CYBERBULLYING AT WORK:

EXPLORING UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing evidence that workplace cyberbullying exerts a significant toll on employees and organisations, conceptualisation issues linger, impeding efforts toward prevention and intervention. Indeed, researchers continue to frame cyberbullying as an electronic extension of traditional bullying – overlooking the intricacies and potentially more damaging nature of this phenomenon, due to various cyber-specific features – or disregard conceptualisation altogether. Therefore, the main aim of this research was to explore how workplace cyberbullying is understood and experienced in New Zealand, with a focus on nursing.

A three-study qualitative, interview-based research design was employed, with findings from each stage informing the subsequent research progress. Study one explored subject matter experts' perspectives on workplace cyberbullying. In addition to suggesting a differentiation of cyberbullying from traditional bullying as a construct, findings also revealed professional-based distinctions around approaches to measurement and management, emphasising the subjectivity and contextual nature of cyberbullying. In line with these findings, studies two and three adopted a context-specific approach in exploring nurses' understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, respectively. The focus on nursing was intended to address a substantial knowledge gap: although this profession experiences higher-than-average rates of traditional bullying, to date, there had been no efforts to investigate how workplace cyberbullying manifested and was experienced within this group.

Findings from study two suggested that although academics and nurses generally conceptualised workplace cyberbullying as being a distinct phenomenon, nurses tended to emphasise target perceptions of victimisation over features such as repetition and intent. Based on this understanding, a purpose-specific definition was formulated for study three to explore nurse experiences of workplace cyberbullying. Accordingly, it emerged that not only did most targets experience co-occurring forms of bullying, but in some cases, cyberbullying was

perceived as more distressing with a potentially wider scope of harm. Further, findings from study three uncovered the risk of nurses experiencing cyberbullying from external sources such as students, patients, and patient relatives. Unfortunately, several work-related and industry-specific factors frequently presented barriers to reporting and successful resolution. Beyond these contributions to our knowledge on workplace cyberbullying, a multi-factor socio-ecological model is also posited as a framework guiding future research, as well as prevention and intervention efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The machine does not isolate man [or woman!] *from the great problems of nature but plunges him more deeply into them*

– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wind, Sand, and Stars,* 1939

1.1 Orientation

The value of Information and Communication Technologies and Devices (ICTDs) such as the internet, smartphones, and computers, in our daily lives – for both work and social purposes – remains indisputable. Yet for all the technological advances that have been made, humans have reliably found innovative ways to misuse and abuse them. Thus, while ICTDs have enabled rapid, widespread, and constant communication, these very features have also been used to facilitate myriad forms of cyber abuse; none appearing more commonplace in our news media and within the research arena than the issue of cyberbullying. Certainly, research suggests that cyberbullying can have potentially harmful and damaging consequences for targets (Anderson & Sturm, 2007), organisations (Borstorff & Graham, 2006), and wider society (Dillon & Bushman, 2015). More worrisome is the fact that scholars within the field predict that instances of workplace cyberbullying are not only increasing (Copley, Flores, & Foltz, 2014; Kelly, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b) but will continue to "morph in various ways" (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013, p. 342) in the absence of preventative measures. Thus, it remains imperative to direct efforts toward addressing this issue.

Consequently, this thesis explores the issue of workplace cyberbullying, with a predominant focus on bullying behaviours (not otherwise discriminatory in nature), perpetrated via ICTDs. While these behaviours may occur beyond the physical work premises, or after work hours; due to the nature of the employment relationship, they remain a workplace issue according to New Zealand legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015). More specifically, this thesis investigates the issue from multiple perspectives – including academics, practitioners, and

nurses – using a sequential, three-study research design. The principal overarching question guiding this research is: "how is workplace cyberbullying understood and experienced?" Rather than relying on reductionist explanations of technological determinism, emphasis is directed instead toward features in the broader work environment, industry context, and even wider national policy that could potentially enable or hinder the occurrence of cyberbullying. Specifically, much of this research is guided by Leymann's (1996) work environment hypothesis, which posits that factors in the broader organisational environment such as leadership and work organisation give rise to and play a bigger role in facilitating workplace bullying than individual-level factors. However, the utility of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) socio-ecological model – encompassing broader industry (exo) and societal (macro) level factors – is also evaluated, with regard to guiding future prevention and intervention efforts within this area.

This introduction chapter begins by asserting the rationale behind the research question and the significance of this research, including clarifying how this thesis contributes to our knowledge and practice of workplace cyberbullying (section 1.2). Next, the research focus is dissected into three specific research objectives, each pertaining to a distinct but interrelated area of inquiry (section 1.3). In this way, these three objectives directly map on to the three sequential studies, guiding the overall research progress. Finally, a roadmap is provided outlining the thesis chapters (section 1.4).

