “one of the greatest pitfalls in conducting research”. Wanat (2008:192) warns that the researcher must determine the “social structure” of a research site and establish professional relationships with the “gatekeepers” to effectively gain access. I will now briefly discuss the site, sample and sampling strategy. A detailed discussion is provided in Chapter Three (section 3.4.1).

The data were generated at the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus, South Africa. These were drawn from eleven female on-campus residences that were purposively selected. The site was chosen by means of convenient sampling. Convenient sampling can be explained as the process of selecting “population elements ... based on the fact that they are easily and conveniently available” (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:177). In order to generate relevant and sufficient data for this research study, I gained access by obtaining the consent of: the Dean of Students (Addendum A); Chairperson of the Student Representative Council (Addendum B); the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences (Addendum C); the Primaria (Chairperson of the residence’s house committee) of the each of the respective on-campus female residences (Addendum D), and the female students in on-campus residences (Addendum E).

Purposive sampling was used in order to select female students in on-campus residences to participate voluntarily in this research study. According to Creswell (2007:125), purposive sampling of participants and research sites in qualitative research takes close account of the research questions, phenomenon or “research problem” of the study. I purposively selected female on-campus residents from female on-campus residences. These residences are all coming from the same or similar context. A letter of invitation to participate voluntarily was sent to them via the Primaria of each of the respective female on-campus residences. The number of participants was not predetermined as I aimed to generate data until data saturation occurred. My qualitative research design aimed at generating rich data rather than making generalisations (Polit & Beck, 2010:1451). In some residences more than two female residents responded to my invitation to participate. When this happened, I included all of them during

the individual and photo-elicitation-interviews to generate data. I used the following criteria to select female residents purposefully:

- Registered students at the North-West University
- Female residents in any of the eleven on-campus residences on the NWU campus
- Students who had experienced social aggression themselves; or were aware of social aggression; or knew about social aggression among the female students in their residence.

I met only with those who gave their informed consent to participate in this research study in response to the invitation letter sent to them via the Primaria of their particular female on-campus residences.

1.8.5 Data generation

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007a:79), the most common data generation strategies that are used in an interpretivist paradigm are interviews and observations. During the interview the researcher asks the participants questions in order to elicit their opinions and ideas on the phenomenon in question (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:87). The “aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:87). Visual data generation are also used. Epstein, Stevens, McKeever and Baruchel (2006:2) contend that visual data generation strategies have become more popular because they are “user-friendly” and not expensive to use. For the purpose of this research study, individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation-interviews were used to generate relevant and detailed data on female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

According to Harper (2002:13) photo-elicitation is “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview”. In this research study, I gave the participants the opportunity to take their own photographs. They were free to decide what they wanted to include or exclude from their lived experiences of the phenomenon and what they wanted to present to me. I also made sure that the ethical requirements for using photographs during research were met during the data generation process.

I generated data by using two sequential phases: individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation-interviews (Addendum E). These interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed for the purpose of data analysis (Addendum H: Transcriber). During phase one, the data generation process was explained to the participants as well as the ethical aspects

of the research. The data generation process (Phases One and Two) is discussed in detail in Chapter Three (section 3.4.2.1).

1.8.6 Data analysis

Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:397) state that the purpose of qualitative data analysis is to produce findings from the data generation process. Babbie (2007:378) is more specific by stating that: qualitative analysis is the “nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”. For the purpose of this research study, the IPA (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) method was used in order to analyse the data generated during the data generation process. This method is mainly used in conjunction with individual interviews as the data generation method (Smith & Osborn, 2007:57). According to them, the purpose of IPA is to fully explore the participants’ lived experiences and their perceptions of the phenomenon, “object or event” (Smith & Osborn, 2007:53). The four steps of the IPA method were followed systematically. These four steps included: identifying themes from the transcriptions; connecting the themes with each other; continuing analysis with other cases; and writing up (Smith & Osborn, 2007:53). The data analysis process is discussed in detail in Chapter Three (section 3.4.3).

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Denscombe (2010:59) ethics in research is a “system of moral principles by which individuals can judge their actions as right or wrong, good or bad”. Denscombe (2010:61) adds that it is the researcher’s responsibility to conduct the research in an ethical manner, including respect for the “cultural norms of the society within which the research is conducted”. I now briefly highlight the important ethical requirements. A detailed description of these will be provided in Chapter Three (section 3.6).

The following ethical requirements were met:

- *Ethical clearance* from the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University.
- *Consent* from the Dean of Students (Addendum A); Chairperson of the Student Representative Council (Addendum B); the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences (Addendum C); the Primaria of each of the respective on-campus female residences (Addendum D), and the female students in the relevant on-campus residences (Addendum E).

- *Avoidance of harm*, including physical, emotional and psychological harm (Mouton, 2001:245) was ensured.
- *Voluntary participation*: meaning that the participants do not feel obligated to participate in the research study, but do it out of their own free will (Strydom, 2011:116).
- *Informed voluntary consent*: before data generation - meaning participants give permission voluntarily and do not feel in any way that they are forced to do so (Denscombe, 2010:67).
- *Confidentiality*: ensuring that information is accessible only to those who have a legitimate interest in the research study and that a participant cannot be identified (Denscombe, 2010:65).
- *Anonymity*: meaning that any information that can lead to the identification of the participants is discarded and that codes are used (Denscombe, 2010:65).
- *Visual ethics*: ensuring the anonymity and privacy of the people or objects being photographed and that no photographs are taken without their consent (Papademas, 2009:253-255).

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

This qualitative study is presented in the following chapters:

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL AGGRESSION

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS:
FEMALE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL AGGRESSION IN
UNIVERSITY ON-CAMPUS RESIDENCES**

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

1.11 SUMMARY

Chapter One outlined this research study. The problem was clearly stated and an overview of the literature on the phenomenon of social aggression was given. The key concepts in this study were clarified and the main research question, subsidiary research questions and aims that directed this study were presented. The research design and methodology were briefly described, including how the requirements of trustworthiness and ethical research were met. The next chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL AGGRESSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two provides the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study. The description of the key concepts, aggression and social aggression, aims at providing a clear understanding of these phenomena in the context of this study. I also elaborate on the interrelatedness of these concepts in everyday contexts. The theories that inform the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study, particularly those concerned with social aggression, are discussed in detail. Diagram 2.1 provides an illustration of this framework.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:36), one of the functions of a conceptual framework is to explain salient concepts and to reveal the “relationships between concepts”. Another is to classify “phenomena ... in terms of characteristics that they have in common with other phenomena” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:36). It also provides information on the research phenomenon that was not previously known (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:84). The discussion aims at providing a clear understanding of the nature of aggression and social aggression as well as the possible causes and consequences of social aggression.

2.2.1 Nature of aggression

According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:833), aggression evolved from ancient times when males used aggression to acquire women, food and shelter. Women, on the other hand, used aggression to protect their children and to care for their families (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:833). Shaver and Mikulincer (2011:4) conclude that in the past aggression was seen as the “result of an inborn instinct aimed at the destruction of life or as a learned response to the frustration of one’s needs”. As time passed, the level of aggression increased because “aggression breeds aggression” (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:833).

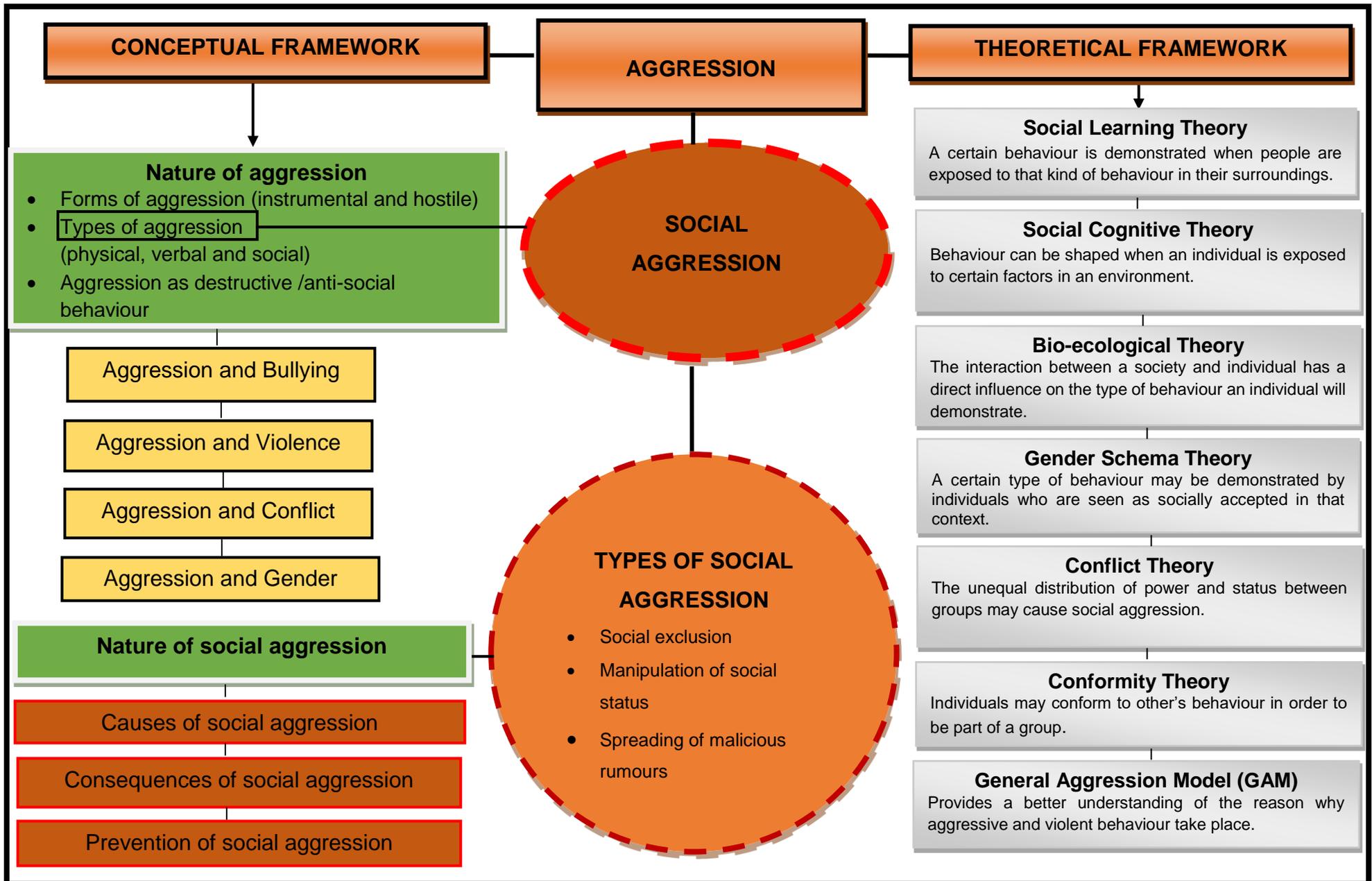


DIAGRAM 2.1 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Brigell (2012:5) explains that there is a direct correlation between exposure to aggression in an individual's childhood and the use of aggression in that person's adulthood. Bushman and Huesmann (2010:833) describe aggression as a visible act which takes place in a social context and involves two or more people. There must be a perpetrator who intends to cause harm and a victim who tries to avoid it (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003:298). According to Warburton and Anderson (2015:373), aggression "refers only to a behaviour, and not to a mindset or an emotional state." Feelings may lead to aggression, such as anger, but cannot be defined as aggression (Warburton & Anderson, 2015:373). Similarly, Wallinius (2012:19) describes aggression as "hostile or attacking interpersonal behaviour". Bushman and Huesmann (2010:833) and Krahe (2013:8,9) argue that aggression has the following features:

- Aggression *excludes* unintended harm or injury and *includes* intended harm
- Self-harm cannot be seen as aggression
- Aggression is external behaviour that can be observed
- Aggression is a social behaviour that involves at least two people
- Not all intentional behaviours that hurt people are aggressive behaviour.

It is evident from these descriptions that aggression involves the intent to cause harm to someone physically or socially (Mpaata, 2008:1; Fiske, 2014:382; Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:833).

As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.7.1), there are two forms of aggression: instrumental and hostile aggression. Anderson and Bushman (2002:275) state that they differ in three ways: "the primary goal of the behaviour; the presence of anger; the extent of thought and planning involved". Instrumental aggression is aggression used to reach a predetermined, non-injurious goal, for example to get approval in a social setting (Onukwufor, 2013:63). Hostile aggression takes place because of the aggressor's anger and his or her goal to cause harm and injury to the victim (Onukwufor, 2013:63). According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:834, 835), hostile aggression can also be referred to as *reactive* aggression and instrumental aggression can be referred to as *proactive* aggression. Reactive aggression takes place when someone has the sole aim of causing harm, whereas proactive aggression is recognised by any behaviour which resulted through the premeditation of reaching a certain goal (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:835).

Warburton and Anderson (2015:374) see physical aggression as involving intentional physical harm to someone. Verbal aggression is harm to someone through the spoken word, whereas social aggression refers to harm done to friendships "verbally or digitally" (Warburton

& Anderson, 2015:374). Withdrawing affection, excluding someone from a group of friends or ignoring someone are examples of social aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:834).

Aggression can also be direct or indirect (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:833; Warburton & Anderson, 2015:373). Direct aggression requires that the victim be “physically present”, whereas indirect aggression such damage to property or social relationships takes place “in the absence of the victim” (Warburton & Anderson, 2015:373).

Aggression can sometimes be seen as antisocial behaviour, “any action that violates personal or cultural standards for appropriate behaviour” (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:17). Wallinius (2012:21), who describes aggression as anti-social behaviour since it is behaviour which is “hostile” and “violat[es] personal and cultural standards”, takes a similar view. DeWall, Anderson and Bushman (2011:245) explain that with the development of society and culture, aggression has become more maladaptive than adaptive. It seems that aggressive antisocial behaviour may be influenced by the surrounding environment, the type of ethnic group and financial status (Wallinius, 2012:21).

Douglas (2008:15) argues that while aggression is antisocial behaviour, altruism can be seen as prosocial behaviour. Altruism is “an act involving some self-sacrifice from the actor that benefits another or others” (Douglas, 2008:14). Douglas (2008:15) explains that a higher degree of altruism is demonstrated between family and friends, but that altruistic behaviour decreases and the possibility of aggression increases when social bonds are not very strong. Staub and Vollhardt (2008:267) argue that aggressive behaviour may breed aggression, but that altruism also can result from being the victim of violence and aggression. Some research has shown those who have experienced suffering or aggression are more likely to exhibit altruism than those who have never experienced any suffering (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008:272).

Aggression can also be associated with negative affect, one the two mood dimensions, positive and negative affect. Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988:1063) describe positive affect as when someone “feels enthusiastic, active and alert” and negative affect as when there is “unpleasurable engagement that subsumes a variety of aversive mood states, like anger”. Glomb and Liao (2003:489) explain that negative affectivity can result in a negative outlook on life and this may cause aggression to increase. Donahue, Goranson, McClure and Van Male (2014:27) add that negative affect may increase the probability that one will resort to physical aggression “when one experiences emotions as overwhelming and has difficulty tolerating distress”. Donhaue *et al.* (2014:27) emphasise that men are more likely to express physical aggression than women, as women are more in touch with their emotions and better

able to control the way they express them. In this research study, I adopted the view taken by Fiske (2014:384) that aggression can be physical, verbal or social (relational).

2.2.2 Aggression and bullying

According to Neto (2005:165), bullying can be defined as “a form of interpersonal power affirmation by means of aggression”. Krahé (2013:154) states that bullying is a form of aggression in which a vulnerable person is usually a victim. It has two features: an “imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim” and that it is behaviour that is “carried out repeatedly” (Krahe, 2013:154). It may manifest itself in a direct form (physical and verbal) or indirect form (social aggression) of aggression (Krahé, 2013:154). Fiske (2014:409) argues that teasing, for instance, is a form of verbal bullying. Krahé (2013:157) warns that there can be long-term consequences of bullying, such as victims experiencing suicidal tendencies or other mental or physical health problems.

2.2.3 Aggression and violence

Krahé (2013:12) states that violence involves behaviour which causes harm to someone. Violence can thus be described as a subset of aggression or a severe type of physical aggression (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:18). Not all types of aggression include violence, but violence always includes aggression (Krahé, 2013:12). Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano (2002:4) define violence as: “[t]he intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation”.

According to DeWall and Anderson (2011:26), violent behaviour follows various “conflict-based interactions”. A cycle of escalated violence is set in motion when an event triggers violent behaviour between two individuals or groups (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:23). The violence escalation cycle (Figure 2.1) continues through several violent activities where one individual or group may see these activities as “appropriate and justified”, but the other individual or group may see them as “inappropriate and exaggerated” (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:23).

DeWall and Anderson (2011:23.24) argue that there are three reasons related to false perceptions why violence escalates: people’s view of their behaviour as appropriate most of the time and the behaviour of another person or group as inappropriate in a certain context or

situation; retaliation violence arising from “perspective biases”; and the perception by some people that their violent actions are “appropriate and justified”. DeWall and Anderson (2011:25) add that people who solve problems or conflict by using violent actions may “turn a situation that involves potentially mild conflict into a severely hostile one” which can cause the violence to escalate.

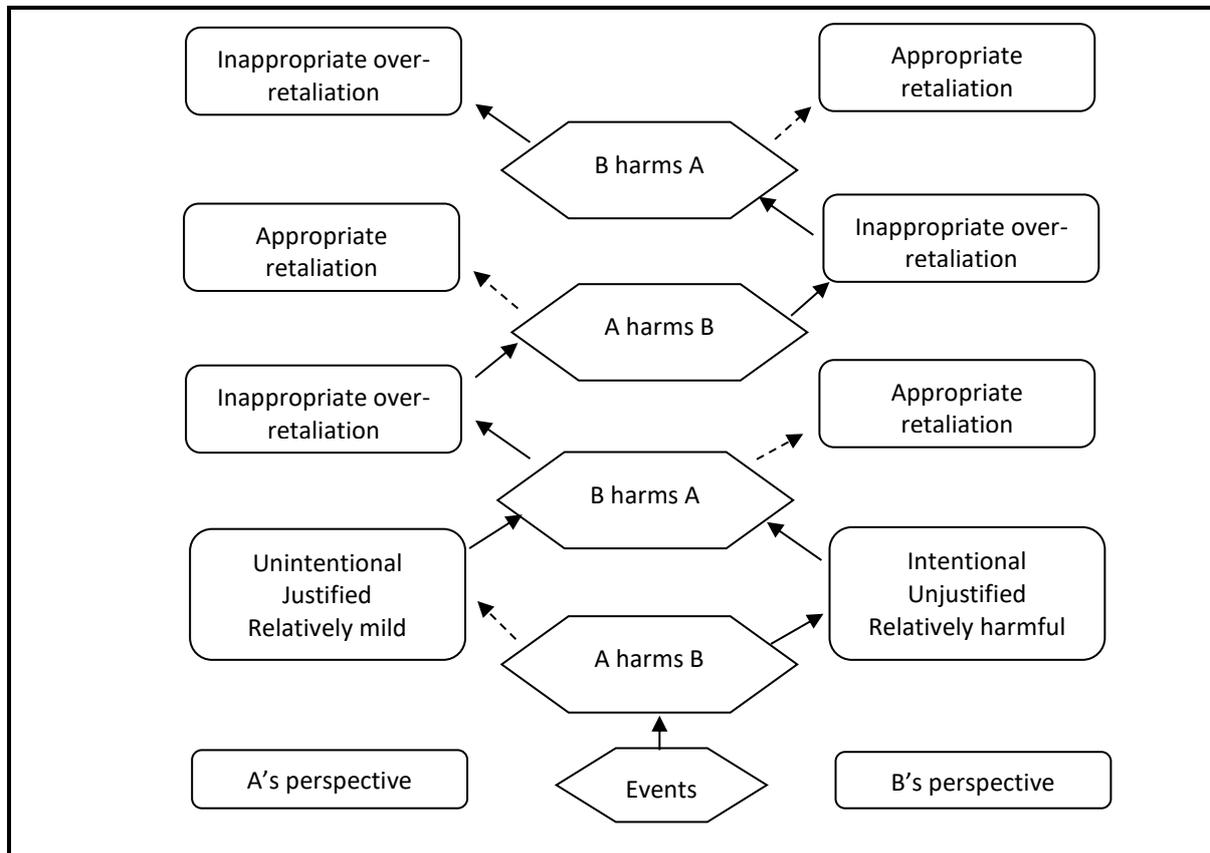


FIGURE 2.1: VIOLENCE ESCALATION CYCLE

2.2.4 Aggression and conflict

Bartos and Wehr (2002:1) state that people gain knowledge about conflict through development that is part of their life span. Medler *et al.* (2008:2) explain that conflict does not always have a negative outcome, but that violence or aggression can be seen as a type of conflict. When communication takes place between two parties who have incompatible goals, it may lead to conflict (Medler *et al.*, 2008:2). Fiske (2014:250) argues that people become involved in conflict because they are competing to achieve a goal which only one person or party can achieve. Bartos and Wehr (2002:15) contend that gaining knowledge about the cause of conflict may help individuals “to understand conflict and [how] to deal with it”. They list the following possible causes of conflict between parties (Bartos & Wehr, 2002:15):

- Incompatible goals
- A high level of solidarity within each party
- Organised for conflict
- Mobilisation of their conflict resources
- Hostility towards each other
- Sufficient material resources.

2.2.5 Aggression and gender

According to Krahe (2013:79) the influence of gender on aggressive behaviour can be identified quite early on, but as children grow older, boys' levels of direct aggression increase, whereas girls are more inclined to exhibit indirect aggression such as social aggression. However, Bushman and Huesmann (2010:837) explain that females may display physical aggression, especially when they are annoyed during social interactions with other females. Archer and Coyne (2005:223) state that the reason girls prefer social aggression is that "girls who spread rumours or exclude others are seen as holding higher power in the social group". Two possible reasons for gender differences in aggression may be: a) girls usually reach maturity faster than boys which help them to develop better skills for self-regulation b) "gender-role" norms may influence girls to view direct aggression as not socially acceptable for them, so they opt for social aggression (Krahe, 2013:80).

2.2.6 Nature of social aggression

Social aggression can be referred to as relational aggression, but social aggression includes "negative facial expressions" whereas relational aggression does not (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:2). Social aggression is the manipulation of acceptance in a group as well as the social status that an individual enjoys in that group (Archer & Coyne, 2005:212). It includes overt and covert forms of aggression as well as negative facial expressions, for example a "dirty look" (Archer & Coyne, 2005:212). Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:331) explain that social aggression can be direct (confrontational) and may include "name-calling and cruel teasing" or indirect (non confrontational) and may include "spreading rumours and gossiping". Therefore, broadly speaking, social aggression can be described as "those types of behaviour that impair relationships" as well as "manipulation that occurs in peer relationships" (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:780). According to You and Bellmore (2014:398) social aggression is usually dependant on the presence of a social group as social aggression takes place when someone gets socially hurt. Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:332) state that a peer group becomes part of

aggression/social aggression by “observing, remaining silent, or actively participating”. It is important to note that bullying can also be viewed as part of social aggression, as a bully can use a social group to indirectly manipulate or harm an individual (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:780). According to Duranovic and Opic (2013:780) the following behaviours characterise a bully that practises social aggression or “anti-social behaviour”:

- Ignoring the victim or giving her the silent treatment
- Mocking the victim’s voice or posture
- Whispering, gossiping, or saying bad things behind the victim’s back
- Writing offensive messages
- Finger pointing, staring, giggling, grimacing or laughing at the victim
- Taking a threatening attitude
- Isolating the victim from social groups, peer groups or games, exclusion from conversation.

In order to gain a better understanding of social aggression, I elaborate on the possible causes and the consequences of social aggression, as well as ways of preventing it.

2.2.7 Causes of social aggression

According to Krahé (2013:89), it is necessary to explore the origin of aggression and social aggression in order to understand why some individuals are more aggressive than others in a particular situation. I therefore explore some possible causes of social aggression.

2.2.7.1 Environment and social aggression

Krahé (2013:90) argues that the environment plays a very important role in triggering aggression. An individual that is exposed to aggressive stimuli, such as violent media and words, is more likely to express aggressive behaviour (Krahé, 2013:91). According to Huesmann, Dubow and Boxer (2011:130), there are various environmental factors that influence aggression, such as “stress, poverty, abuse, parental rejection, peer behaviours, and religion”. Krahé (2013:90) notes that when an individual is in the presence of weapons, aggressive responses are increased as weapons are usually associated with aggression and violence. Subra, Muller, Bègue, Bushman and Delmas (2010:1052) contend that aggression is usually associated with the use of alcohol. However, Krahé (2013) argues that alcohol is not necessarily the cause of aggression. “[I]t is possible that the aggression-promoting effects

of alcohol consumption occur only in the presence of particular features of the situation, such as provocation or prior frustration” (Krahé, 2013:99).

Krahé (2013:109) argues that extremely hot temperatures can cause aggressive behaviour. Anderson (2001:33) explains that “[h]ot temperatures increase aggression by directly increasing feelings of hostility and indirectly increasing aggressive thoughts”. For example, in the United States the murder rate is 2.6% higher in summer than in the other seasons (Anderson, 2001:33). Crowding can also increase aggressive behaviour when an individual’s personal space gets crowded in places such as bars and family homes (Krahé, 2013:114). Krahé (2013:115) adds that men are more likely to express aggression in crowded places because of the restriction of their territory. Research has shown that noise as well as air pollution (cigarette smoke) provokes hostile behaviour especially if an individual is already “in a state of increased readiness for aggressive behaviour” (Krahé, 2013:115).

According to Krahé (2013:39-40) people “with a genetic disposition towards aggression” are more likely to demonstrate antisocial behaviour such as social aggression especially when they have grown up in a negative environment. However, Krahé (2013:39) takes the view that environmental factors have a greater influence on antisocial behaviour than genetics. In similar vein, López, Pérez, Ochoa and Ruiz (2008:433) argue that family as well as school environments have a strong influence on the type of behaviour an individual exhibits. Dhooge (2011:173) supports this view, saying that when a child is aggressively maltreated during childhood he or she is more likely to express aggression in social environments and relationships. The first relationship children develop is with their parents and this relationship influences the social skills they exhibit in a social environment (López *et al.*, 2008:435). Therefore, if they do not develop positive social skills at home, they may become socially aggressive in the school environment. Girls, in particular, “like to be considered as powerful, socially accepted, different and rebellious by their classmates” (López *et al.*, 2008:435). According to Solarz (2008:17), the main cause of social aggression is the desire to gain power and social status in a social group or environment.

2.2.7.2 Frustration and social aggression

Krahé (2013:42) states that the frustration-aggression hypothesis reflects the view that frustration may be the cause of aggression. Krahé (2013:42) explains that “[f]rustration is an external interference with the goal-directed behaviour of the person”. According to Berkowitz (1989:61), frustration usually occurs when an individual sets a goal and is prevented from reaching that goal. Aspects that have an influence on aggression are: a) how desperate an

individual is to achieve his or her goals; b) how great the obstacle is that is preventing an individual from achieving his or her goals; c) how many times there are frustrating responses (Berkowitz, 1989:61). However, Krahe (2013:42) explains that frustration does not always lead to aggression as some individuals choose not to engage in aggressive behaviour or acts. Frustration can also lead to aggression that is displaced from the provocation onto another target: the “fear of punishment for overt aggression or unavailability of the frustrator are factors that may inhibit aggression following a frustration” (Krahe, 2013:42).

According to Ojanen, Findley and Fuller (2012:100) frustration is more likely be expressed through social aggression at an older age, whereas physical aggression is usually exhibited at a younger age. Ojanen *et al.* (2012:105) state that adolescents are more likely to “channel frustration into covert rather than overt aggression” such as social aggression. Individuals who are easily frustrated are also more likely to engage in social aggression when they become frustrated or angry (Ojanen *et al.*, 2012:101).

2.2.7.3 Socialisation and social aggression

According to Krahe (2013:247), social groups “may become involved in violent conflict because they compete for resources, such as power or material profit that only one party can obtain”. Ostrov *et al.* (2006:243) explain that antisocial behaviour such as social aggression may develop at home where children learn certain types of behaviour and relationship styles and apply what they have learned at home in the school environment, especially in their friendships. Social aggression is promoted by media that present it as the way mostly women interact in their “peer groups” (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2013:331). Such antisocial behaviour can thus come to be viewed by women as the norm (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2013:331).

Sijtsema, Ojanen, Veenstra, Lidenberg, Hawley and Little (2010:516) explain that social aggression can be related to individuals who have a reputation for popularity in their social groups, but they are not liked by their peers. This results their being rejected. Indirect forms of aggression such as social aggression can also be seen as an alternative form of aggression that is adopted because direct aggression is not acceptable behaviour in certain social groups (Archer & Coyne, 2005:220). Archer and Coyne (2005:220) add that a requirement for social aggression to take place is “that there are the social networks in place that would enable a person to advance their social standing at the expense of another person or people by manipulating their social position and reputation”. However, an individual can only demonstrate social aggression when he or she actually has the social skills to manipulate a social group (Archer & Coyne, 2005:221). Duranovic and Opic (2013:784) explain that as

children grow up their language skills develop, making it possible to manipulate a social group. Accordingly, children gradually replace direct aggression with indirect aggression.

2.2.7.4 Gender and social aggression

As was discussed in Chapter One, females are more socially aggressive than males. Artz, Kassis and Moldenhauer (2013:308) contend that recent research provides evidence that males demonstrate more indirect aggression than females. It seems that the “mean girl myth” has been exploded (Artz *et al.*, 2013:322). “Boys use more indirect aggression against boys than girls do against girls and girls reported far higher levels of indirect aggression against boys than boys reported using against girls” (Artz *et al.*, 2013:323). It seems that if interventions are implemented to reduce the amount of indirect aggression among boys, direct aggression between boys may be reduced, eventually reducing indirect and direct aggression among girls (Artz *et al.*, 2013:323).

2.2.8 The consequences of social aggression

According to Toth, Harris, Goodman and Cicchetti (2011:351), the presence of aggression during childhood may cause the problems in the “recognition, expression and understanding of emotions”. Therefore, children who were maltreated tend to be more aggressively reactive than children who were not (Toth *et al.*, 2011:354). Toth *et al.* (2011:356, 357) add that maltreated children may develop depression, personality problems, insecurity and mental health problems. The consequences of aggression can be direct or long term. The direct effects of aggression are usually “feelings of irritations, anger, anxiety, helplessness, depression, discouragement, feelings of guilt, and decreased self-esteem” (Merecz *et al.*, 2009:244). The long-term effects may be the separation of “social and professional life”, damage to the relationships in the work environment, a decrease in motivation and an increase in interpersonal conflict (Merecz *et al.*, 2009:244).

According to Archer and Coyne (2005:223-224) indirect aggression, such as social aggression, may cause psychological harm and even lead to suicide. This may be an indication of the connection between the “social exclusion” in a group and “suicide” (Archer & Coyne, 2005:224). Archer and Coyne (2005:224) add that girls who are exposed to “indirect bullying” may become self-destructive through the abuse of substances. Field, Crothers and Kolbert (2006:6) argue that if females are continually exposed to social aggression, their development may be affected and social aggression may continue because of their

“maladaptive interpersonal skills”. You and Bellmore (2014:399) explain that the continued exposure to any type of aggression can make individuals see it in a less negative light and they may even start to exhibit that type of aggression. A few negative consequences of social aggression are: “peer rejection, antisocial behaviour, egocentricity, identity problems, and self-harm behaviour, lower overall life satisfaction [and] depression” (Archer & Coyne, 2005:225). However, someone who uses more subtle forms of social aggression may be more socially acceptable (Archer & Coyne, 2005:225). This may give the perpetrator a seemingly higher social status, whereas someone who uses more obvious methods may be rejected or and excluded from a social group.

2.2.9 Prevention of social aggression

Bushman and Huesmann (2010:852) state that because aggression is not usually caused by just one stimulus, it is difficult to construct interventions that effectively reduce aggressive behaviour. However, a few guidelines can be provided to reduce or prevent aggression. According to Krahe (2013:290), since aggression may be seen as a response to aggressive stimuli in the environment, it can be reduced by limiting these stimuli. Krahe (2013:290) adds that prevention of aggression at societal level requires eliminating any possibility of aggressive behaviour in a society as well as in the surrounding environment. “The law [can be] used to enforce adherence to social norms, not only by punishing individual lawbreakers, but also by deterring future perpetrators from committing acts of aggression” (Krahe, 2013:291).

Bushman and Huesmann (2010:854) state that the reduction of aggression can be done in two ways: reducing proactive aggression and reducing reactive aggression. According to Rhee and Waldman (2011:151), proactive aggression is “premeditated” and “less emotional”, whereas reactive aggression can be described as “impulsive anger, a response to frustration or perceived threat”. In order to reduce proactive aggression, an individual must be taught that there are more effective ways to reach a goal through nonaggressive behaviour, in other words “behaviour modification” needs to take place (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:854). Bushman and Huesmann (2010:855) advise using “relaxation and cognitive-behavioural techniques” to reduce reactive aggression. This includes the relaxing by means of deep breathing and visualization after the provocation has occurred, as well as using “cognitive-based treatments” to analyse how “an event is appraised or interpreted” (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:855).

As yet there is inadequate research on the prevention and reduction of social aggression. As one of the aims of this research study was to provide suggestions on how to reduce social aggression in residences, participants were invited to offer suggestion during this research.

These suggestions are presented in Chapter Five. Young, Boye and Nelson (2006:307) state that “[w]ithout intervention, future behaviour and relationship problems may arise for youth who, on the surface, appear to be thriving socially”. In order to reduce social aggression, you need to identify the type of behaviour that increases social aggression and to replace that type of behaviour with more positive behaviour (Young, Boye & Nelson, 2006:307).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:37), a theory can be explained as “an attempt to explain and/or predict a particular phenomenon. Theories can also be applied to provide explanations or predictions about phenomena (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:38). The next section highlights relevant theories which were explored in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, social aggression.

2.3.1 Social learning theory

Denson (2011:111) states that aggressive behaviour may be socially learned through observation as well as through the exposure to violent media. Shaver and Mikulincer (2011:4) state that the social learning theory “proposes that people develop aggressive behaviour when they observe other behaving aggressively, particularly if the others are likable, have high social status, or are rewarded for their aggressive behaviour”. Smith and Berge (2009:439) explain that people may learn to behave in a certain way by observing others, especially if they are positive towards the observed behaviour. As Fiske (2014:396) puts it, the social learning theory “address[es] understanding how and when to aggress, giving both actions and consequences”. A particular behaviour may develop through “modelling, vicarious conditioning or observational learning” (Fiske, 2014:396). Therefore when female students are exposed to social aggression in their residence, they are more likely to engage in it, for example, by spreading rumours about each other.

2.3.2 Social cognitive theory

Fiske (2014:126) states that social cognitive theory involves the process when people make sense (processing information) of their perspectives about other people, social situations and also about themselves. This process usually takes place through social interaction (Fiske, 2014:127). Krahe (2013:50) adds that the way people process information determines how

aggressively they will react in a certain situation. According to Bandura (2002:269), the social cognitive theory “adopts an agentic perspective to human development, adaption and change”. In this context, an agent can be described as someone that may be the reason for changes in someone else’s life or situation (Bandura, 2002:270). There are three different types of agency: “personal agency exercised individually; proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and collective agency when people act in concert to shape their future” (Bandura, 2002:269). Most people need a combination of these different agencies in order to reach their goals as they can only be achieved through social interdependence (Bandura, 2002:270). Therefore particular individuals may be socially aggressive in a certain context, because they have acquired the knowledge and skills during social interactions to enable them to increase their own power and or social status.

2.3.3 Bio-ecological systems theory

According to Krishnan (2010:5), Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory indicates that “development cannot be explored or explained by any one single concept, but by a more multidimensional and complex system”. This means that an individual’s development depends on the interaction between the individual and the surrounding systems (levels of society) (Smith, 2011:2). There are four components of Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory: *process*, *person*, *context* and *time* (Krishnan, 2010:6; Smith, 2011:3; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009:200-201).

According to Krishnan (2010:6), the *process* or *proximal process* can be described as the interactions between an individual and the surrounding environment that promote an individual’s development. Bronfenbrenner (1994:38) terms the interactions between a human being and the immediate surroundings (environment) as *proximal processes*. Smith (2011:3) stresses that continuous development means “proximal processes need to be reciprocal, progressively complex, and occur regularly over an extended period of time”. The proximal processes can be seen as the fundamental and most important part of Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory (Tudge *et al.*, 2009:200).

Krishnan (2010:6) explains that an individual’s interaction with the surrounding environment and development are mainly influenced by his or her (personal) characteristics. Tudge *et al.* (2009:200) state that Bronfenbrenner divides personal characteristics into three groups: *demand*, *resource* and *force*. Demand characteristics are an “immediate stimulus to another person, such as age, gender skin colour and physical appearance” (Tudge *et al.*,

2009:200). Resource characteristics are those characteristics that are not always very apparent, but are the “mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills and intelligence” (Tudge *et al.*, 2009:200). The third group, the force characteristics, are the “differences of temperament, motivation, persistence and the like” (Tudge *et al.*, 2009:201). Therefore an individual has an important role to play in his or her own development.

According to Krishnan (2010:7), the *context* refers to the environment with which an individual is constantly interacting. The context is divided into four systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Krishnan, 2010:7; Tudge *et al.*, 2009:201; Bronfenbrenner, 1994:36). The microsystem includes family, friends, peers and education institutions with which a person has the most immediate interaction and to which he or she is also closest (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39; Krishnan, 2010:7). The mesosystem “focuses on the connections between two or more systems, essentially microsystems, such as home, playmate settings [and] school” (Krishnan, 2010:8). Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) describes the mesosystem as the interaction between different microsystems. According to Tudge *et al.* (2009:201), the exosystem can be seen as a system that has an indirect influence on an individual, but it also plays an important role in his or her development. Krishnan (2010:7) adds that the exosystem includes the micro- and mesosystem and therefore it may influence everyone that has any interaction with the individual in question. The mesosystem has an influence on all the other system and is also influenced by the other systems (Tudge *et al.*, 2009:201). The mesosystem comprises “cultural characteristics, political upheaval, or economic disruption, all of which can solely or collectively shape development” (Krishnan, 2010:8). Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) has added a fifth component, the chronosystem, which indicates any changes that may occur over time not only in the individual, but also in the environment.

Time has a strong influence on the individual’s development, and may include “chronological age, duration and nature of periodicity” (Krishnan, 2010:9). Time helps an individual to process the impact of an event, because as time goes by the impact decreases (Krishnan, 2010:9). Tudge *et al.* (2009:201) notes that some phases of development occur a lot faster than others.

As indicated, an individual’s development is shaped by the interaction between the individual and his or her surrounding systems. If an individual is constantly interacting with a environment of social aggression, then that individual’s behaviour will be influenced by it in the course of time.

2.3.4 Gender schema theory

Chung (2009:51) emphasises that “[c]ognition consists of hypothetical constructs called schemata (singular schema)”. He explains that schemata can be seen as a network of information that a person has built up about the surrounding environment and the people in it (Chung, 2009:51). Bussey and Bandura (1999:4) state that once an individual has gained information about gender and what it entails, gender identification can take place which leads to gender stability when an individual realise that his or her gender “remains the same over time”. Bussey and Bandura (1999:5) also explain that when gender schemata have been established, children are expected to behave according to the “traditional roles” of males and females.

According to Chung (2009:52), once someone “internalises the society’s gender schema”, he or she can form his or her own perceptions of and associations with gender. By the age of five, children can make the associations with gender that the society they live in does. This includes certain roles, behaviour and items that are believed to belong only to males or females (Chung, 2009:53). Martin, Ruble and Szkrybalo (2002:911) add that people sometimes want to live in “accordance with gender norms as a means of defining themselves and attaining cognitive consistency”. Bussey and Bandura (1999:5) see gender labelling as the probable reason that motivates individuals to exhibit “gender-linked” behaviour. Bussey and Bandura (1999:5,6) explain that the environment and circumstances also influence the type of behaviour exhibited, not only the information that someone has on gender-linked behaviour. Therefore the gender-liked behaviour and preferences of a male or female are not only a matter of complying with gender norms or stereotyping, but is also of being influenced by the surrounding environment.

2.3.5 Conflict theory

According to Medler *et al.* (2008:1), conflict theory “is a collection of multiple theories from different fields including sociology, psychology, and economics that attempts to understand how humans begin, maintain, and end conflict”. As mentioned in Chapter One (section 1.7.3), conflict theory is divided into three systems of “stratification”, power, class and status, with power seen as the core of the conflict theory (Coser *et al.*, 2006:213). Coser *et al.* (2006:223) defines power as “something that can be exercised at any moment in all social relations and depends mostly on the personalities of the individual involved”. Authority also intersects with power and it involves the social status or position of someone (Coser *et al.*, 2006:224). Therefore female students may sometimes use the power they have to protect their own social

status by breaking down another female student's social standing in the residence. In other words, female students who have high status in their residence can more easily abuse female students whose status is lower to reach their desired goals. As Solarz (2008:17) emphasises, the aim of social aggression is to gain power and social status through tools like gossip and rumour.