1.2 Justification

Originally defined – within the schoolyard context – as an electronic manifestation of traditional bullying (Beran & Li, 2007; Smith et al., 2008), there is now much dissensus around whether cyberbullying is a distinct phenomenon (Casas, Del Rey, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2013; Copley et al., 2014). In fact, it is argued that placing cyberbullying within the framework of traditional bullying may hamper our understanding and ability to effectively deal with this phenomenon (Dooley, Cross, & Pyżalski, 2009), with cyberbullying interventions informed by traditional understandings of bullying proving largely ineffective (Pingault & Schoeler, 2017). Conceptual issues make it difficult to gain insight into the extent, nature, and management of the problem,

particularly within the workplace. Furthermore, among the handful of investigations that have examined workplace cyberbullying, there has been limited research exploring how this phenomenon is understood – beyond academia – and experienced. Such enquiries remain crucial since aside from a lack of academic consensus, previous findings also suggest that adolescents (Nocentini et al., 2010) and tertiary students (Faucher, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2014; Kamali, 2014; Walker, 2014) often conceptualise cyberbullying in an altogether different manner. Thus, conceptualisation is an impediment that is hindering progress within the cyberbullying field (Tokunaga, 2010) and can no longer be overlooked, especially with regard to the predicted increases and detrimental impacts associated with this phenomenon.

Prior to beginning my research, the Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDC Act, 2015) was still in the preliminary stages of being a Bill in New Zealand parliament, and little research had been carried out on cyberbullying within the organisational setting. Since that time, there appears to have emerged a degree of acceptance or acknowledgement that workplace cyberbullying as an issue currently facing the workforce. In contrast, around three years ago – at the beginning stages of my PhD – I was often met with scepticism about its occurrence in workplaces, particularly at practitioner-geared events and outside academia. Comments also frequently reflected assumptions that this was mainly an issue of childhood or isolated to teenagers and adolescents. Aside from being disheartening, and causing me to second-guess my research focus, this was also somewhat indicative of the stigma associated with bullying generally (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007) as well as the silence that shrouds this issue (Kelly, 2011). Rather than be deterred, this stimulated my interest in wanting to explore how cyberbullying is understood outside of academic research and how targets experienced this phenomenon.

However, two conceptual issues accompanied the nascent cyberbullying literature that seemed troubling but little discussed. On the one hand, despite emerging evidence that cyberbullying likely operates in different ways, many researchers continued to place the phenomenon within

the framework of traditional bullying, potentially limiting our understanding of its intricacies (Dooley et al., 2009). On the other hand, many others developed their own definitions and instruments for measuring cyberbullying, with little consideration or justification for their relevance (Tokunaga, 2010). This phenomenon of 'construct proliferation' (Raver & Barling, 2008) is not unique in emerging fields, where there is often a rush to develop measurement instruments and investigate correlates, at the expense of conceptual studies (O'Leary-Kelly, Duffy, & Griffin, 2000). As a result, conceptualisation remains a foremost concern within the research, with some scholars calling for a "universal definition" of cyberbullying (Betts, 2016; Tokunaga, 2010). In response, study one was designed to explore how subject matter experts understood workplace cyberbullying with regards to its conceptualisation, measurement, and management. Yet, findings indicated that while academics and practitioners had largely similar views on the issue, each group prioritised specific features based on their professional roles. Indeed, Rayner and Cooper (2006) note that definitions are largely influenced by actor perspectives and roles. In fact, understandings of bullying and cyberbullying have been shown to vary across regions (Nocentini et al., 2010), occupations (Way, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Hepworth, 2013), age groups (Crosslin & Golman, 2014), and gender (Salin, 2003b). Additionally, the advent of new platforms correspondingly gives rise to new forms of cyber abuse – such as *trolling, fraping, swatting, doxing,* and *catfishing* – on a consistent basis. Thus, it appeared that striving for universality in conceptualisation would arguably remain a Sisyphean endeavour.

In consideration of this situation, subsequent research (studies two and three) aimed to side-step the issue of developing a universal definition, by focusing instead on group- or context-specific understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying. Here, my research focus narrowed to a specific 'high risk' occupational group – nurses – since despite consistently experiencing above-average rates of traditional workplace bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Spector, Zhou, & Xin Xuan, 2014; Wright & Khatri, 2015), there had surprisingly been no research investigating cyberbullying within the profession.

1.2.1 Research significance and contributions

The significance of my research lies in the fact that it simultaneously addresses two substantial knowledge gaps within the literature, while making a number of original contributions to practice and policy. Firstly, it attempts to resolve the major conceptual hurdles impeding progress toward workplace cyberbullying prevention and intervention by emphasising the importance and value of adopting a context-specific approach over striving toward an unattainable universal understanding. Indeed, the value of my research lies in the fact that it allowed me to demonstrate, from multiple perspectives, that cyberbullying is commonly conceptualised as a distinct phenomenon from traditional workplace bullying, though it is acknowledged that often the two forms co-occur, with potential for a broader scope of harm.