2.3.6 Conformity theory

According to Knafo, Daniel and Khoury-Kassabri (2008:654), conformity can be defined as "limiting actions and urges that might violate social expectations and norms". Fiske (2014:521) explains that conformity takes place when the behaviour of an individual changes according to the preference of a group and as a result of "social interaction". Sometimes a false consensus effect or social projection takes place (Fiske, 2014:525-526). False consensus effect is when an individual agrees or disagrees with something because he or she thinks that someone else will also share that decision (Fiske, 2014:525). Social projection happens when an individual thinks that his or her opinion about something will be supported by most of the people around them (Fiske, 2014:526).

Cialdini and Goldstein (2004:606) aver that two conformity motivations can be distinguished: informational and normative. An informational motivation is "the desire to form an accurate interpretation of reality and behave correctly", while normative motivation is driven by the desire for "social approval from others" (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004:606). For instance, an individual will sometimes aim to conform to his or her authorities' opinion or preference in order to gain approval (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004:606). This kind of conformity can take place automatically or be a conscious action (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004:609). Fiske (2014:525) provides the example of automatic conformity when friends aim to be like one another. In a residence context, female students may conform to social aggressive behaviour, for example gossiping or spreading rumours, just to be part of a certain group or to gain approval from a certain group.

2.3.7 The General Aggression Model (GAM)

The GAM (General Aggression Model) provides a way of gaining a better understanding of aggression and violence (Anderson & Bushman, 2002:33; DeWall & Anderson, 2011:8). Warburton and Anderson (2015:375) add that the GAM model is the "broadest theory of aggression processes to date". The GAM "integrates mini theories of aggression into a single

conceptual framework” and provides a better explanation of aggression as it has “multiple motives” (DeWall, Anderson & Bushman, 2011:246). As Fiske (2014:383) explains, an aggressive act can be influenced by multiple motives and so it is difficult to determine the “primary intent”. The GAM focuses on how knowledge structures can be used in “perception, interpretation, decision making and action” (Anderson & Bushman, 2002:33). These knowledge structures, which are developed through personal experiences, can assist a person to decide how to respond to threats or provocations that are linked to aggression; what the benefits and disadvantages of different behavioural actions towards a target or provoker are; and who can be seen as a threat and who not (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:19).

Diagram 2.2 illustrates the General Aggression Model which consists of three stages within one “episodic cycle of aggression” which means distinct, chronological episodes of aggressive behaviour: *a)* person and situation inputs; *b)* present internal states; *c)* outcomes of appraisal and decision-making processes (DeWall *et al.*, 2011:246). In the first stage, a person and situation inputs can be viewed as the immediate force behind an aggressive act (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:20). A few situational aspects that can cause aggression are: “provocation, exposure to weapons, a hot environment, unpleasant odors; loud noises, violent media and physical pain” (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:20). Personal aspects such as: “beliefs; attitudes; values; sex and traits” may lead people to behave aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2002:35-36; DeWall & Anderson, 2011:20).

In the second stage, the person and situation inputs will “influence the person’s internal state” (Warburton & Anderson, 2015:375). Internal states can be described as abstract internal “constructs”; therefore they are not easily identifiable (Dhooge, 2011:13). According to DeWall and Anderson (2011:21), affect, cognition and arousal are three of the main internal states. Warburton and Anderson (2015:376) explain that an individual may have the impulse to react aggressively in a certain situation, but whether or not he or she does depends on his or her knowledge structures and the level of provocation (arousal). Furthermore, “a person may act on this impulse, but if they have the time and cognitive resources to do so, and if the immediate response is undesirable, a period of appraisal and reappraisal will follow” (Warburton & Anderson, 2015:376).

In the third stage, the appraisal (act of judging) and decision making processes can take place automatically or can be controlled by the individual (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:21). An automatic appraisal and decision process can be referred to as *immediate appraisal* and the more controlled processes as *reappraisal* (DeWall & Anderson, 2011:21). According to DeWall and Anderson (2011:21), an immediate appraisal includes “fear and anger-related affect, goals related to aggression and the formation of intentions to carry out aggression-related

acts". Reappraisal includes an individual's search for alternatives as well as the process of considering and discarding alternatives (Anderson & Bushman, 2002:41). Anderson and Bushman (2002:41) explain that if any actions evolve out of reappraisal they may be considered to be thoughtful actions. The decision that an individual makes at the end of stage three will determine the final actions of the episodic cycle as it will also influence any social encounter with other individuals (Anderson & Bushman, 2002:40). Therefore the person and situation aspects (stage 1) influence the internal states (stage 2), which in turn influence the appraisal and decision process (stage 3).

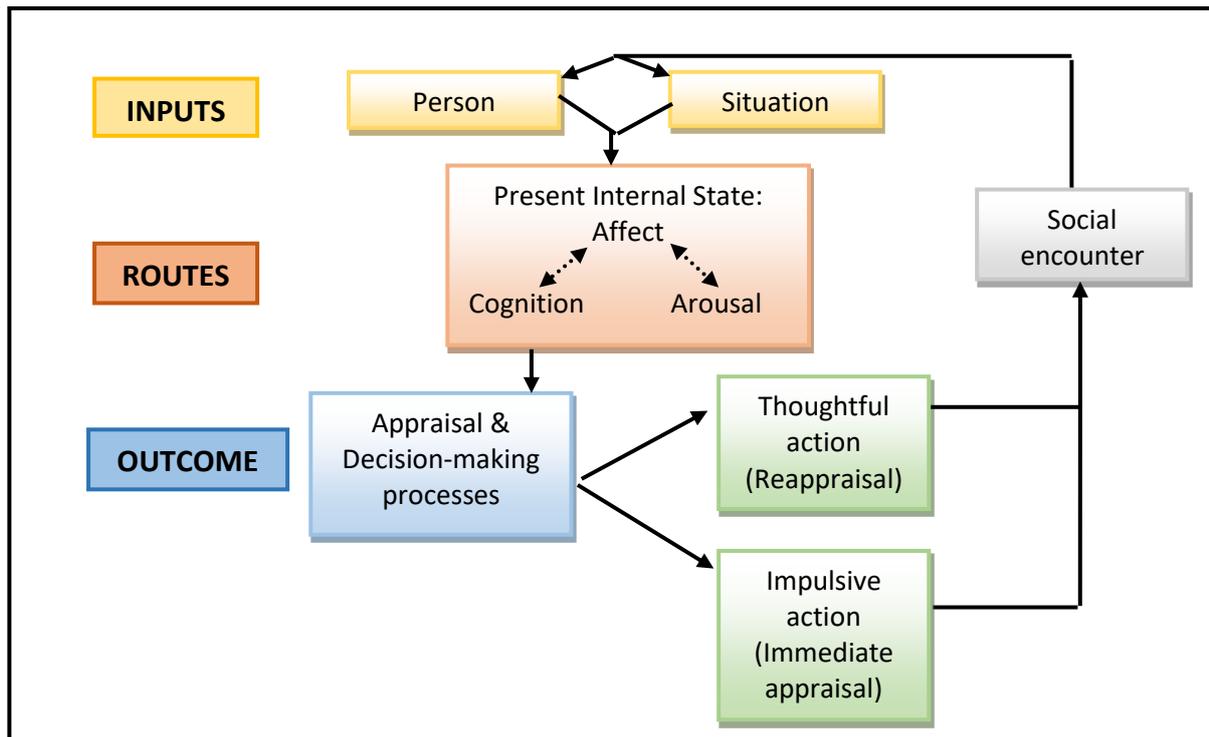


DIAGRAM 2.2 GENERAL AGGRESSION MODEL (Adapted from Anderson & Bushman, 2002:246).

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter described the conceptual and theoretical framework which informed this research study. The literature enabled me to gain a better understanding of social aggression, as well as of the related concepts and the relationship between relevant concepts, and the theories that provide possible explanations of the phenomenon of social aggression and why people resort to it. The next chapter describes the research design and methodology which were used to conduct this empirical study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the course of this study. This includes the research paradigm, research design and research methodology, sampling strategies, methods of data generation and analysis; measures to ensure trustworthiness and meet the requirements of ethical research; and my role as researcher during this study. Diagram 3.1 illustrates the research design.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007b:47), a paradigm can be described as “a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view”. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000:175) see a research paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. For De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2011:513), a paradigm is a worldview or framework that is constructed through people’s perceptions about the world and reality, which guides the researcher through the research process.

Interpretivist research studies endeavour to understand the phenomenon better “through the meanings that people assign to [it]” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:59). Wahyuni (2012:71) describes interpretivism as a process in which “individuals with their own varied backgrounds, assumptions and experiences contribute to the on-going construction of reality existing in their broader social context through social interaction”.

This research study was guided by the interpretivism paradigm, which allowed me not only to explore social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences, but also to make meaning of the participants’ experiences of social aggressive behaviour. This was important in order to understand this destructive or anti-social behaviour and ultimately to address one of the research aims of providing suggestions to female residents that could change female students’ social aggressive behaviour. I chose to interact socially with the research participants using individual interviews and photo-elicitation-interviews to elicit accounts of the participants lived experiences and the meanings they attached to them. My aim was to gain as complete an understanding of the phenomenon of social aggression as possible.

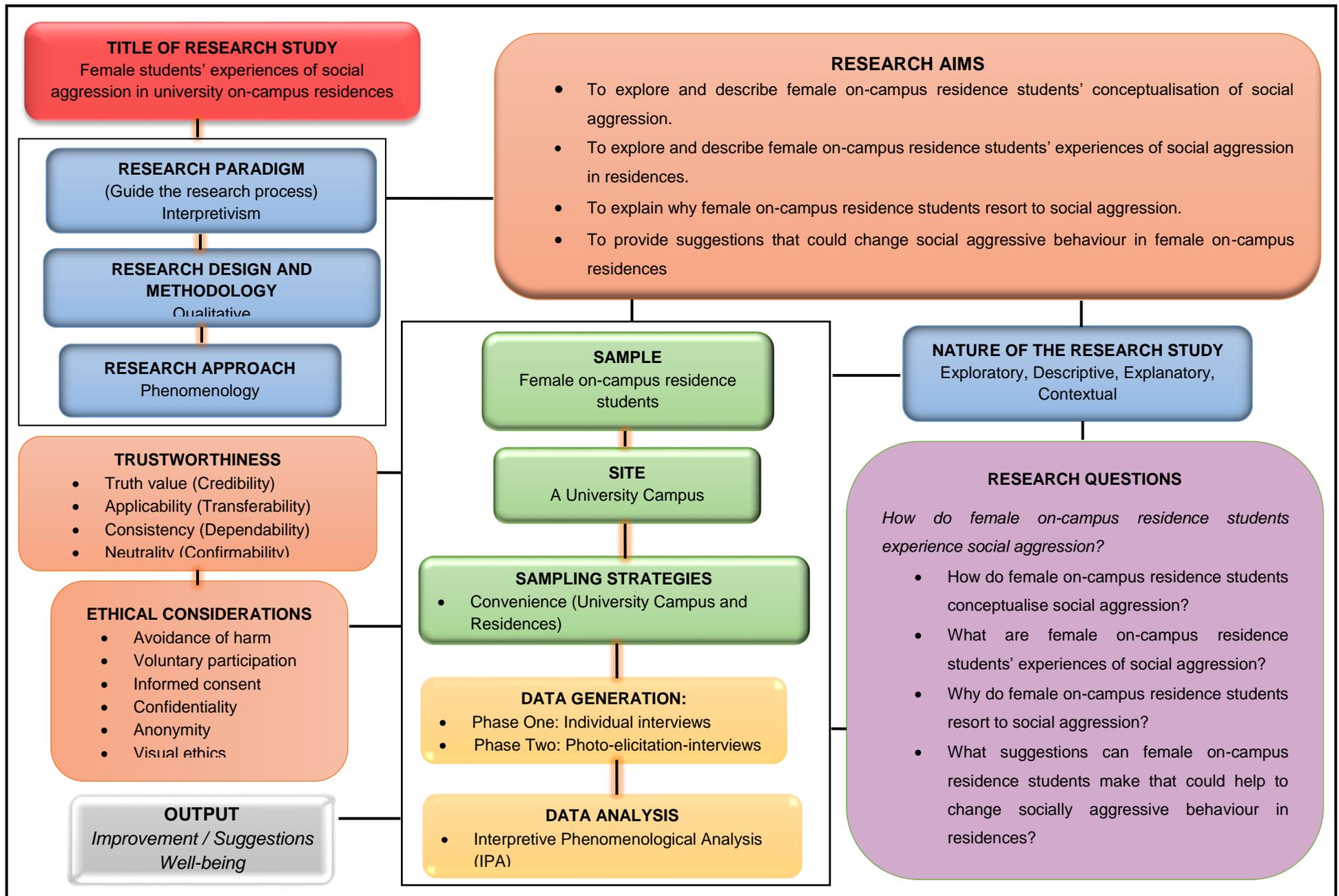


DIAGRAM 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001:3), paradigmatic assumptions, such as ontology, epistemology and methodology, are important as they influence how we see the world and our understanding of the world. According to Crotty (2003:3), ontology can be defined as “the study of being” and epistemology is “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know”. Methodology can be described as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 2003:3). The ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm I adopted in this study are outlined in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 INTERPRETIVISM

Interpretivist paradigm	
Ontology <i>(What is the nature of reality?)</i>	I assumed that the female university students live in a world in which reality is constructed through human interaction.
Epistemology <i>(How do we know the world?)</i>	I constructed meanings (knowledge) about the phenomenon through the interpretation of the participants’ experience by means of individual interviews and photo-elicitation-interviews.
Methodology <i>(How do we gain knowledge about the world?)</i>	The methodology used in this research study was a phenomenological approach which explored the participants’ lived experiences of a particular phenomenon.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (2009:3), a research design is the “plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis”. Van Wyk (2012:4) defines a research design more simply as the plan showing the methods that are going to be used in order to answer the research questions. Silverman (2012:36) explains that the methodology indicates the approach that the researcher uses to study the research phenomenon, whereas methods are “specific research techniques” that the researcher uses to collect and analyse the required data.

According to Mouton (2001:55), a research design can be described as “a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research”. Similarly, Nieuwenhuis (2007a:70)

describes a research design as a “plan or strategy” used to determine how participants will be selected and what methods of data gathering and data analysis are going to be used. According to Creswell (2009:3), there are three types of research designs: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. He adds that there are three components in a research design, namely philosophy (worldview), strategies of inquiry and research methods (Creswell, 2009:4).

For the purpose of this research study, a qualitative research design was chosen. My aim was to “explore and understand” the phenomenon, social aggression, by purposefully choosing participants who had the most experience of the phenomenon (Ivankova, Creswell & Clark, 2007:265). Merriam (2002:11) argues that a research design for qualitative research entails “shaping a problem for [a qualitative] of study, selecting a sample, collecting and analysing data and writing up the findings”. Arolker and Seale (2012:587) add that qualitative research may include non-numerical data, like interviews, photographs and field notes. The selection of a research design is also influenced by the researcher’s approach to research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:70). Qualitative research “focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:50). I decided to use a phenomenological approach. As already stated, the paradigm used in this research study was interpretivism, where individuals (participants) give meaning to something (a phenomenon) through their experiences. The nature of this qualitative study was explorative, descriptive, explanatory and contextual (section 3.3.2).

3.3.1 Research approach

Research methodology is a “systematic way to solve a problem” (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013:5). According to Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:5), a research methodology can also be explained as the ways or techniques a researcher uses to determine how knowledge will be gained about the phenomenon and how the research processes will be carried out.

In the context and purpose of this study I adopted a phenomenological approach to research in order to fully explore, describe and explain social aggression of female students who reside in on-campus residences. According to Griffin and May (2012:442), phenomenology “seeks to understand what it is like for an individual to experience at first hand the phenomena of the world”. Phenomenology can also be described as idiographic which means that experiences of the phenomenon must be explained just as they are (subjective) and not be generalised explanations of the phenomenon (objective) (Griffin & May, 2012:448). According to Kafle (2011:185), phenomenology can be categorised into three different schools

of knowledge: Transcendental phenomenology, Hermeneutic phenomenology, and Existential phenomenology. For the purpose of this study a hermeneutic phenomenology approach was adopted as it focuses on the “subjective experience of individuals and groups” (Kafle, 2011:186).

I chose a phenomenological research approach because it is underscored by “attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation” (Delport, Fouché & Schurink, 2011:305). To sum up, this study followed a phenomenological approach aimed at providing a dense and accurate description of the participants’ lived experiences about social aggression whilst remaining “true to the facts” (Groenewald, 2004:5).

3.3.2 Nature and purpose of qualitative research

A research study can also be classified by its purpose or nature. In this case, the study was exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and contextual in nature.

- Exploratory

An *exploratory* study asks questions about the phenomenon in order to gather more information (Gray, 2009:36). Burns and Grove (2001:374) explain that exploratory research aims to gain new knowledge and ideas about the phenomenon when little is known about a specific phenomenon or a phenomenon in a specific context. Marlow (2005:334) explains that exploratory research is “a form of research that generates initial insights into the nature of an issue and develops questions to be investigated by more extensive studies”. Although exploratory research does not provide sufficient and “conclusive” answers to research questions, it can provide an indication of what the answers may be (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:41). The exploration was guided by the main research question as well as the subsidiary questions.

- Descriptive

Gray (2009:36) states that research of a *descriptive* nature “provide[s] a picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs”. According to Rubin and Babbie (2010:42), the descriptive nature of a qualitative study includes a more in-depth research or “examination” of the phenomenon in order to have a better understanding of the meanings attached to it. The aim of descriptive research studies is thus to provide “rich details about [the participants’] environments, interactions, meanings and everyday lives” (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:42). Glicken

(2003:15) emphasises that although information about a research phenomenon already exists, a descriptive research study enables the researcher to provide additional information on the phenomenon. In this case, the research provided a detailed description of the participants' experiences and their interpretation of their lived experiences of the phenomenon of social aggression.

- Explanatory

In *explanatory* research, a description of the phenomenon is provided by asking “why” and “how” questions (Gray, 2009:36). According to Fouche and De Vos (2011:96), the aim of explanatory research is to explain “why things are the way they are”. The explanations include the “causes of events” as well as the factors that influenced the causes (Blaikie, 2000:75). Therefore the researcher may use probing questions to arrive at explanations of the phenomenon (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:42). Strydom (2013:155) notes that the explanatory research “builds on exploratory and descriptive purposes, and goes beyond focusing on a description of a topic or providing a picture of it”. One of my research aims was to explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggressive behaviour by using individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews.

- Contextual

Holloway and Wheeler (2002:34) state that context includes the “environment and conditions in which the study takes place as well as the culture of the participants and location”. This research study was *contextual* in nature in that it focused on the social aggressive behaviour of female on-campus students in a specific context, namely on-campus residences in a university environment. To improve the well-being of female students, a change in the destructive behaviour of female on-campus residents in a university environment (context) is necessary. Suggestions are provided that could help female students reduce social aggression in the specific context of residences.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Site, sample and sampling strategy

According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007:34), it is important for the selected site to be appropriate and conducive to the research carried out by the researcher. After the selection of a suitable site where the research takes place, the researcher needs to seek permission to conduct the research at the site with the selected participants (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007:34).

- **Selection of the site**

The site that was selected for this research study was the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus, South Africa. The reason was convenience. It was possible to “draw samples that [were] both easily accessible and willing to participate in a study” (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:78). Secondly, this site was selected because of the various negative public reports on students’ destructive behaviour at this specific university.

In order to conduct this research I obtained the consent of various stakeholders: the Dean of Students (Addendum A); Chairperson of the Student Representative Council (Addendum B); the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences (Addendum C); the Primaria of each of the on-campus female residences (Addendum D); as well as female students in on-campus residences (Addendum E).

- **Selection of the on-campus residences and the participants**

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007a:79), sampling is when the researcher selects a few participants from a society or community in order to gather relevant data. In qualitative research there are different types of sampling. Taking my research design and aims into consideration, I chose to use purposive sampling to select the female on-campus residences as well as the female student participants. Purposive sampling means that the “participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:79). I purposively selected all eleven female on-campus residences as all these residences are on the North-West University Potchefstroom campus in which female students reside. These residences are all coming from the same or similar context. A purposive sampling strategy was also used in order to select female students from female on-campus residences to voluntarily participate in the data generation process,

which involved individual interviews followed by photo-elicitation-interviews. Through the Primaria (Chairperson of the House Committee) of each of the female on-campus residences, I invited all the residences to participate voluntarily using an information letter (Addendum F) that was distributed to all residents at 11 female on-campus residences. This information letter contained general information about the research study. My contact details were provided to the participants so they could contact me if they were willing to take part voluntarily in the research. The sample size could not be determined beforehand. That was not important because my aim was data saturation. In qualitative research data generation needs to proceed until sufficient, rich data are generated. I therefore accommodated all female on-campus residents who were willing to participate. The following selection criteria were used to select the female participants purposefully for this research study:

- Students registered at the North-West University
- Female residents in any of the female on-campus residences on the NWU campus
- Students who had experienced social aggression themselves; or were aware of social aggression; or who knew about social aggression among the students in their residences.

3.4.2 Data generation

Data generation entails using theories and methods “to create data from a sampled data source in a qualitative study” (Given, 2008:192). The selected data generation methods for this research study included individual interviews followed up by photo-elicitation-interviews. An individual interview is the process in which an individual is interviewed “to gain a detailed picture of a participant’s belief about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic” (Greeff, 2011:351). Greeff (2011:342) emphasises that the participants who are interviewed must not only provide an explanation of their experiences, but also reflect on their explanations. Kvale (in Sewell 2001:1) explain qualitative interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the participant’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, [and] to uncover their world prior to scientific explanations”.

According to Harper (2002:13), photo-elicitation entails the use of a photograph/s that is/are presented by the participants during an interview. In the context of this study, the photographs were used during face-to-face individual photo-elicitation-interviews in order to elicit discussion on the phenomenon social aggression. Harper (2002:13) states that “the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information”. Therefore the photographs that were presented by the participants during

the individual photo-elicitation-interviews enabled the participants to provide a variety of information on the topic as well as their lived experiences (Harper, 2002:13).

3.4.2.1 Data generation process

The data generation process consisted of two phases: Phase One (individual interviews) and Phase Two (individual photo-elicitation-interviews):

- *Phase One: Individual interviews*

The following processes were followed during the individual interviews:

- During this individual interview session, I explained the purpose and aims of this research study as well as what the data generation processes entailed. I then explained what the photo-elicitation-interview phase, a visual data generation method, would entail as.
- Ethical issues such as the participants' anonymity, confidentiality and their voluntary participation were carefully explained before I asked them to sign the consent forms if they were willing to participate (Addendum E). I stressed that they were under no obligation to participate.

I then commenced the first phase of the data generation process, individual interviews with those who had signed the consent forms. I requested the participants' permission before audio-recording the interviews. These recordings were later transcribed (Addendum H: Transcriber) so the data could be analysed. I reiterated that participation was voluntary so that the participants understood clearly that they were free to withdraw at any stage during the data generation process without any penalty.

- I posed these two questions to the participants during the individual interviews: "*How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?*" and "*What are your experiences of social aggression in your residence?*"

After the individual interviews I discussed the second phase of the data generation process that required the participants to take five photographs. As photographs are viewed as visual material, I also explained to the participants what visual ethics demand, making it clear what they needed to consider when taking photographs in their surroundings as well as how to take

photographs (Mitchell, 2011:15-32). The participants were instructed to take photographs only of objects with no identifiable information and that they could not take any photographs of their co-residents or other people that would make it possible to identify them (see visual ethics section 3.6).

The following photo-elicitation prompt was posed to each participant: *“Do you experience social aggression in residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence”*. The participants were then asked to use their cell phone camera or a disposable camera to take five photographs that best depicted their experiences of social aggression in their residences. I allowed ample time for the participants to take their five photographs. I gave the participants the option to either print their own photographs or to send their photographs to me by means of MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service), email or through any Smart Phone Application. I printed the photographs that participants opted to send me by means of MMS, e-mail or through a Smart Phone Application. I then scheduled a follow up appointment with each participant to resume the data generation process. This entailed individual photo-elicitation-interviews.

- *Phase Two: Individual Photo-elicitation-interviews*

In this phase the photographs that were taken in the first phase were brought to the individual photo-elicitation-interview by either the participant or the researcher to be used as visual material during the photo-elicitation-interview (Mitchell, 2008:369). All the photo-elicitation-interviews were audio recorded with the written consent (permission) of each participant (Addendum E). This was important because the photo-elicitation-interviews had to be transcribed for data analysis purposes. The following processes were followed during the individual photo-elicitation-interviews.

- Each participant was asked to provide a caption for each of the five photographs. She was then given the following prompts: *“Explain each of the captions that you provided for the photographs”* and *“How do the captions reflect your experience of social aggression in the residence?”*
- Each participant was then asked to choose one photograph that she thought best depicted her lived experience of social aggression in her on-campus residence and to provide reasons for choosing this specific photograph. The following question was then directed to each participant: *“What is depicted in this chosen photograph that the others do not?”*

At the end of the individual photo-elicitation-interviews, these questions were posed to the participant: *“Why do you think residence students resort to social aggression?”* and *“What suggestions can female on-campus residence students make that could help to change socially aggressive behaviour in residences?”*

3.4.3 Data analysis

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c:99), qualitative data analysis is “based on an interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data”. For the purpose of this research study, the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method was used to analyse the data generated during the first phase (individual interviews) and the second phase (individual photo-elicitation-interviews). According to Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008:177), the IPA data analysis method explores the meaning participants’ give to their lived experiences. IPA is thus used to “explore, understand and communicate the experiences” of the research participants (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006:103). Smith and Osborn (2007:53) explain that IPA analysis aims to provide a better understanding of the research phenomenon by providing a detailed exploration of participants’ experiences and perceptions about their “personal and social world”. IPA, which “has been inspired by the philosophy of phenomenology and the theory of interpretation, sometimes known as hermeneutics” (Griffin & May, 2012:447) was used to analyse the participants’ explanation of their experiences of the phenomenon.

3.4.3.1 Data analysis process

I adhered to the following step-by-step approach to analysis in IPA as set out by Smith and Osborn (2007:67-78):

- **Identifying themes from transcriptions**

In this first step, the transcripts were read a few times and when something of significance came to the fore, it was noted in the left hand margin of each transcript. By doing so, it was possible to identify similarities as well as connections between the participants’ words. I used the notes that were written down to identify themes.

- **Connecting the themes with each other**

The identified themes were listed in the order in which they appeared in the transcripts. The themes that were identified represent the participants' spoken words that were audio recorded as well as the researcher's interpretation of those words. I aimed to identify connections between the themes clustered together. All these themes were then presented in a table.

- **Continuing analysis with other cases**

The themes that emerged during the analysis of the transcript of the first interview were used as a guideline during the data analysis of the other transcripts. I identified the similarities as well as differences between the transcripts. As a result, some of the themes were re-labelled. In the process, superordinate themes also emerged.

- **Writing up**

During the last stage, the identified themes were written down and supported by using verbatim quotations that were a true reflection of the participants' lived experiences. Existing literature on social aggression was used to support the views expressed in the verbatim extracts (quotations) and fully explain and describe the generated data.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c:113), trustworthiness is very important in conducting qualitative research as it enhances the quality of the research. Trustworthiness can be explained as the "demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound and when the argument made based on the results is strong" (LaBanca, 2010:1). In order to ensure the trustworthiness and quality of this study, four trustworthiness criteria were applied: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:289-290). Table 3.2 lists the four trustworthiness criteria and the strategies that were applied in this research study to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

TABLE 3.2 CRITERIA AND STRATEGIES USED TO ENSURE THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:289-290)

CRITERIA	Strategies
TRUTH VALUE	Credibility
APPLICABILITY	Transferability
CONSISTENCY	Dependability
NEUTRALITY	Confirmability

3.5.1 Credibility

Research is said to be credible when there is confidence in the truth of the findings (Krefting, 1991:215). According to Morrow (2005:252), credibility can be established when the researcher engages with the participants and observes them for a sufficient period of time. Credibility can also be strengthened through the “discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants” (Krefting, 1991:215). Comparing the findings with those of other researchers whose research also contains knowledge about the phenomenon is yet another way of strengthening credibility (Krefting, 1991:215-216). Nieuwenhuis (2007c:114) adds that “stakeholder checks” can be implemented when the participants, as well as other persons who have an interest in the study, make comments on the researcher’s interpretation of the findings.

In this study, credibility was established by regularly consulting with my supervisor who independently assessed the research questions and procedures of the data generation phases (individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation-interviews) as well as the data analysis process. Probing questions were used where necessary during the individual interviews to ask participants to clarify what they had said. The interviews were audio-recorded and verbatim transcriptions were made so that I could present accurate data and findings on female students’ experiences of social aggression in on-campus residences. Independent coders were also consulted to enhance the credibility of the data analysis process.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability is achieved when the “findings can be applied to other context and settings with other groups; it is the ability to generalise from the findings to larger populations” (Krefting, 1991:216). I provided an accurate and sufficient description of the research phenomenon to

enhance the readers' understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and adds that the findings of a qualitative study should be understood in the context in which the research was conducted, taking due account of the characteristics of the research participants (Shenton, 2004:70). In similar vein, Morrow (2005:252) stresses that the researcher must provide a dense description of the research context and the processes followed in conducting the research.

While it was my responsibility to provide sufficient information about my study, it is the responsibility of the individuals who read it to determine whether the data are applicable to their context (Shenton, 2004:70). In this study, transferability was optimised by providing a dense description of the research design and methodology, the participants and the site and sampling strategies used so that others can make transferability judgements themselves.

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability means that "if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and the same participants, similar results would be obtained" and adds that dependability can be achieved by providing a detailed description of the research process followed to enable other researchers to repeat the process (Shenton, 2004:71).

Therefore dependability was achieved in two ways. I asked my supervisor to evaluate the implementation of the research process. I also provided a detailed plan of my research and a dense description of the research design and methodology as well as a detailed description of the data generation and analysis process.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Morrow (2005:252) argues that confirmability "is based on the acknowledgement that research is never objective". Therefore the researcher must aim to present the data analysis process as well as the findings in such a way that adequacy is evident to the readers (Morrow, 2005:252). In order to obtain adequate findings the researcher must have prolonged interaction with the participants. This means that confirmability relates more to the data generated than to the researcher (Krefting, 1991:217). Confirmability is obtained only when credibility and transferability are established (Krefting, 1991:217). However, confirmability can also be ensured when the "work's findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004:72).

In this study, verbatim quotations from the transcripts are used when the findings are discussed in order to provide the interpretations of the participants through their spoken words. In order to avoid researcher's bias, an independent coder assisted me in order to verify my identified themes and categories during data analysis.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (2011:113-114), due consideration of ethical aspects is of the utmost importance when effective and successful research is the goal. In order for me to conduct the research on female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences, a request to conduct the research and formal consent were obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University; the Dean of Students (Addendum A); the Chairperson of the Student Representative Council (Addendum B); the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences (Addendum C); the Primaria of each of the on-campus female residences (Addendum D); and the female students in on-campus residences who participated (Addendum E).

The following ethical requirements were also met in this research study.

3.6.1 Avoidance of harm

According to Mouton (2001:245), the process of data generation must not in any way bring personal harm to the participants. Mouton (2001:245) explains that informed consent must be obtained from the participants if the "risks of research are greater than the risks of everyday life". Strydom (2011:115) adds that participants can be harmed not only in a physical way, but also emotionally. Creswell (2003:64) states that it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants from harm or discomfort during the research study. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:70), all possible risks that could surface during the data generation process must be considered during the planning phase. The physical and emotional protection of the participants was important. I therefore ensured that a psychologist employed by the Potchefstroom Campus Support Services was available to assist any participant who experienced any uncomfortable feelings during or after the data generation process. The contact details of the psychologist were clearly indicated on the consent form (Addendum E) as well as the invitation letter with general information about the research (Addendum F) that was handed out to the Primaria (Chairperson of House Committee) of each of the female on-campus residences. Provision were aware that they could contact the psychologist at the

Potchefstroom Campus Support Services (Addendum E) if necessary during or after the completion of the study. Their participation in the research was entirely voluntary. I also informed the participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage during the research process.

3.6.2 Voluntary participation

According to Rubin and Babbie (2005:71), the participation must be entirely voluntary. Babbie (2007:63) warns that although this is made clear to potential participants, they may still feel obligated to participate. Klenke (2008:50) describes voluntary participation as meaning that the “participants are not coerced to participate in the study and, at any time during the research may withdraw their participation”. Therefore it was very important that participants understood the full meaning of “voluntary participation”. The interviewing process and procedures as well as the purpose of the study were explained to the participants before the individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation-interviews. This provided the participants with adequate knowledge to make an informed decision about participating in the research study.

3.6.3 Informed consent

According to Hakim (2000:143), obtaining the informed consent of the participants is of the utmost importance. Strydom (2011:117) states that written informed consent must contain all the necessary information about the research study, including the advantages as well as disadvantages and the procedures used to reach the aim of the study. Patton (2002:407) explains that before interviews begin the researcher must explain the purpose of the data generation process as well as the purpose of participation thoroughly. Informed consent implies that all necessary information about the research aims, the procedures to be followed, advantages and disadvantages of participation and ethical aspects are explained to the participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:66-67). Full explanations were provided in the consent form given to the participants (Addendum E) before the data generation process commenced.

3.6.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be defined as “a continuation of privacy, which refers to agreements between persons that limit others’ access to private information” (Strydom, 2011:119). This means that the researcher has to keep all personal and private information obtained confidential (Strydom, 2011:119). The researcher has to respect every person’s right to

privacy and to reveal only what they want to about their experiences or their opinions on the research topic (Strydom, 2011:119). In this study, confidentiality was assured by ensuring that the audio recorded data was in safekeeping and by making sure that no one except the researcher and the supervisor had access to the hard copy of the data. In addition, all identifiable information on the participants was omitted when the verbatim transcriptions were typed, as well as when the findings were written up.

3.6.5 Anonymity

Mouton (2001:244) refers to anonymity as “the principle that the identity of an individual is kept secret, the principle of confidentiality refers to the information gathered from subjects”. Strydom (2011:120) also explains that anonymity implies that the identity of the participants must not be revealed to the public or even to the researcher. Mouton (2001:243) extends anonymity “to the collection of data by means of camera, tape recorders and other data generation devices, as well as to data collected face to face interviews or in participant observation”. As I conducted face-to-face interviews, I could not completely protect every participant’s anonymity, but I did not use their names in the transcription of audio recorded individual interviews or of the photo-elicitation-interviews. I made use of codes for each transcript and all audio-recordings were destroyed after the verification process by an independent coder had been completed.

3.6.6 Visual ethics

The use of photographs during the individual photo-elicitation-interviews necessitated attention to visual ethics throughout this study. According to Cox, Drew, Guillemin, Howell, Warr and Waycott (2014), there are important ethical issues to be considered when visual research methods are used. These include “avoiding physical and emotional harm; protecting research participants’ anonymity and confidentiality; promoting research that serves a public good” (Cox *et al.*, 2014:11). The participants freely gave their formal consent (see Addendum E) for me to use their photographs during the individual photo-elicitation-interviews as well as to write up the findings for degree purposes and possibly for publication. I also showed the participants how to take photographs to ensure the anonymity of the people involved and to make it difficult to identify their surroundings. The participants were made aware that I would omit, remove or “black out” any identifiable information that appeared on the photographs that were used in this study in order to protect and safeguard the identity of the people that were photographed.

3.7 RESEARCHER'S ROLE

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007a:79), the role of a researcher in a qualitative study is to promote change in the “real-life context” by recording participants’ experiences of real life situations. Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen and Liamputtong (2007:327) state that a researcher is also responsible for the emotional and physical protection of the participants. The main purpose or role of a researcher is to “understand the phenomenal world through the study of events, actions, talk and interactions” (Barrett, 2007:417).

In this research study, my role as researcher encompassed the following:

- Following this study’s planned research design and methods
- Ensuring that the research was conducted in an ethical manner as set out as ethical considerations
- Obtaining ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University
- Obtaining formal consent from the Dean of Students (Addendum A); Chairperson of the Student Representative Council (Addendum B); the House Parents (Wardens) of the female on-campus residences (Addendum C); the Primaria of the each of the respective on-campus female residences (Addendum D), and the consent (permission) of female students in on-campus residences (Addendum E)
- Planning the data generation processes, finding a suitable interview venue away from the participants’ residences
- Facilitating the individual interviews as well as the individual photo-elicitation-interviews
- Ensuring that the participants understood the data generation processes and what their participation entailed
- Analysing the data according to the selected IPA data analysis method
- Verifying the themes and categories by the independent coder
- Describing and reporting on the findings
- Employing trustworthiness criteria and strategies to enhance the quality of the study.

3.8 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to outline the research design and methodology. It first presented the rationale for employing an interpretivist paradigm and a phenomenological approach. After the site, sample and sampling strategies had been described, the data generation and analysis

processes and strategies were discussed. This included the trustworthiness criteria and strategies. Finally, important ethical considerations as well as my role as researcher were discussed.

The next chapter presents the analysis of the data and the findings of the research on female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS: FEMALE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL AGGRESSION IN UNIVERSITY ON-CAMPUS RESIDENCES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four discusses the results that emerged during the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the data. An independent coder provided assistance during the IPA process in which consensus was reached on two major themes and categories (Table 4.1). In the discussion that follows, the literature on social aggression is cited to support the findings of this study.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Twenty-four female students who reside in on-campus residences voluntarily took part in the data generation process. The data that were collected was analysed by means of the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method. Two major themes and categories were identified (see Table 4.1).

4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The discussion of the results relating to the identified themes and categories is illustrated by means of verbatim quotations from the data and supported by the relevant literature. Cordon and Sainsbury (2006:11) argue that the use of verbatim quotations assists the reader to have a better understanding of why people behave in a certain way and of the research phenomenon. Some of the photographs taken by participants are also included to provide a more complete explanation of their conceptualisation of social aggression and how their lived experiences of it in their on-campus residences. This is in line with Meo (2010:155) who argues that the use of photographs during the data generation process strengthens the process of “gathering richer data” and “making sense of some data” that might be difficult to understand without them. The code¹ which precedes each verbatim quotation is the one that was assigned to each participant in order to ensure the anonymity of each of the participants.

TABLE 4.1 IDENTIFIED THEMES AND CATEGORIES: Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

THEME 1
Female students experience social aggression in university on-campus residences in diverse ways
Category 1: Female students experience social aggression in university on-campus residences as a range of negative feelings and emotions
Category 2: Social aggression affects the interpersonal relationships of female students in university on-campus residences
Category 3: Social aggression negatively affects relationships involving the social networks of female students in university on-campus residences
Category 4: Female residents conceptualise social aggression in university on-campus female residences in terms of cultural norms, gender and socialisation
Category 5: Female students describe social aggression in university on-campus residences, as they perceive it, from the perpetrator's perspective
THEME 2
Female students provide suggestions to change socially aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences

¹ Code: P = Participant; R = Residence

Theme 1 reflects the various ways the participant female students experience social aggression in their on-campus residences as the result of factors such as culture, norms and social status. Theme 2 is the suggestions that female students made in order to change socially aggressive behaviour in on-campus residences into prosocial behaviour that could enhance the well-being of female students in on-campus residences.

4.3.1 THEME 1: Female students experience social aggression in university on-campus residences in diverse ways

The discussion of this theme explores the data that capture female students' lived experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences. The participants describe their experience of social aggression as a range of feelings and emotions which affect their interpersonal relationships, as well as their relationships involving their social networks. The five categories that underscore Theme 1 will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.1.1 Category 1: Female students experience social aggression in university on-campus residences as a range of negative feelings and emotions

The female students' experience of social aggression, sometimes implied rather than overtly expressed, is confined to negative feelings such as being intimidated, belittled, humiliated or isolated. The incidents of social aggression they describe made them feel denigrated or demeaned and had a damaging impact on their self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

The following photograph taken by and quotations from the comments made by participant (P1 R1) reflect her experience of social aggression in her on-campus residence. The participant felt intimidated and belittled by the spoken words and actions of other female students in her on-campus residence.



PHOTOGRAPH 4.2 CAPTION: “OM IEMAND TE INTIMIDEER” (TO INTIMIDATE SOMEONE)

[P1 R1] *“Die groot bottels omring die klein "jar". Dit is net intimidasie as 'n groep teen iemand gaan en hulle intimideer. Dalk sleg te sê of ook minderwaardig te laat voel of te verkleineer.”*

(The big bottles encircle the small jar. It is just intimidation if a group turns on someone and intimidates them. Maybe to bad-mouth or to make someone feel inferior or to feel small.)

Browne and Carroll-Lind (2006:22) state that covert intimidation used by females takes the form of actions which result in exclusion, breaking down someone's confidence and ignoring the presence of an individual. Fiske (2014:215) adds that intimidation usually includes “nonverbal behaviour” like negative facial expressions. Browne and Carroll-Lind (2006:22) note that females who use covert intimidation are usually liked by their peers, which enables them to obtain information that is used to humiliate others. According to Browne and Carroll-Lind (2006:22), females “identified the need for power as being central to the practices of covert intimidation”.

According to Fiske (2014:215), the “emotion that the intimidator wants to inspire in people is fear, just enough fear to control them”. Browne and Carroll-Lind (2006:23) state that female victims are not likely to retaliate because of the fear of being victimised again. Their self-esteem may be diminished as a result of covert intimidation. They thus avoid any “new or challenging situations” (Browne & Carroll-Lind, 2006:23). Female victims may tend to become friends with a younger person, just to obtain more confidence and power (Browne & Carroll-Lind, 2006:23).

The following verbatim quotations indicate that they experience social aggression as humiliating and isolation:

[P1 R7] *“Al is jy in 'n koshuis van 280 mense [woon], voel jy maar nogsteeds stoksiel alleen.”*
(Even though you are in a residence with 280 people, you still feel completely alone)

[P1 R 11] *“... in 'n groot groep is daar altyd een kind wat uit voel.”*
(... in a large group, there is always someone that does not feel part of the group.)

[P1 R11] *“As jy nie wil doen wat hulle doen nie. Dan is jy nie meer deel van ons nie.”*
(If you do not want to do what they do. Then you are no longer one of us.)

[P1 R7] *“Van 'n glipsie wat jy maak op sosiale media, soos ek, dan gebruik hulle dit half om jou te verneder.”*
(With a slip that you make on social media, like me, they then use it almost to humiliate you.)

[P1 R6] *“... sosiale aggressie het haar selfbeeld verkleineer en sy het niks aan hulle gedoen nie.”*
(... social aggression diminished her self-image and she didn't do anything to them.)

[P1 R7] *“... hulle maak dit baie duidelik dat jy is daar, jy is deel van hulle, máár jy is nêe deel van hulle nie.”*
(... they make it very clear that you are there, you are part of them [the group], but you are not part of them [the group].)

These extracts indicate that the participants experienced social aggression in the form of being humiliated and excluded from the group. Archer and Coyne (2005:212) explain that that social exclusion may take the form of preventing someone from attending a social activity or having access to certain resources. Social status may be used to manipulate the acceptance of individuals into a group (Archer & Coyne, 2005:213). Duranovic and Opic (2013:780) explain that social exclusion usually takes place “with the aim of causing damage or disrupting the victim’s self-esteem”. Bullying is another means of manipulation in which “the social structure of the group [is used] to harm the victim” (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:780). According to Solarz (2008:3), when individuals realise they are being excluded from the group, they feel confused and try to deny the socially aggressive act. In contrast, Scalafani (2008:10) argues that when individuals are excluded from a group they may try to harm another individual’s relationships in order to displace their hurt onto someone else.

According to Ojanen *et al.* (2012:99), direct types of aggression are related to peer exclusion. In contrast, social aggression may be related to popularity amongst peers as well as to the goal of being the most dominant member of a social group (Ojanen *et al.*, 2012:105). You and Bellmore (2014:405) note that socially aggressive individuals are perceived as popular as well as socially dominant, which enables them to influence the group. It can be argued that the reason that the perpetrator of social aggression can continue to be seen as popular is that socially aggressive behaviour is usually anonymous (Duranovic & Opic, 2013:781). Therefore a perpetrator can acquire higher social status and remain popular. However, although their popularity and social status may increase, their social or peer acceptance may not (Mayeux, 2014:503). It seems that certain characteristics, which are seen as important by peers, may influence the degree of popularity of an individual (Mayeux, 2014:503-504). Some of these characteristics may include having a good sense of style, being good at sport and being good-looking (Mayeux, 2014:503). According to research, “adolescents who were both relationally aggressive and who possessed more of these peer-valued characteristics were seen as more popular and powerful by peers than adolescents who were relationally aggressive but did not have these qualities” (Mayeux, 2014:503-504).

According to Redden (2013:377), when social aggression is expressed through humiliation, it usually takes place publically. Solarz (2008:16) states that individuals that demonstrate social aggression “use power over others by telling their secrets, sharing confidential information or intimidating or threatening to share the inside information to humiliate the victim”. According to Horton (2010:3), this type of bullying, verbal bullying, aims to embarrass or humiliate the victim through gossip or by spreading rumours.

The following verbatim quotations indicate that these female students experienced social aggression as demeaning and belittling and that it negatively influenced their self-esteem:

[P2 R8] *“If you don't know much, then you are nothing. If you can't understand much, you are nothing.”*

[P2 R8] *“... you know that I don't understand, but you would tell me in that language that I don't understand ... I feel like people use that [language] in a way of making you feel incompetent, making you feel like you can't be heard in the hostel [residence] and making you feel like you are not important. So you better listen to what I'm saying. I'm in charge of you and you have to listen.”*

[P2 R8] *“It [being humiliated] definitely made me feel small, because I remember I shared a room with somebody who also felt that way, but she had the choice to go out of the "gang" of the hostel [residence]. So I was the only one who was left there. Who didn't understand the language [Afrikaans] and the tradition. So I felt like I was such a failure.”*

Some participants experienced being belittled in their residences. One participant indicated that she was often belittled by the other residents in her residence because she came from a different background and culture. The fact that she did not understand Afrikaans, the language used by most of the residents, made her feel that they were belittling her. The following quotation indicates that female students may feel they are not worthy of being part of a group after being belittled by what other group members say about them or the use of a language that they do not understand.

[P2 R10] *“Daai persoon voel baie klein en die persoon voel soos niks na die tyd nie, want as jy die heelyd hoor hoe sleg jy is gaan jy dit naderhand begin glo en jy gaan nie iets anders wil wees nie. Jy gaan naderhand net opgee.”*

(That person feels very small and that person feels like nothing, because if you hear how bad you are the whole time, then you will start believing it and you do not want to be anything else. You will just give up after a while.)

The participants also indicated that students in their residences, especially senior female students, made them feel unworthy of being a member of their on-campus residence. Solarz (2008:1) states that the aim of social aggression is to “hurt the feelings and break down the self-esteem of the victim”. Sclafani (2008:7) explains that an individual’s self-esteem can be linked with social aggression. There are two types of self-esteem, trait and state self-esteem. Trait self-esteem is more stable and can predict an individual’s future patterns of self-esteem (Sclafani, 2008:7). State self-esteem reflects an individual’s self-esteem at a particular point in time and that it can be affected by changed circumstances or surroundings (Fiske, 2014:454). An individual who has low state self-esteem is more likely to resort to social aggression (Scalafani, 2008:10). For instance, “women who report having lower collective self-esteem (sense of social acceptance) and low personal self-esteem [are] more likely to reject other women” (Scalafani, 2008:10). However, Thomaes and Bushman (2011:208) cite research evidence that individuals with high self-esteem may be much more aggressive than those individuals who have low self-esteem. In similar vein, Fiske (2014:412) argues that the “most aggressive people do not show low self-esteem”. Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell (2000:26) argue that individuals who have a high opinion of themselves are often aggressive: individuals with low self-esteem do not have enough confidence to engage in aggressive behaviour.

Thomaes and Bushman (2011:208) state that self-esteem and narcissism can be linked with each other. Narcissism is evident when people “with big egos become aggressive when others threaten their inflated egos” (Thomaes & Bushman, 2011:207). Baumeister *et al.* (2000:27) add that narcissists are also individuals with a high, but unstable self-esteem as they cannot accept it when someone “questions his or her highly favourably assessment of self”. There are two kinds of narcissism: covert narcissists have low self-esteem and try to avoid any social interaction most of the time as they are introverts, whereas overt narcissists are extroverts and have high self-esteem (Thomaes & Bushman, 2011:208). Fiske (2014:413) found that when someone with high levels of narcissism is insulted, he or she is likely to exhibit a high level of aggressive behaviour.

4.3.1.2 Category 2: Social aggression affects the interpersonal relationships of female students in university on-campus residences

Negative and destructive interpersonal and psychological effects are associated with the socially aggressive behaviour that female students experience in university on-campus residences. Social aggression occurs in a group context and take the form of offender’s using

social skills to inflict harm on the targeted individual's relationships or social status. Contextual social aggression is mostly covert and according to the participants it manifests itself in several ways:

- *Excluding* someone from the social group to prevent the victim from interacting with the perpetrator's social circle
- *Snubbing, shunning or ignoring* a peer or an unpopular friend
- Spinning *fabricated lies* about the victim and maliciously spreading this information to others as facts.

The most common form of social aggression is gossiping and spreading malicious unfounded rumours.

[P1 R11] *"... sê jy goed van ander meisies wat nie waar is nie en versprei dit onder 'n groep meisies en dan dink almal so van haar ..."*

(... you say things about other girls which are not true and spread it among a group of girls and then everyone thinks that of her ...)

[P2 R5] *"... en dit gebeur baie ook dat hulle sê, nee hierdie meisie moes nie eens in die koshuis gewees het nie, sy weet nie hoekom sy in die koshuis is nie."*

(... and it regularly happens that they say this girls should not even be in the on-campus residence, she does not know why that girl is in the residence.)

[P1 R2] *"Dit klink vreemd, maar ek het altyd nog gedink dit [gossiping] is 'n "bonding mechanism". As jy 'n "mutual enemy" het dan word jy en die meisie baie vinnig vriende ... of as daar iemand is wat julle saam nie van hou nie, dan is dit makliker as jy net iets het om oor te praat, dan gaan dit makliker."*

(It sounds strange, but I always thought it [gossiping] is like a bonding mechanism. If you have a mutual enemy, then you and the girl become friends very quickly ... or if there is someone that you both do not like, then it is easier if you just have something to talk about, then it becomes easier.)

According to Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:332), gossiping and spreading rumours about someone is the most common manifestation of social aggression. Reynolds and Repetti (2010:283) contend that females are mainly responsible for these forms of social aggression. Foster (2004:83) defines the kind of gossip involved as "the exchange of personal information in an evaluative way about absent third parties". It is clear that the participants experienced gossiping and the spreading of malicious rumours as being rife in their residences and as

damaging relationships in their on-campus residences. Fiske (2014:530) contends that when rumours are spread and someone is gossiped about then it is “being merciless with regard to other people’s reputations”. The effects may be far reaching. Kritzer (2015:6) explains that when a victim’s reputation is damaged through rumours that are spread verbally or electronically, the victim may not only be excluded from a social group but also find it difficult to focus on academic work. According to Lansu, Cillessen and Sandstrom (2013:10), individuals who have a reputation for being victims are easily victimised again. A factor in this is that “adolescents believe that other adolescents with a victim reputation deserve to be victimised” (Lansu *et al.*, 2013:10).

Cole (2013:2) argues that gossiping and the spread of rumours is at the cost of the victim’s interpersonal relationships. But they can have both a positive or negative effect on the perpetrator’s self-esteem (Cole, 2013:5:13). A possible positive effect is that the gossiper develops a closer social bond with others, which increases her self-esteem (Cole, 2013:5). A possible negative effect is that the gossiper is disliked (rejected) by others, which decreases her self-esteem (Cole, 2013:13). Similarly, Loudin, Loukas and Robinson (2003:431) found that social aggression among peers can be “associated with higher level of peer rejection and lower levels of prosocial behaviour”.

The participants’ responses indicate that social aggression in on-campus residences usually takes place in the context of a group. Low, Polanin and Espelage (2013:1078) state that the aim of social aggression is to cause harm or damage to members of a certain group. Individuals start to resort to social aggression in their early adolescence as during this stage they spend most of their time in peer groups (Low *et al.*, 2013:1078). Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:331) posit that even when individuals know social aggression is wrong, they still use it in order to build a relationship with their group. Archer and Coyne (2005:222) explain that social aggression “depends heavily on maturation and the development of a strong social network”. Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:344) add that while social groups remain very important to females, social aggressive behaviour will continue taking place.

There are different types of group membership. Espelage, Wasserman and Fleisher (2007:452) state that a *clique* member is a member of a group that consists of three members who have direct connections with each other. A *loose group member* is also part of a group that consists of three members, but these members have direct and indirect connections with each other (Espelage *et al.*, 2007:452). A *liaison* can be described as “those individuals who interact with several groups, but are not clearly a member of a specific group” (Espelage *et al.*, 2007:452).

Solarz (2008:ii) states that socially aggressive behaviour, which includes gossiping and the spreading of rumours, may damage social relationships. As McDonald, Putallaz, Grimes, Kupersmidt and Coie (2007:407) explain, “gossiping within the larger peer group is associated with social aggression and perceived popularity”. At the same time, gossiping is a safe way to ensure that an individual gains more status in a group than his or her friends (McDonald *et al.*, 2007:384). It is also used gossip is used between friends to strengthen unity by excluding other individuals from the group (McDonald *et al.*, 2007:404). According to Remillard and Lamb (2005:227), after a socially aggressive act like gossiping has occurred the victim feels hurt and angry, which will probably cause the friendship with the group to end. Xie, Cairns and Cairns (2005:109) add that socially aggressive behaviour may also hurt the “feelings of acceptance or inclusion” of the victim.

Other actions, attitudes or behaviour that provide evidence of the harmful impact of social aggression on interpersonal relationships include: backstabbing and betrayal of friendships; manipulation of social situations; and verbal abuse and teasing:

[P1 R7] *“Soos hulle gaan vir jou sê jy lyk mooi in die rok net om vir almal te gaan vertel hoe dik jy in die rok lyk.”*

(Like they will tell you how beautiful you look in the dress, just to tell everyone how fat you look in the dress.)

[P1 R7] *“... die meisie wat my verneder het is my kamermaat”*

(... the girl who humiliated me was my roommate.)

[P1 R7] *“Jou vriendinne wat nie vir jou plek hou in die klas nie, of jou vriendin wat letterlik die een is wat weet wat op sosiale media aangaan. Hulle sien alles wat jy doen. Hulle is daar as jy dit doen, en dan is hulle die ene wat die stories begin versprei en so aan.”*

(Your girlfriends that do not keep a seat for you in class, or your girlfriend that is literally the person who knows what is happening on social media. They see everything that you do. They are there when you do something and then they are the ones who spread the stories and so on.)

The following photograph of participant P1 R1 indicates the negative effect of social aggression on her interpersonal relationships in on-campus residences. She stated that sometimes you put your trust in friends, but that they stab you in the back by spreading malicious rumours about you. This behaviour is caused by their jealousy or their desire to become a member of a certain group.



PHOTOGRAPH 4.2 CAPTION: “BACKSTABBERS”

[P1 R1] *“Jy dink jy kan iemand vertrou en dan is hulle eintlik agteraf en beskinder jou by ander mense sê jy is sleg, versprei dalk stories. Dalk het jy 'n vriendin 'n storie in geheim vertel en dan gaan vertel sy vir ander mense omdat sy jaloers is of omdat sy by daai groep mense wil inpas en nou gee sy half vir hulle interessante feite van iemand anders in die koshuis.”*

(You think you can trust someone and then they are actually underhand and slander you to other people, say you are bad, maybe spread rumours. Maybe you told a girlfriend a story in private and then she goes and tells the story to other people because she is jealous or because she wants to fit in with that group of people and now she sort of gives them interesting facts about someone else in the residence.)

Dallape (2008:42) states that individuals who struggle to develop positive relationships with friends and family will encounter behavioural problems later on, for example bullying or social aggression. Niu (2009:3) explains that in childhood bullying is more physical in nature, but in adolescence it may turn into social aggression. In contrast, the development of positive relationships with friends can improve social skills and develop prosocial behaviour (Dallape, 2008:24).

Bowie (2007:111) explains that females value interpersonal relationships with other individuals more than their independence. According to Zimmer-Gembeck, Geiger and Crick (2005:422), this is because females value the support they receive from each other. Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:332) argue that individuals may support another’s social aggression “by

listening to the aggressor and contributing their own thoughts about the targets, viewing this support as relationship building". According to Ayodele (2013:29), humiliation, betrayal, antagonism, hostility and competition may lead to negative interpersonal relationships. As seen in the verbatim quotations cited above, backstabbing or betrayal causes the most damage to interpersonal relationships. Fitness (2001:2) explains that betrayal is so painful because it takes place in already established relationships in which individuals have invested trust in each other, and because of the personal humiliation involved. Fitness (2001:2) refers to betrayal as a situation in which "one party in a relationship acts in a way that favours his or her own interest at the expense of the other party's interest".

In turn, the female students respond to this kind of painful experience in various ways: through retaliation or revenge, often through gossip, in which case the vicious cycle of social aggression is perpetuated:

[P2 R5] *"Die skinder gebeur eintlik meer na die tyd as sy vies is vir die ander meisie as sy nou nie haar kamer gekry het of haar sin gekry het."*

(The gossiping mostly takes place afterwards when she is upset with the other girl, because she did not get the room she wanted or she didn't get her way.)

[P2 R10] *"... sy het dit aan my gedoen, so ek gaan dit aan haar doen."*

(... she did it to me, so I'm going to do it to her.)

Bowie (2007:108) states that social exclusion and the spread of rumours about someone lead to retaliation or revenge. Chester and DeWall (2015:1173) explain that retaliation takes place when an individual is under the impression that aggression will improve his or her situation. According to Ostrov and Gentile (2006:5), the "indirect aggressor does not directly confront the victim in order to avoid the potential cost of retaliation, but may use the established peer network". Similarly, Heilbron and Prinstein (2008:180) argue that because "social forms of aggression do not necessarily identify the aggressor, it is possible to minimise the potential for retaliation from the victim".

As indicated by the participants' verbatim quotations, a vicious cycle of indirect aggression (social aggression) may take place if individuals experience social aggression and decide to retaliate. Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Duriez and Niemic (2008:677) state that individuals may demonstrate increased levels of social aggression in the course of time which in turn negatively influence the quality of friendships. Similarly, Averdijk *et al.* (2016:176) found that "victimization was associated with increased indirect aggression". Miller-Ott and Kelly

(2013:345) state that the vicious cycle of social aggression will continue as long as females are under the impression that social aggression is normal behaviour for females.

4.3.1.3 Category 3: Social aggression negatively affects relationships involving the social networks of female students in university on-campus residences

The research participants stated that social networks are sometimes used as a means of social aggression and this may lead to increased levels of this type of indirect aggression in the on-campus residences of users. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007:2), social networks include the following: individuals “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. Boyd and Ellison (2007:2) add that “networking” may initiate relationships between strangers that do not have any social ties.

The participants also described the negative influence that social media such as television, radio, the internet, newspapers, magazines and other printed materials can have in on-campus university residences, causing acts of cyber bullying to proliferate. As Neti (2007:2) points out, social media are “internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings”. Cyber bullying experienced by the participants includes malicious text messages or emails and rumours sent by email or posted on social networking sites. The participants indicate that social aggression which is expressed through social media can ruin their social status in their on-campus residence:

[P1 R11] *“... dan sit hulle dit op [sosiale media] en dan "ruin" dit jou hele "image" van jouself.”*
(... then they put it on [social media] and then it ruins your whole image of yourself.)

[P2 R7] *“... [sosiale media] is absoluut 'n integrale deel van sosiale aggressie.”*
(... [social media] is absolutely an integral part of social aggression.)

[P1 R1] *“Sosiale media het 'n baie groot invloed op sosiale aggressie. Mense wat mekaar sleg sê op sosiale media. Weereens, hulle sê dit nie vir die persoon in sy gesig nie, sal eerder dit so versprei.”*
(Social media has a very big influence on social aggression. People who say bad things about each other on social media. Again, they don't say them to the person's face, but rather spread them on social media.)

[P2 R6] *“... ek dink sosiale media dra ook baie by tot sosiale aggressie in die koshuis self. As ek kyk wat op ons "groups" aangaan.”*

(... I think social media contributes to social aggression, especially in the hostel [residence] itself. If I see what is happening in our groups.)

[P2 R11] *“Die TV wys altyd vir jou hoe die perfekte meisie moet lyk of hoe 'n mens moet optree en dan beïnvloed dit mense se gedagtes. Dan raak dit vir hulle makliker om te skinder.”*

(TV always shows you what the perfect girl should look like or how you are supposed to behave and then this influences people's views. Then it becomes easier for them to gossip.)

Participant P2 R8 provided a caption *“BEING BULLIED ON FACEBOOK – ANONYMOUS MESSAGE”* that depicts how social aggression is expressed through social media and states that even though she does not know who the cyber bullies are, they still manage to make her feel inadequate.

[P2 R8] *“So I didn't like posting things in the hostel's Facebook, because it felt like whenever you posted something, somebody comes and post something better than you and therefore you are called names, but according to anonymous people. So I felt like I was being bullied by people who were sitting behind their laptop, or their cell phones.”*

According to Azimi and Ghomi (2011:36) when individuals create profiles on social media, they do not always recognise the need to safeguard their privacy, which makes it possible for outsiders to use information that may be harmful to the individuals' “public image or relations”. Das and Sahoo (2011:223) add that when individuals share personal information on social media, they cannot prevent others from distributing that information. Individuals should avoid sharing any negative personal information on social media as this may play a role in “maligning [their] own image” (Das & Sahoo, 2011:227). Some of the participants also indicated that groups on social media such as Whatsapp or Facebook can be used to destroy an individual's social status. The intended goal of social media groups in residences is to channel important information to one another, not to harm one another.

Gentile, Coyne and Walsh (2011:194) state that social aggression is more likely to occur after exposure to violent media. Similarly, Ostrov and Gentile (2006:3) argue that “chronic and frequent exposure to violent media and aggressive acts may influence the display of not only physical and verbal aggression but also relational aggression”. As Redden (2013:376) points out, from an early age females are exposed to media which portrays socially aggressive behaviour as socially acceptable. This kind of excessive exposure to social aggression may encourage viewers to engage in social aggression (Redden, 2013:397). The fact that in

television reality shows females use social aggression such as “conniving, backstabbing, and spreading rumours” helps to establish it as normal behaviour (Redden, 2013:380). However, individuals “who adopt aggression seen on television may become increasingly ostracised from peer groups that do not have the same media exposure” (Redden, 2013:383).

Cyber bullying may also evolve when there is a lot of exposure to social media. Krahe (2013:182) describes cyber bullying as “the use of electronic devices that allows perpetrators to remain anonymous and reach a large audience”. Notar, Padgett and Roden (2013:4) state that cyber bullying is frequently expressed through phone calls, text messages and instant messaging. There are six different roles that individuals can take on during cyber bullying: entitlement bully, target of entitlement bully, retaliator, victim of retaliator, bystander and bystander with a solution (Notar *et al.*, 2013:4). An *entitlement bully* is an individual who thinks he or she has the right to use social media to bully someone else who has a lower social status (Notar *et al.*, 2013:4). A *retaliator* is someone who was bullied before and retaliates by using social media, whereas a *retaliator victim* is someone who cyber bullied others and in return is bullied now (Notar *et al.*, 2013:4). A *bystander* is someone who encourages the bully and does not help the victim in any way, whereas a *bystander with a solution* tries to reduce cyber bullying by helping the victim (Notar *et al.*, 2013:4).

Hinduja and Patchin (2014:2) state that individuals who experience cyberbullying may exhibit depression, frustration and anger. Victims of cyberbullying may also have a low self-esteem, may be experiencing family as well as academic problems, and may have suicidal thoughts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014:2). Cyberbullying does not only negatively influence individual’s well-being, but also their peer relationships. Wright, Aoyama, Kamble, Li, Soudi, Lei and Shu (2015:340) state that “poor peer attachment is related positively to cyber aggression involvement”. Wright *et al.* (2015:341) add that peer rejection may cause individuals to resort to cyberbullying. According to Pavri (2015:79), when individuals are victims of cyberbullying they will most likely lose interest in peer relationships over a period of time, which in turn may cause isolation and the exclusion from a social group.

Snell and Englander (2010:511) state that females use social media a lot more than males and that the frequent use of social media may easily cause females to become part of cyber bullying or to become a victim. Snell and Englander (2010:511) add that “online activity for social interactions can lead to friend disagreement and fights or perpetuate an ongoing conflict” which can negatively influence interpersonal relationships between female students in their on-campus residence. Research findings show that when females engage in cyber bullying, they do so by spreading rumours or deliberately ignoring someone (Snell & Englander, 2010:511). Females also stated that they are sometimes harassed on social

websites like Facebook where they experience “harassment and threats on their Wall and lies or false stories on their Wall” (Snell & Englander, 2010:512).

According to Ahn (2011:1437), when someone writes negative comments on an individual’s Facebook Wall, it has a negative influence on the way other people see the individual concerned. This may negatively influence the social status of female students in on-campus residences. Ahn (2011:1441) adds that not only can social media negatively influence an individual’s social status, but it may also isolate individuals from their peers, which may lead to loneliness.

4.3.1.4 Category 4: Female residents conceptualise social aggression in university on-campus female residences in terms of cultural norms, gender and socialisation

The participants suggested that the norms or rules which govern the expectations of behaviour within a cultural or the socialisation in a social group can encourage social aggression. In their view, the phenomenon occurs in response to the individual’s need to conform to social stereotypes or as a result of her own prejudices in terms of culture and gender. They perceived female students as resorting to social aggression rather than physical aggression, because of acculturation, their upbringing or socialisation.

[P2 R4] *“Ek dink meisies is nie so geneig tot fisiese aggressie nie. Hulle is mos nou, ons is nie so ingestel om mekaar te slaan soos die outjies ...”*

(I think girls are not as likely to use physical aggression. They are, we are not as inclined to hit each other like guys do ...)

[P2 R6] *“... is meisies maar baie erger as in die mans koshuise.”*

(... girls are much worse than what goes on in men’s residences.)

[P2 R6] *“... dames skakel maar weer vir my in by jou beginsels en jou waardes en ons is mos maar bietjie sagter en ons is mos maar meer vroulik.”*

(... I see women as concerned about norms and values, and we more tender hearted and more feminine.)

[P2 R6] *“So dit [aggressive] is nou glad nie gedrag wat by 'n dame pas nie.”*

(So it [aggression] is not the type of behaviour that suits a woman.)

According to Bowie (2007:108), social aggression is more common among females because they value friendships and social interaction a great deal more than males. Bowie

(2007:108) adds that social aggression is not culturally or ethnically bound, but it is popular behaviour among females all over the world. Tomada and Schneider (1997:601-602) argue that certain cultures encourage boys to be aggressive as it is seen as preparing them to be men, whereas direct aggressive behaviour is frowned upon for girls and women and sometimes even prohibited. However, Tomada and Schneider (1997:602) argue that because women are not allowed to take part in physical or verbal aggression in some cultures, it is more likely they will engage in social aggression to add value to interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Bowie (2007:110) argues that there is pressure on girls to behave appropriately according to the norms of their society, which results in their using more covert forms of aggression like social aggression. Crick, Ostrov, Appleyard, Jansen, and Casas (2004:82) state that social aggression “increases among girls as they develop a firmer understanding of female gender roles”. Kritzer (2015:2) explains that because of the covert nature of social aggression it is not easily observed by other individuals. However, even though it is not easily detected, Young *et al.* (2006:297) argue that “evidence is accumulating to suggest that relational aggression may create just as much, if not more, damage than physical aggression”.

A few reasons can be identified why females are more socially aggressive than males. Bowie (2007:112) states that the ability to use language well is one of the essential factors for social aggression. According to research, females are better at languages than males. Females may also demonstrate socially aggressive behaviour in order to attain a higher status in a group of friends (Kritzer, 2015:3). Social aggression is also used by females in order to sort out “issues of identity and social norms” (Kritzer, 2015:4). According to Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:332), social aggression is employed to compete for friendships or when there is conflict between roommates. Since social aggression is more socially accepted than physical aggression, females use social aggression to improve their relationships with other females (Lewis, 2010:29).

Miller-Ott and Kelly (2013:331) state that females resort to social aggression, because this type of aggression is portrayed by the media as being acceptable behaviour for females. According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010:837), males as well as females demonstrate physical aggression when they are young, but as time passes females tend to become socially aggressive. However, they can be physically aggressive if they are provoked (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010:837). Solarz (2008:17) explain that direct aggression is less likely to be used by females as it “does not fit with feminine gender role identity, girls who follow this standard will use more indirect and manipulate behaviours to express anger toward another person”. Heilbron and Prinstein (2008:179) explain that females chose to use social aggression when

they acquire the necessary verbal skills and become aware of the negative consequences of direct forms of aggression.

4.3.1.5 Category 5: Female students describe social aggression in university on-campus residences, as they perceive it, from the perpetrator's perspective

The participants perceived that the perpetrator may be socially aggressive owing to jealousy, preoccupation with social status, appearance, the need to belong and an unhealthy competitive style of behaviour.

[P2 R5] *“Hulle raak vinnig jaloers as die een lyk asof sy lyk asof sy beter doen of meer het as sy. Hulle erken dit nie altyd nie, of sê dit pla hulle nie, maar 'n mens kan sien by van die meisies dit is nie waar nie, hulle word vinnig jaloers”.*

(They become jealous very easily if one of them seems to do better or has more. They do not always acknowledge it, or they say it doesn't bother them, but one can see that is not true for some of the girls, they become jealous very easily.)

Niu (2009:3) explains that jealousy is viewed as one of the most common reasons why individuals resort to direct as well as indirect aggression. It is also usually used to ensure the exclusivity of friendships by socially aggressive individuals who do not like to share friends (Niu, 2009:4). Newberry (2010:1) states that extreme jealousy is seen as a lack of trust. It is also sometimes perceived as failure. Parker *et al.* (2005:236) explain that individuals “make social comparisons with the third party and are thus more likely to react more negatively to third parties because a friend's interest in someone implies a personal failure on the part of oneself”.

[P2 R5] *“Maar meisies, hulle status is vir hulle regtig belangrik.”*

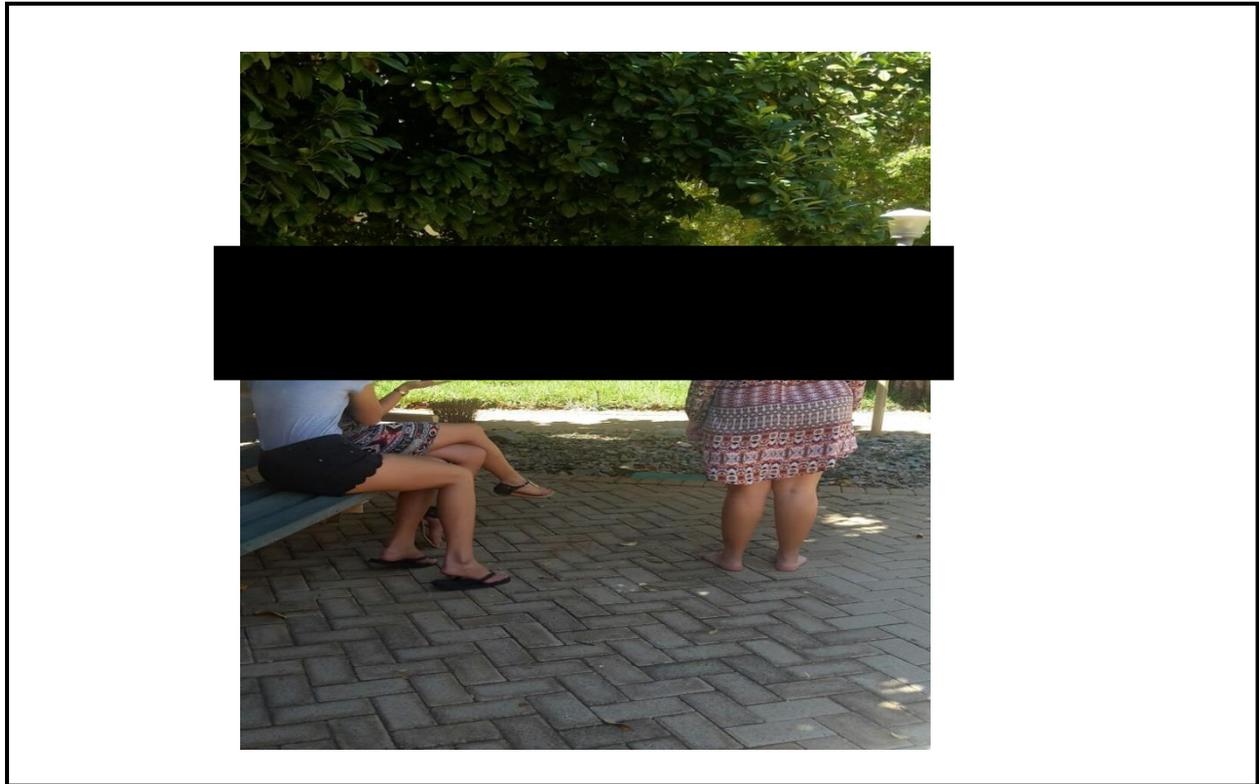
(But for girls, their status is very important to them.)

[P2 R5] *“... hulle wil daardie belangrik voel ... hulle wil in die hoë range wees.”*

(... they want to feel important ... they want to be in the top rankings.)

[P1 R4] *“... there will always be this sense of social status and social division in life. It's just something that I do not think we will get over. We will always have social judgements and all that.”*

The following photograph taken by participant P1 R6 depicts how two female students gossip about the appearance (body type) of another female student in their residence and the fact that she is overweight (has an obese body). This kind of social aggression may be the result of trying to fit in a certain group, to make new friends by having someone they can gossip about, or because of the need to belong.



PHOTOGRAPH 4.3 CAPTION: “SOSIALE AGGRESSIE IN DIE VORM VAN GROTER FIGURE” (SOCIAL AGGRESSION IN THE FORM OF BIGGER FIGURES)

[P1 R6] *“Dit lok meer sosiale aggressie uit oor sulke goed soos die tipe lyf wat jy het, tipe bene, tipe hare. Vir meisies wat maer is en wat nie daardie probleem het nie, is dit aanloklik om oor mense te skinder wat dan groter is.”*

(It invites more social aggression about things like the type of body that you have, type of legs, and type of hair. It is tempting for girls who are skinny and don't have that problem to gossip about people who are fatter.)

According to Berberick (2010:4) appearance and body image is very important to females as they frequently compare themselves to the perfect body that is portrayed by the media. This may result in females taking drastic measures like plastic surgery. Similarly, Small (2016:19) contends that for a lot of women “identity, success, sexuality and value stem from their appearance”. Berberick (2010:6) posits that frequent comparisons between what the media portrays and one's own appearance may result in negative emotions such as

depression. The dissatisfaction with one's own body image may also lead to unhappiness, eating disorders and a low self-esteem (Berberick, 2010:13).

Female residents discuss that a tendency to feel irritated may make the perpetrator resort to social aggression.

[P1 R5] *“Meisies het maar die geneigdheid om as een geïrriteerd is, dan is hulle maar happerig.”*

(Girls are inclined, when they are irritated, to be snappy)

[P2 R7] *“Kan sy nie net sien sy irriteer my so baie.”*

(Can't she see she irritates me so much?)

[P2 R1] *“Dan word jy 'n senior, en dan irriteer iets van iemand jou en dan ontstaan daar wees rusie tussen mense.”*

(Then you become a senior and something about someone irritates you and then a fight develops between people.)

Caprara, Perugini and Barbaranelli (1994:125) describe becoming easily irritated as the “tendency to react impulsively, controversially, or rudely at the slightest provocation or disagreement”. According to Krahé (2013:72) individuals who easily become irritated also show higher levels of aggression. Sukhodolsky, Smith, McCauley, Ibrahim and Piasecka (2015:5) argue that irritation may develop into “an irritable mood, argumentativeness, defiant behaviour and vindictiveness”. This type of behaviour may result in temper outbursts which may then lead to aggression (Sukhodolsky *et al.*, 2015:72). Similarly, Krahé (2013:72) notes that an individual may move from being frustrated to experiencing higher levels of irritation.

Fiske (2014:407) defines frustration as “the blocking of any goal-directed sequence of behaviour”. It seems that the degree of frustration influences the intensity of aggressive behaviour (Krahé, 2013:72). Bushman and Huesmann (2010:853) explain just as frustration may turn into anger, when there is no vent for it to escape, anger may become an aggressive rage. Ojanen *et al.* (2012:100) add that frustration and anger do not decrease with age, but that these feeling are be more likely to lead to social aggression. As indicated in the verbatim quotations of the participants cited above, when frustration occurs, the individuals seem to engage more readily in fights or social aggression.

The participants expressed their opinions about why individuals resort to social aggression from a perpetrator's perspective. It appears that social aggression results from a

low level of prosocial behaviour. The perpetrators lack empathy and therefore behave cruelly, without feeling any remorse. The participants' comments suggest that if the perpetrator is deemed to be one of the "popular" girls, she will resort to social aggression in an attempt to maintain her status in the group or even to give herself higher status than her peers. The participants suggested that the perpetrators behave in this way to disguise their feelings of inadequacy or the social anxiety they experience.

[P 2 R11] *"Hulle is so "insecure" oor hulself dat hulle ander mense moet sleg sê dat hulle beter kan voel oor hoe hulle is of oor hoe hulle lyk."*

(They are so insecure about themselves that they have to say nasty things about others in order to feel better about the way they are or about what they look like.)

[P2 R5] *"... hulle het hulle eie probleempies wat hulle op jou dan uithaal in die groepie."*

(... they have their own problems which they take out on you in the group.)

[P1 R11] *"Sy het 'n lae selfbeeld en dan probeer sy ander, sy breek jou af om half haarself op te bou."*

(She has low self-esteem and then she tries to break you down, in order to build herself up.)

[P2 R9] *"Elke meisie wil maar die top punt van almal wees. Sy wil hê almal moet dink sy is die "coolste", die mooiste, die oulikste."*

(Each girl wants to come out on top. She wants everyone to think she is the coolest, the most beautiful, the cutest.)

[P2 R5] *"... sy hou nie daarvan om minderwaardig as iemand anders te voel nie. So alles wat ek dan doen, sal sy wil beter doen. Sy wil meer hê, meer weet."*

(... she does not like to feel inferior to someone else. Therefore everything I do she will want to do better. She wants to have more, know more.)

[P1 R8] *"... some girls feel better about themselves when they make other girls feel worse ..."*

According to Khodabakhsh and Besharat (2011:902), empathy is an individual's "basic capacity which contributes to the management of relationships, the supporting of communal activities, and the group cohesion". It can also be argued that empathy decreases aggressive behaviour (Loudin *et al.*, 2003:432). According to Khodabakhsh and Besharat (2011:904), empathy enables one to establish a positive connection between oneself and the environment or society and thus to want to help rather than harm others. Empathy thus increases the quality of interpersonal relationships (Khodabakhsh & Besharat, 2011:904). In contrast, as indicated by the participants, the female students who exhibit social aggression in their on-campus

residences show little or no empathy towards their victims, thus decreasing the chances of a positive relationship. You and Bellmore (2014:405) explain that a witness of social aggression who is continuously exposed to this type of antisocial behaviour will show less empathy towards the victims after a period of time.

Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean and Knowles (2009:415) state that the need to belong to someone or something is one of the most important fundamental needs of humans. Molden *et al.* (2009:415) explain that in some social groups, individuals are rejected because of their insufficient social standing: in that group and in other social groups, individuals are ignored with the aim of excluding them from the group. Individuals who are rejected by a group become very cautious so that they can protect themselves from further experiences of social loss (Molden *et al.*, 2009:427). However, individuals who are excluded from a group through being ignored have a strong desire to establish a new connection with the group (Molden *et al.*, 2009:427).

Raina and Bhan (2013:51) found females are more insecure than males. They describe insecurity as “an emotional problem, a state of being in disturbance due to the feeling of tension, strain and conflict together with the consequences of tension” (Raina & Bhan, 2013:52). Individuals who feel insecure usually experience rejection, isolation, unhappiness, selfishness, tension and anxiety, and are quiet, nervous and reserved (Raina & Bhan, 2013:52). In contrast, Loudin *et al.* (2003:432) found that females who demonstrate social anxiety during social interaction continuously seek their peers’ approval and are very aware of how their peers evaluate or view them. Furthermore, “individuals high in social anxiety may be more likely than peers to use aggressive means to retaliate” (Loudin *et al.*, 2003:432). They may also use social aggression to exclude peers from certain groups, especially when they fear disapproval from those friends or peers (Loudin *et al.*, 2003:437).

Research suggests that individuals who have low self-confidence or self-esteem may have problems with their physical and mental health, including a tendency towards depression (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton & Caspi, 2006:386). These individuals also do not seem to have very good economic prospects and are likely to commit a crime during adulthood (Trzesniewski *et al.*, 2006:386). There may be other social effects. According to Cowan and Ullman (2006:400), “personal inadequacy or low self-esteem may be related to group rejection”. Loudin *et al.* (2003:437) note that individuals who feel inadequate may engage in socially aggressive behaviour in order to deflect attention onto someone else’s faults.

4.3.2 THEME 2: Female students provide suggestions to change socially aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences

Participants suggested a variety of constructive ways of changing socially aggressive behaviour in university on-campus female residences. Their suggestions included: presenting education programmes, inviting guest speakers to raise awareness of the phenomenon. They could teach students about desired behaviour as opposed to destructive behaviour like social aggression, and create an awareness of the negative effects of social aggression on individuals.

[P2 R7] *“... 'n spreker te kry wat daaroor (social aggression) kan kom praat. Wat net vir meisies bietjie kan sê hoe om op te tree en so.”*
(... to get a speaker who can talk about it [social aggression]. That just can tell girls how to behave and so on.)

[P2 R10] *“Mens kan mos "actually" sulke "cool" sprekers kry wat "actually" vir die mense sê, hoor hier, dit en dit is hoe dit werk.”*
(People can actually get such cool speakers who will actually tell the people, listen here, this and this is how it works.)

[P1 R7] *“... ek dit is baie belangrik om koshuise bewus te maak van hoe groot probleem dit werklik is.”*
(... I think it is very important to make residences aware of how big the problem really is.)

Sayers (2006:1) contends that in order to raise awareness about an issue, sufficient information has to be provided. However, effecting positive change to people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour is extremely difficult. Sayers (2006:47) argues that the following strategies have proved effective in promoting awareness of the identified problem: *Personal communication* which involves meetings, presentations or social activities; *mass communication* which involve the use of social media or printed materials; and *training or education* on the required behaviour in order to provide individuals with incentives to change. Young *et al.* (2006:307) add that “interventions which focus only on aggressive individual will likely fail” as social aggression always takes place in a group context. The research participants indicated that one strategy to follow is to inform the female on-campus residences how serious social aggression is, because most female students do not realise the consequences of this socially aggressive behaviour. The participants also stated that a guest speaker who provides relevant information about social aggression could create greater awareness among female students about:

- how to replace antisocial behaviour with the appropriate prosocial behaviour using effective social skills;
- the harm that can be done to an individual's self-esteem;
- the uniqueness of every female student and her right to use her own voice; and
- how to change their mind sets about socially aggressive behaviour.

Young *et al.* (2006:307) state that in order to decrease social aggression, the reinforcing agents of social aggression must be identified and replaced with prosocial behaviour. This view was also expressed by the participants, but they considered that they would need to acquire prosocial behavioural skills and strategies before this would be possible.

The participants also said that open communication is a prerequisite to raising awareness of how a victim may experience social aggression and may be a catalyst for change. They suggested raising awareness of socially aggressive behaviour through alternative social activities that include different cultures. The participants also stressed that intervention strategies should focus on making students aware that the ultimate reason for being at the university is to study.

[P2 R10] *“Meisies moet leer om met mekaar te kommunikeer direk en dit dadelik en dit aan te spreek.”*

(Girls must learn how to communicate directly with each other and at that immediately, and to address it [the problem].)

[P1 R9] *“... wat ek dink ook is meisies moet eerder met mekaar praat as wat hulle met ander meisies praat.”*

(... what I also think is girls must talk to each other instead of talking to other girls.)

[P1 R2] *“... dit kan verbeter word as mens gereeld sessies met die meisies het dat jy met hulle praat daaroor ...”*

(... it can improve if you have regular sessions with the girls that you talk with them about that ...)

[P2 R1] *“Maar ook in 'n manier moet daar iemand wees wat as mediator op tree ...”*

(But also in a way, there must be someone who acts as a mediator ...)

[P2 R5] *“Niemand is eintlik hier vir die koshuis, jy is hier om te swot.”*

(No one is actually here for the residence, you are here to swot.)

According to Nel and Payne-Van Staden (2014:194), communication “is the interaction between two or more persons where messages are interchanged. Building good interpersonal relationships, however, requires open and effective communication (Koen, 2014:301). Several of the participants indicated that the open communication between each other would be the best strategy to decrease social aggression in female on-campus residences. Participant P2 R8 argued that in order to promote communication between female students in their residence, an internal residence “*aksie*” (function) can be arranged where they share stories and get to know each other better. The participant recommended that there should not be a fee involved because this would mean some students would be excluded from participating because they have limited allowances. Participant P1 R1 argued that that internal residence functions would help female students to get to know one another better and to learn that culture and race should not be a barrier. According to Fiske (2014:491), groups must work together to improve the performance of their members as a whole as well as their commitment to one another which can only take place when all group members are accepted and tolerant towards each other. Fiske (2014:491) notes that those that feel included become part of the group more easily and feel free to express themselves.

Participant P2 R1 suggested that regular meetings with senior students be held in the residence, in order for everyone to share their feelings and what upsets them in their on-campus residences. This participant added that during these meetings it is important to have a mediator present to assist in managing conflict situations. According to Kriesberg (2012:149), “mediation generally [takes] the form of listening to the disputants and then handing down a binding decision”. Kriesberg (2012:151-152) emphasises that a mediator should be present to facilitate the communication process, so that all the disputants have the opportunity to say how they feel. A mediator should also make sure that the information transmitted from one person to another is correctly understood to prevent socially aggressive behaviour.

Participant P2 R5 stated that the main purpose of being part of a university or on-campus residence is to study and to ensure a better future for yourself. Accordingly, you should focus on successfully completing your studies, rather than focusing on being the best: the social status you have in your on-campus residences will not help you in the workplace one day. This is consistent with the view expressed by Chan, Brown and Ludlow (2014:1) that Higher Education Institutions exist to make sure students “create and disseminate knowledge, and to develop higher order cognitive and communicative skills in young people, such as, the ability to think logically, the motivation to challenge the status quo, and the capacity to develop sophisticated values”. While it is true that students need to develop social skills as well as

good interpersonal relationships with their peers, it is more important to acquire the necessary skills to deal with the continuous changes of today's economy and technology (Chan *et al.*, 2014:2). Therefore it is important for students to remember the main purpose of being at a university is to ensure they have a good quality of life afterwards, rather than to gain the short-term advantages, such as being the best and most popular in their on-campus residences.

Some participants believe that the individual person is the primary catalyst for social transformation. They indicate that an individual is responsible for her own actions and that socially aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences will only change if every individual accepts responsibility for her own behaviour.

[P1 R10] *“Ek dink dit begin ook half by 'n mens self. Jy moet jou fout kan agterkom, kan sê, en kan voel ek moet hier aan werk.”*

(I think it also starts with yourself. You must recognise your mistake, be able to admit it and to feel I must work on this.)

[P1 R2] *“As jy weet hoekom jy iets doen, kan jy 'n poging aanwend om dit nie te doen nie.”*

(If you know why you do something, you can make an effort not to do it.)

Participant P1 R10 stated that in order to change socially aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences, female students must engage in introspection to determine whether they like the type of person they are. In a related comment, participant P1 R2 said that in order to change something, you need to know what you are doing wrong. This participant explained that you could change the way you behave and thus reduce socially aggressive behaviour by becoming aware that your gossiping could have a negative emotional effect on someone else. Female students need to decide to accept responsibility for their own actions and behaviour. Frankl (1992:140) states that “happiness cannot be pursued, it must be ensured”, in other words, when female residents take responsibility for their own actions, there could be more happiness and satisfaction in their on-campus residences. Fiske (2014:357) supports the view that individuals must take responsibility for their own actions, but argues that that they need to recognise that they need assistance from those who have higher status. Fiske (2014:357-358) also believes that victims must be more assertive: “[v]ictims are deprived, but they must assert themselves, along with other subordinates who must mobilise because humans are basically good and can bring about change for the better.”

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the themes and categories which were identified by IPA. Theme one was the different ways in which the female students in this study experienced social aggression. It affected female students negatively on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level in on-campus residences. Theme two was participants' suggested ways of effectively reducing or changing socially aggressive behaviour in their residences.

The next chapter presents the factual as well as conceptual conclusions of the study. The suggestions for future research and the limitations of this research study are also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five provides an overview of this research study. It outlines the factual as well as conceptual conclusions and the contribution this study makes to the existing literature on the social aggression of female students. It also suggests ways of promoting the well-being of female students who reside in on-campus residences. Finally, it lists some of the constraints experienced during the completion of the study.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Trafford and Leshem (2008:130) contend that the conclusion of your study must be congruent with the methods of analysis, interpretations and findings that were discussed in previous chapters. The conclusions of this research study are divided into factual and conceptual conclusions (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:140). The factual conclusions in this study indicate that the research aims were obtained by using the findings in Chapter Four, while the conceptual conclusions show that the theoretical framework of this study support the findings in Chapter Four.

5.2.1 Factual Conclusions

According to Trafford and Leshem (2008:140), factual conclusions consist of the findings that were generated as well as what can be concluded from these findings. In the following section, the research aims are provided and also the findings which support these research aims.

5.2.1.1 Aim one: Exploration and description of female on-campus residence students' conceptualisation of social aggression.

The following subsidiary research questions were directed to the research participants: "*How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?*" The participants' main response to this was that social aggression, which may be caused by jealousy, is used to hurt other individuals

without their knowledge. They also indicated that social aggression takes the form of gossip designed to diminish the social status of others even though the stories that are spread are not true. Some participants also indicated that social aggression usually takes place in a group context where the group members exclude other individuals from the group if they feel they do not fulfil the requirements for being a member of that group.

The participants also revealed that female students who engage in socially aggressive behaviour to crush others usually do so verbally. One participant stated that social aggression is characterised not by physical aggression, but by the emotional damage gossip and malicious rumours cause. The participants also explained that social aggression may be non-verbal, for example a dirty look.

5.2.1.2 Aim two: Exploration and description of female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression in residences.

The participants indicated that their experience of social aggression caused a range of negative emotions like feeling intimidated, humiliated, excluded or belittled. The participants stated that they sometimes felt isolated and excluded from a group as some female students made it clear that if those who did not meet certain requirements were not good enough to be part of the group. One of the participants also explained that she experienced social aggression as feeling belittled when the others used a language in her residence that she did not understand. This also made her feel incompetent and not worthy of being part of the on-campus residence. It seems that female students from a different background or culture from the main group are more likely to experience social aggression. They can easily be excluded from a group, because they are seen as different and also not equipped to stand their ground, for instance, when they are unable to speak the language that is used by a particular group or by most people in the on-campus residence. Some participants explained that social aggression could lead to a decrease of self-esteem, because if you frequently hear how bad you are, then you will start believing that you are and act accordingly.

It is evident from the findings that social aggression has a negative influence on interpersonal relationships as it usually occurs in a group context. The participants indicated that female students spread malicious rumours about other individuals in the group. These rumours influence the whole group and damage relationships. However, one participant stated that gossiping may be used as a bonding mechanism, because two individuals who do not like a certain individual have a mutual "enemy" and something to talk about. Several participants explained that backstabbing and betrayal cause the most damage to interpersonal

relationships as the information they have entrusted to their friends is used to humiliate or embarrass them. One of the participants said that jealousy may lie behind the betrayal or backstabbing of friends. The participants also indicated that the gossiping and spreading of rumours is usually a means of revenge after an incident does not go according to plan to get their own back on someone. This may result in a vicious cycle of social aggression.

The participants also experienced social aggression in social networks like Whatsapp groups and Facebook. Social media are seen as a means of social aggression because it can be used to say bad things which may negatively influence another's social status. Social media like TV and the internet may also increase social aggression. They show forms of female social aggression as acceptable behaviour. One of the participants also stated that the social media show what the perfect girl should look like and what proper behaviour is. This encourages female students to gossip about other females that do not meet those requirements.

They also provided their experiences of social aggression from the perpetrator's perspective. They stated that the reason why perpetrators resort to social aggression is their insecurity and low self-esteem. Perpetrators may exhibit social aggression in order to hide their feelings of inadequacy and the anxiety of not being the best or the most popular. This causes perpetrators to resort to social aggression. They are impervious to the damage they do to the social status or emotions of others as they are pre-occupied with their own social status and the need to be extremely popular. Reynolds and Repetti (2010:291) found that the victims experienced more negative feelings than the perpetrators. Reynolds and Repetti (2010:293) state that perpetrators use the strategy of ignoring their victims to attain their goal or to take revenge more frequently than gossiping and exclusion.

In previous research studies, the participants explained their experiences from the victim's perspective. However, in this research study, the participants described their experiences of social aggression from the perpetrator's perspective. A possible reason for this is that some of the participants had experienced being both a victim and a perpetrator. Therefore they could talk about their experiences of being a perpetrator. Another reason may be that some of the participants witnessed instances of social aggression that occurred around them and witnessed the behaviour of perpetrators.

5.2.1.3 Aim three: Explanation of why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.

According to the findings, female students resort to social aggression because they wanted to feel more important, or have better social status or better physical appearance than other female students. As some participants indicated, social aggression may also result from jealousy and competitiveness. The participants said that females may resort to social aggression because they feel insecure about themselves and are not as pretty or as slim as other female students: they need to make negative comments about others to feel better about themselves. One of the participants stated that retaliation may be the reason why females resort to social aggression. They desire to hurt the person who hurt them and also to show that they are not afraid of the perpetrator. The participants also indicated that females resort to social aggression in order to keep their friends and to “gang up” against the rest. Irritation with each other was identified as one of the aspects that caused females to resort to social aggression.

Several participants stated that female students resort to social aggression because cultural and gender norms regard physical aggression by females as not socially acceptable. Therefore they usually resort to socially aggressive behaviour as it is covert and so not easily identifiable.

The findings also indicated that females are raised by their parents to be polite and kind, therefore females find another way of dealing with aggression or retaliating.

5.2.1.4 Aim four: Provision of suggestions for female on-campus residence students in order to change social aggressive behaviour in residences.

Several participants stated that a guest speaker would be the most effective way of changing socially aggressive behaviour into prosocial behaviour. They indicated that these speakers could advise female students on appropriate behaviour or how to react when they are faced with social aggression. Some participants felt that the issue of social aggression could be resolved by encouraging communication between female students in their on-campus residences, rather than gossiping or rumour mongering. One of the participants explained that it is very important to involve a mediator during a discussion between female students to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to explain her side of the story. It was also evident from the findings that socially aggressive behaviour will change only when individuals take responsibility for their own actions and decide to adopt more acceptable behaviour.

5.2.2 Conceptual Conclusions

According to Trafford and Leshem (2008:140), conceptual conclusions involve “expressing the conclusion through abstract ideas and theories”. The concepts used and explained in this study must be congruent with the conceptual conclusions in order to ensure theoretical coherence. In the following section, the theories that were identified in the theoretical framework, section 2.3, will be used to underpin and explain the findings on social aggression.

The *Social Learning Theory* principles explain that certain behaviour can be socially learned by observing others, especially if those observed have a high social status and are likeable. This theory is relevant to this study as social media portray the perfect and popular girl in the eyes of the outside world exhibiting socially aggressive behaviour. Female students are frequently exposed to these images and are thus influenced by what these images. They replicate these actions in the hope of attaining a high social status. Female students are also influenced by the socially aggressive behaviour of fellow students in their on-campus residences who have a high social status and are popular. Other female students observe this behaviour and then use it to raise their social status. This research thus shows that social aggression may be entrenched as an effective way for female students to gain and or maintain popularity and social status.

The *Social Cognitive Theory* is concerned with social interaction between individuals. According to Schunk and Usher (2012:13), the social cognitive theory includes “reciprocal interactions among personal, behavioural and social/environmental factors”. Therefore when individuals are exposed to an environment associated with social aggression, it will have a direct influence on the type of behaviour those individuals will exhibit; there is a reciprocal interaction between the environment and particular behaviour. A possible explanation for the frequent instances of socially aggressive behaviour in on-campus residences is the competition and jealousy among female students in a hierarchical system. Female students, who vie for popularity and social status, begin to exhibit the type of behaviour seen in their environment as it seems to be the norm in their residence environment.

The *Bio-ecological Theory* explains that an individual is fundamentally influenced by his or her interaction with different aspects of the surrounding environment. Therefore the way individuals interact with their environment influence their behaviour, their relationships and how they interact with each other (Härkönen, 2007:4). If female students are continuously exposed to a socially aggressive environment, their personal development as well as behaviour is likely to be influenced by it. This in turn may influence their interpersonal

relationships. Thus, in the course of time, female students may develop socially aggressive behaviour such as gossiping, spreading rumours or backstabbing.

The *Gender Schema Theory* describes the influence gender norms have on the type of behaviour that is demonstrated by an individual. It is seen as acceptable for males to be physically aggressive, probably because its association with strength and dominance. In contrast, physical aggression is not socially acceptable behaviour for females as it does not accord with the gender norms for females (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:181). The data of this study support the notion that social aggression is seen as more acceptable than physical aggression among females.

The *Conflict Theory* explains that the unequal distribution of power and resources may lead to conflict between individuals: power is “fundamental to [the] conflict theory” (Coser *et al.*, 2006:213). According to the findings of this study, female students see social status as very important as it gives them some sort of power over others. Therefore they use social aggression in the form of gossiping or spreading rumours to attain high social status. When some female students have higher social status than other female students, the unequal distribution of power may result in conflict. Female students of higher status may resort to socially aggressive behaviour to retain their status. At the same time, female students who enjoy lower social status than their peers may be provoked into socially aggressive behaviour because of their jealousy.

The *Conformity Theory* is concerned with individuals who change their behaviour in order to be part of a group or be accepted as part of a group. Tang, Wu and Sun (2013:347) add that conformity “is a type of social influence involving a change in opinion or behaviour in order to fit in with a group”. According to the findings in this study, female students may engage in gossiping or the spreading of rumours as a bonding mechanism between friends. Most females see interpersonal relationships as very important so they resort to measures like spreading rumours that are not true just to be part of a group. The findings show that some female students are afraid to act against perpetrators. Therefore they adopt or conform to the behaviour of perpetrators just to avoid retaliation.

The *General Aggression Model* explains that aggressive acts take place in order to provide a better understanding of aggressive and violent behaviour. The existing knowledge and experience an individual has of aggressive behaviour will determine how he or she interprets a situation, what decision will be made and what action will be taken. From the findings of this study, it is evident that some female students are provoked into immediate retaliation, using the same type of behaviour that was used against them. This sets in motion

the vicious cycle of socially aggressive behaviour again. It seems that an effective way of promoting the well-being of female students is to change or improve the experiences female students have of social aggression.

5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

As seen throughout this research study, very little research has been done on female students' lived experiences of social aggression in the context of university on-campus residences. Therefore the findings of this study, which are based on the data generated during individual interviews and individual photo-elicitation interviews, are a contribution to the literature on the phenomenon of social aggression. This research shows clearly that social aggression occurs not only in the school context, but also in the higher education context.

At present much more research has been done on relational aggression than on social aggression. The findings provide a better understanding of what social aggression is and why female students engage in it. The participants indicated that they experienced negative feeling of humiliation, exclusion and belittlement during social aggression. It was also evident in the findings that these students resorted to social aggression, which is more socially acceptable for females than physical aggression, mainly because of jealousy, insecurity, and the desire to become part of a group.

The main contribution of this research study is the finding that the participants perceive social aggression from the perpetrators perspective. Most studies only focus on social aggression from the victim's perspective. The findings make it evident that perpetrators resort to social aggression, because of jealousy, the need to belong to a group, and the desire for higher social status or competitiveness. The participants also indicated that perpetrators are so bent on trying to better their position that they show no mercy towards the victim. This may also be the result of insecurity or jealousy.

5.4 THE RESEARCHER'S SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF FEMALE STUDENTS

The review of the relevant research made it very evident that social aggression is a social problem that needs to be addressed at an early stage to limit its influence on the well-being of individuals. As social aggressions involve gossiping, spreading of rumours, backstabbing and the diminishment of social status, it may result in feelings such as rejection, insecurity,

inadequacy, depression and sadness. These feelings may negatively influence the self-esteem of victims and their academic performance, not only the social interaction between victims and others. In order to counter the negative effects of social aggression and promote the well-being of female students in on-campus residences, the following strategies are suggested:

- Emotion-focused and problem-solving strategies

Remillard and Lamb (2005:223) argue that there are certain emotion-focused and problem-solving strategies that can enable victims to cope with the experience of social aggression. Emotion-focused strategies involve “avoidance, ignoring, withdrawing, and expressing oneself negatively”, whereas problem-solving strategies involve seeking support from other individuals (Remillard & Lamb, 2005:223). Research indicates that females mainly use social support to resolve conflict in friendships. These strategies could be explained during student meetings at female on-campus residences or during presentations by an invited speaker from outside the university.

- Addressing the group dynamic

Young, Boye and Nelson (2006:307) contend that it is vital to address the group, not only the individual, as social aggression usually occurs in a group context. As suggested by the participants, presentations can be arranged to educate students on prosocial behaviour and ways of avoiding resorting to social aggression.

- Functional Behaviour Assessment

Young *et al.* (2006:307) also add that Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) can be used to identify what provokes socially aggressive behaviour and how prosocial behaviour can best be taught and reinforced. However, Young *et al.* (2006:307) warn that the FBA strategy may not be fully effective as covert aggression is usually difficult to identify. In order to use FBA in female on-campus residences, professionals could be employed to do the assessments and to provide feedback over a period of time.

- Tootling

Tootling can also be used in university on-campus residences to reduce social aggression. Tootling is a process in which peers focus on the positive characteristics and behaviour of one other (Young *et al.*, 2006:307). This strategy can help students to develop prosocial behaviour and not to focus on the negative aspects of others. Tootling can be used by the house committee members when they encounter instances of social aggression involving particular female students. Tootling can be used to emphasise that they need to focus on the positive characteristics, not on the faults and mistakes of others.

- Improvement of communication skills

Effective communication between the residence students and their house committee members (HC) could help the HC to identify and address incidents of social aggression at an early stage. This could prevent retaliation by the female students concerned and also prevent a cycle of social aggression. When an issue of social aggression is brought to the attention of the HC of a female on-campus residence, they can also reinforce the type of prosocial behaviour that should prevail in a female on-campus residence. As also suggested by the participants, the house committee members can act as mediators when addressing a social aggression issue and ensure that it is effectively resolved.

- Open communication

Social activities in female on-campus residences can be arranged to create opportunities to get to know one another and to improve communication among them. The participants suggested that these social activities should be used to emphasise the value of diversity and the need to find common ground rather than to focus on differences in culture, ethnicity, religion and values.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research in the following areas could benefit society:

- Male students' experiences of social aggression at Higher Education Institutions. Social aggression is not only prevalent between females; males also exhibit social aggression.

- The development of an effective programme to reduce social aggression in university on-campus residences.
- The relationships between good leadership and social aggression in university on-campus residences.
- Social aggression involving male and female students at residences at different universities in South Africa.

5.6 LIMITATIONS

Despite its strengths, study has some limitations. This was caused by the following constraints:

- I completed my study in Namibia, which made it difficult to access resources because of the distances involved.
- I had limited time to interview all the participants during the data generation phase in South Africa.
- Some of the participants did not show up for their scheduled interviews. This meant I had to find other suitable participants who were willing to take part in the research study at short notice.

5.7 SUMMARY

Chapter Five provided clear links between the factual and conceptual conclusions and the aims of this research study, and highlighted the congruence between the findings and the theories that form part of my theoretical framework. Suggestions on how to reduce socially aggressive behaviour between females as well as recommendations for further research were also provided. The limitations of this research were clearly identified.

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Addendum A

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa, 2520
Tel: 018 285 2265

Date:

The Dean of Students
.....

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Hendrina Johnston, an MEd student from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus at the Faculty of Education Sciences. I am currently in the process of completing a research study entitled: *“Female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences”*. The research study is under the supervision of Prof. A.J. Botha at the Faculty of Education Sciences, School of Education Studies.

The aims of the research study are:

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
- To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences

Request to conduct research:

In order to complete the research study, I need to generate (collect) data from female on-campus students about students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences through individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews. The data generation process will consist of two sequential phases: During the first phase, the participants will be informed of what the data generation process entails and the ethical issues that will be considered throughout the data generation process. In phase one, two questions will be directed to the participants to determine their conceptualisation of social aggression in an on-campus residence as well as about their experiences of social aggression in residences. During the second phase, the participants will be asked to take five photographs that depict their experiences of social aggression in on-campus residences. The photographs will be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to

transcribe the data of the two phases verbatim for analysis purposes. All the findings will be verified by an independent coder.

The photographs and transcriptions of the interviews will be securely stored after use during the photo-elicitation-interviews as well as during the data analysis process. The data generation process will meet the ethical criteria set by the NWU such as ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. I will ensure that the participants understand that they are under no obligation to take part in the research study. All the participants who are willing to participate can withdraw from the research study at any stage if they wish to do so without any consequences.

The following questions will be used during the individual interviews:

- How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?
- What are your experiences of social aggression in your residence?

The following photo-elicitation prompt will be posed to each participant:

- Do you experience social aggression in residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence.

Photo-elicitation-interviews:

The photographs taken in phase one are brought to the photo-elicitation-interview by either the participant or the researcher and will be used as visual material during the photo-elicitation-interview. I will base the questions used to elicit responses during the interviews on the photographs taken in phase one.

Thank you for your support

Hendrina Johnston

MEd student

+264 81 4242 9313

hendrinajohnston@gmail.com

Prof. A. J. Botha

Supervisor

(018) 285 2265

.....
I hereby give permission to Hendrina Johnston to conduct the research with female students, who reside in on-campus residences on the NWU's Potchefstroom campus, to voluntarily participate in the research study.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Addendum B

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

Date:

The Chairperson of the Student Representative Council

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Hendrina Johnston, an MEd student from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus at the Faculty of Education Sciences. I am currently in the process of completing a research study entitled: *“Female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences”*. The research study is under the supervision of Prof. A.J. Botha at the Faculty of Education Sciences, School of Education Studies.

The aims of the research study are:

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences

Request to conduct research:

In order to complete the research study, I need to generate (collect) data from female on-campus students about students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences through individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews. The data generation process will consist of two sequential phases: During the first phase, the participants will be informed of what the data generation process entails and the ethical issues that will be considered throughout the data generation process. In phase one, two questions will be directed to the participants to determine their conceptualisation of social aggression in an on-campus residence as well as about their experiences of social aggression in residences. During the second phase, the participants will be asked to take five photographs that depict their experiences of social aggression in on-campus residences. The photographs will be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to

transcribe the data of the two phases verbatim for analysis purposes. All the findings will be verified by an independent coder.

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- How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?
- What are your experiences of social aggression in your residence?

The following photo-elicitation prompt will be posed to each participant:

- Do you experience social aggression in residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence.

Photo-elicitation-interviews:

The photographs taken in phase one are brought to the photo-elicitation-interview by either the participant or the researcher and will be used as visual material during the photo-elicitation-interview. I will base the questions used to elicit responses during the interviews on the photographs taken in phase one.

Thank you for your support

Hendrina Johnston
MEd student
+264 81 4242 9313
hendrinajohnston@gmail.com

Prof. A. J. Botha
Supervisor
(018) 285 2265

.....
I hereby give permission to Hendrina Johnston to conduct the research with female students, who reside in on-campus residences on the NWU's Potchefstroom campus, to voluntarily participate in the research study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Addendum C



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

Date:

The House Parents (Wardens)

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Hendrina Johnston, an MEd student from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus at the Faculty of Education Sciences. I am currently in the process of completing a research study entitled: *“Female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences”*. The research study is under the supervision of Prof. A.J. Botha at the Faculty of Education Sciences, School of Education Studies.

The aims of the research study are:

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences

Request to conduct research:

In order to complete the research study, I need to generate (collect) data from female on-campus students about students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences through individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews. The data generation process will consist of two sequential phases: During the first phase, the participants will be informed of what the data generation process entails and the ethical issues that will be considered throughout the data generation process. In phase one, two questions will be directed to the participants to determine their conceptualisation of social aggression in an on-campus residence as well as about their experiences of social aggression in residences. During the second phase, the participants will be asked to take five photographs that depict their experiences of social aggression in on-campus residences. The photographs will be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to

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- How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?
- What are your experiences of social aggression in your residence?

The following photo-elicitation prompt will be posed to each participant:

- Do you experience social aggression in residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence.

Photo-elicitation-interviews:

The photographs taken in phase one are brought to the photo-elicitation-interview by either the participant or the researcher and will be used as visual material during the photo-elicitation-interview. I will base the questions used to elicit responses during the interviews on the photographs taken in phase one.

Thank you for your support

Hendrina Johnston
MEd student
+264 81 4242 9313
hendrinajohnston@gmail.com

Prof. A. J. Botha
Supervisor
(018) 285 2265

.....
I hereby give permission to Hendrina Johnston to conduct the research with female students, who reside in on-campus residences on the NWU's Potchefstroom campus, to voluntarily participate in the research study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Addendum D



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

Date:

The Primaria

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Hendrina Johnston, an MEd student from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus at the Faculty of Education Sciences. I am currently in the process of completing a research study entitled: *“Female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences”*. The research study is under the supervision of Prof. A.J. Botha at the Faculty of Education Sciences, School of Education Studies.

The aims of the research study are:

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students’ experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences.

Request to conduct research:

In order to complete the research study, I need to generate (collect) data from female on-campus students about students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences through individual interviews as well as photo-elicitation-interviews. The data generation process will consist of two sequential phases: During the first phase, the participants will be informed of what the data generation process entails and the ethical issues that will be considered throughout the data generation process. In phase one, two questions will be directed to the participants to determine their conceptualisation of social aggression in an on-campus residence as well as about their experiences of social aggression in residences. During the second phase, the participants will be asked to take five photographs that depict their experiences of social aggression in on-campus residences. The photographs will be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to

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Thank you for your support

Hendrina Johnston
MEd student
+264 81 4242 9313
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Prof. A. J. Botha
Supervisor
(018) 285 2265

.....
I hereby give permission to Hendrina Johnston to conduct the research with female students, who reside in on-campus residences on the NWU's Potchefstroom campus, to voluntarily participate in the research study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

CONSENT (PERMISSION) TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the study:

Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to voluntarily participate in this research study because you fit the selection criteria as you are a female student at the North-West University living in an on-campus residence. The purpose of the research is to generate (collect) sufficient data about female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.
- To provide suggestions that could change social aggressive behaviour in female on-campus residences.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any stage of the data generation process without any consequences of being harmed in any way. The following contact details are of a Psychologist at the Potchefstroom campus Support Services who is available if you experience any uncomfortable feelings during or after the data generation process of this study.

The Psychologist can be contacted at the Potchefstroom campus Support Services:

018 299 1777

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IN TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH STUDY?

- You will be informed about the visual ethics that must be considered when taking photographs.
- You will have a chance to talk about your experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.
- You will help the researcher to understand social aggression in university on-campus residences' context better by making a contribution to the research study.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

You will be requested to take part in a two phase data generation process that entails the following:

Phase 1: Individual interviews

The individual interviews will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. The recordings will be discarded when the transcription and data analysis process is completed. The following questions will be asked during the individual interviews:

- How do you conceptualise (understand) social aggression?
- What are your experiences of social aggression in your residence?

After individual interviews, you will be asked to use a camera (cell phone camera or disposable camera) to take five photographs that depict your experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences. You will be informed about what the data generation process consists of and the visual ethics that must be considered during the taking of photographs. The following prompt will be given to you:

- Do you experience social aggression in your residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence.

The photographs can be sent to me in a way you find convenient (email; MMS; any Smart Phone App) or you may print the photographs yourself and then bring them along to the photo-elicitation-interview session.

If you are willing to participate in the individual interviews, please complete the form below.

Please tick the appropriate box.

I do not want the interview to be audio-recorded.

I give my consent that the interview can be audio-recorded.

**I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN PHASE 1 (SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS)
OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

Name of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Phase 2: Photo-elicitation interviews

The photographs taken in Phase One of the data generation process, will be used during Phase Two of data generation. You will be asked to provide a caption or title for each of the five photographs where after the following questions will be directed to you:

- Explain each of the captions that you provided for the photographs.
- How do the captions reflect your experience of social aggression in the residence?

You will then need to choose one photograph that best depicts your lived experience of social aggression in on-campus residences and provide a reason for choosing that specific photograph. The following question will be directed to you:

- What is depicted in this chosen photograph that the others do not?

At the end of the photo-elicitation-interviews, the following questions will be posed to you to promote a critical reflection of your perception of social aggression in on-campus residences.

- Why do you think residence students resort to social aggression?
- What suggestions can female on-campus residence students make that could help to change socially aggressive behaviour in residences?

Consent to use photographs

I hereby give or refuse permission that my photographs that depict my experiences about social aggression in university on-campus residences may be used in order to help the researcher (Miss H. Johnston) reach the aims of the research study.

Please tick the appropriate block.

- Yes: I give consent that my photographs may be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews and in the research study to gain better understanding of social aggression in on-campus residences.
- No: I do not give permission that my photographs may be used during the photo-elicitation-interviews and in the research study to gain better understanding of social aggression in on-campus residences.

Complete the following.

Please give me credit when you use my photographs for publication purposes.

Full name of participant: _____

Please do not mention my name when you use my photographs for publication.

Please use codes when using my photograph to give me credit.

Comments:

Every attempt will be made by the investigators to keep all information collected in this study confidential. If any publication results from this research, you will not be identified by name.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

If you have any questions pertaining to your participation in this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Hendrina Johnston by telephoning (+264 81 424 9313) or by e-mail (hendrinajohnston@gmail.com).

DISCLAIMER/WITHDRAWAL

You agree that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time without prejudicing your standing within the North-West University, thus you as participant will not be damaged in any way by withdrawing from the research study.

I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN PHASE 2 (PHOTO-ELICITATION-INTERVIEWS) OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Name of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

CONCLUSION

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the consent form
- Agree to participate in this research study

- Gave permission that the individual interviews and photo-elicitation-interviews can be audio recorded.
- You are aware that the option of phoning or seeing the Psychologist at the Potchefstroom campus Support Services is available if you need to talk to the Psychologist during or after the data generation process.

Researcher's name

Researcher's signature

Date

Participant's name

Participant's signature

Date

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT?

Aggressive behaviour among people raises concern not only at national levels but also at international levels (Cilliers, 2014; De Vries, 2013; Hauser, 2007; Kruger, 2013; Louw, Hosken & Davids, 2014; Rademeyer, 2013; Stevens, 2012; Strydom, 2015). Although literature attests that a vast amount of studies were conducted on the physical forms of aggression (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:176), the research on aggression has shifted its focus to other forms of aggression that encapsulate non-physical forms of aggression which include social aggression (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008:176). Archer and Coyne (2005:212) posit that although research indicates that females are just as aggressive as their male counterparts, social or relational aggression is more typical of female aggressive behaviour. Longa (2011:1) cautions that concerns of social aggression are evident, not only at school level but also at university level and highlights the negative consequences of social aggression as well as the “negative outcomes in both the victim and aggressor”.

Previous research focussed specifically on aggression in school contexts, leaving a gap for research on aggression, specifically social aggression at university level. In order to respond to this identified gap in literature, I intend to focus on social aggression among female students in on-campus residences at a university.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' conceptualisation of social aggression.
- To explore and describe female on-campus residence students' experiences of social aggression in residences.
- To explain why female on-campus residence students resort to social aggression.

- To provide suggestions for female on-campus residence students in order to change social aggressive behaviour in residences.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any stage of the data generation process without any consequences of being harmed in any way. The following contact details of a Psychologist at the Potchefstroom campus Support Services can be used if you experience any uncomfortable feelings during or after the data generation process of this study.

The Psychologist can be contacted at the Potchefstroom campus Support Services: **018 299 1777**

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IN TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH STUDY?

- You will be informed about the visual ethics that must be considered when taking photographs.
- You will have a chance to talk about your experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.
- You will help the researcher to understand social aggression in university on-campus residences' context better by making a contribution to the research study.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

You will be requested to take part in a two phase data generation process that entails the following:

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The individual interviews will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. The recordings will be discarded when the transcription and data analysis process is completed. The following questions will be asked during the individual interviews:

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After individual interviews, you will be asked to use a camera (cell phone camera or disposable camera) to take five photographs that depict your experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences. You will be informed about what the data generation process consists of and the visual ethics that must be considered during the taking of photographs. The following prompt will be given to you:

- Do you experience social aggression in your residence? If so, take five photographs depicting how you experience social aggression in your residence.

The photographs can be sent to me in a way you find convenient (email; MMS; any Smart Phone App) or you may print the photographs yourself and then bring them along to the photo-elicitation-interview session.

Phase 2: Photo-elicitation interviews

The photographs taken in Phase One of the data generation process, will be used during Phase Two of data generation. You will be asked to provide a caption or title for each of the five photographs where after the following questions will be directed to you:

- Explain each of the captions that you provided for the photographs.
- How do the captions reflect your experience of social aggression in the residence?

You will then need to choose one photograph that best depicts your lived experience of social aggression in on-campus residences and provide a reason for choosing that specific photograph. The following question will be directed to you:

- What is depicted in this chosen photograph that the others do not?

At the end of the photo-elicitation-interviews, the following questions will be posed to you to promote a critical reflection of your perception of social aggression in on-campus residences.

- Why do you think residence students resort to social aggression?
- What suggestions can female on-campus residence students make that could help to change socially aggressive behaviour in residences?

If you have any questions pertaining to your participation in this research study or wish to participate, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Hendrina Johnston by telephoning (+264 81 424 9313) or by e-mail (hendrinajohnston@gmail.com).

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Title of the study:

Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

By signing the following agreement, I as _____ (specific job description) agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. After consulting with the *Researcher*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

Name & Surname	Signature	Date
----------------	-----------	------

Name & Surname	Signature	Date
----------------	-----------	------

ADDENDUM H

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FROM TRANSCRIBER



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 285 2265

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Title of the study:

Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

By signing the following agreement, I as Transcriber (specific job description) agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. After consulting with the *Researcher*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

<u>Carsia P. Hesselmann</u>	<u>CH</u>	<u>04.11.2016</u>
Name & Surname	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name & Surname	Signature	Date

ADDENDUM I

LETTER FROM INDEPENDENT CODER

Dr Marina Velma Snyman DEd, MPhil, Honours BA, BA, HED (PG), HED (PG Pre-Primary), DSE (Remedial Education) PMT Independent Practice (PMT 0073687)	
PO Box 252	Tel: 011 849 0631
BENONI	Fax: 011 849 0631
1500	Mobile: 083 450 3850
E-mail mvsnyman@gmail.com	Date: 3 November 2016

Female students experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences

Hendrina Johnston's research data on ***Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences*** was analysed by Dr Marina Velma Snyman in June 2016. The researcher and the independent coder coded the collected data adhering to a prescribed protocol. A consensus discussion was held between the researcher and the independent coder on 25 June 2016 to refine the identified themes.

Dr MV Snyman (Psychometrist)

ADDENDUM J

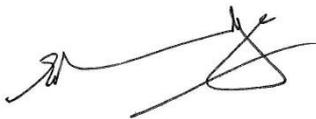
LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Dr Elaine Ridge
Freelance Editor and Translator
eridge@adept.co.za
elaineridge42@gmail.com
Cell: 083 564 1553
Landline: 021 8871554

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to attest that I have edited the language of the thesis: “Female students’ experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences”
by Hendrina Johnston.



(Dr) Elaine Ridge BA UED (Natal) DEd (Stell)
Freelance Editor and Translator

6 November 2016

ADDENDUM K

TURN-IT-IN REPORT

22116729:MEd_Hendrina_Johnston_22116729_final.pdf

ORIGINALITY REPORT

%7	%4	%1	%5
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to North West University Student Paper	%3
2	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	%1
3	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	<%1
4	Submitted to University of Pretoria Student Paper	<%1
5	scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source	<%1
6	www.ukessays.com Internet Source	<%1
7	Cavanaugh, Doreen, and Sis Wenger. "Healthy Development in Youth with an Alcohol- or Drug-Impaired Parent", Encyclopedia of Primary Prevention and Health Promotion, 2014. Publication	<%1
8	public.psych.iastate.edu Internet Source	<%1

ADDENDUM L

PROOF OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
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Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences (ESREC)** at the meeting held on **26/11/2015**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Female students' experiences of social aggression in university on-campus residences.											
Study Leader/Supervisor: Prof AJ Botha											
Student: H Johnston											
Ethics number:											
N	W	U	0	0	4	4	5	1	5	A	2
Institution			Study Number				Year		Status		
<small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small>											
Application Type: N/A											
Commencement date: 2015-11-26				Expiry date: 2016-11-30				Risk: N/A			

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- x Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the ESREC (if applicable).
- x Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the ESREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- x The study leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the project
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- x The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the ESREC. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- x The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- x In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and ESREC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - . any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - . it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the ESREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - . the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - . new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- x ESREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Erna.Conradie@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 4656

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or ESREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA
Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis

Du Plessis
Date: 2016.11.18
08:19:32 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)