Secondly, and relatedly, to the best of my knowledge this research is the first empirical investigation of workplace cyberbullying within the nursing profession; providing evidence that this is a very real workplace hazard faced by the profession. In addition, this research also highlights relatively unique forms and sources of cyberbullying, particularly from clients and their relatives (external cyberbullying). While traditional workplace bullying generally focuses on sources within the organisation, with customers and clients often highlighted as sources of incivility (Fevre, Lewis, Robinson, & Jones, 2012), growing evidence within the cyberbullying field suggests that this form of bullying may be perpetrated by sources external to – but still related to – the organisation, including; customers (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013) and students (Blizard, 2015), highlighting a new vulnerability for nursing. In identifying these external sources of bullying, this research highlights the potential shortcomings of the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) in identifying barriers to reporting and intervention of cyberbullying, at least for nursing. Instead, the socioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) is posited as a potentially useful framework for future research within this area. Alongside this, deficiencies in the current prevention and management approaches at the organisational,

industry, and national level are also illuminated. Therefore, beyond the theoretical contributions in drawing attention to the problem of workplace cyberbullying, this research also sheds light on why and how workplace cyberbullying is specifically a problem, while proffering recommendations for practice and policy.

1.3 Research Focus

These theoretical gaps within the field guided the development of my overall research question: how is workplace cyberbullying understood and experienced within New Zealand? Within this, there was a specific focus on the nursing profession in New Zealand, since this group has previously demonstrated heightened vulnerability to experiencing traditional forms of bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Spector et al., 2014). Accordingly, three interrelated research objectives (ROs) were formulated, corresponding to three specific research studies.

RO1: Explore expert understandings around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying

RO2: Explore nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, in order to identify salient features in their definitions

RO3: Explore targets' understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, within the nursing profession

In order to meet the aforementioned research objectives, the following research design (see Figure 1) was proposed to guide my PhD research progress: alternating between theorising or 'desk' research, along with three qualitative research studies. Furthermore, each stage was designed to inform subsequent stages, and develop the progression of my research. As noted earlier, study one was a conceptualisation study designed to explore subject matter experts' understandings of workplace cyberbullying within New Zealand. The focus in study two then

narrowed specifically to the nursing profession, where nurses and nursing students'

understandings of workplace cyberbullying were explored in order to develop a purpose-

specific definition. This definition was subsequently utilised in recruiting self-identified targets

of workplace cyberbullying for study three, where nurses' experiences of workplace

cyberbullying were investigated. In line with the exploratory nature of this research, a

qualitative, semi-structured interview approach was utilised across all studies. The progressive

nature of my research progress is summarised in the figure below.

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Theorising
"at desk"

Investigating
"real world"

Theorising
"at desk"

Investigating
"real world"

Theorising
"at desk"
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CH 1: INTRODUCTION
Broad description and justification of research focus

CH 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
Synthesis of research on workplace bullying, cyberbullying, narrowing down to workplace cyberbullying

CH 3: STUDY 1 - EXPERT CONCEPTUALISATION
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CH 7: OVERALL DISCUSSION
Integrating findings with respect to relevant literature and outlining contributions to theory, practice, and policy

Figure 1. Thesis Structure

1.3.1 A comment on epistemology: a subtle realist perspective

At this point, it is worth noting the philosophical underpinnings guiding this research are in line

with the subtle realist perspective, put forward by Hammersley (1992). Similar to realism, this

position acknowledges that an independent reality exists; however, comparable to relativism, knowledge is viewed as a human construction (Hammersley, 1992). Thus, it is argued that this reality cannot ever be directly accessed, but at best can be represented from a specific point of view (researcher's) or interpretation (of participants' views); as a result, "there can be multiple, non-contradictory and valid descriptions and explanations of the same phenomenon" (Hammersley, 1992, p. 51). Accordingly, Hammersley cautions that we can only ever be reasonably confident about the value of any knowledge claim – or relative value of competing claims – based on the assessment criteria of validity and relevance. Thus, there is an inherent reflexivity required on the part of the researcher, in terms of (avoiding) representing any one perspective as 'the truth' (Murphy, Dingwall, Greatbatch, Parker, & Watson, 1998). Furthermore, Hammersley (1992) also argues that in seeking to understand social phenomena or explore perspectives, concerns with validity may not be as applicable. This post-positivist perspective adopts a happy medium between the realist and relativist dichotomies (Duncan & Nicol, 2004; Murphy et al., 1998), and has been noted as particularly useful within health care research (Murphy et al., 1998).

1.4 Thesis Outline

As per Figure 1 above, the subsequent chapter provides a literature review broadly linking three research bodies of traditional workplace bullying, cyberbullying, and workplace cyberbullying. This chapter serves to contextualise the issue of workplace cyberbullying, while also comparing this literature to research on traditional workplace bullying. Chapter three then details the first study – investigating subject matter experts' perceptions around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying. These findings provide support for adopting an industry/occupation-based focus in exploring experiences and understandings of workplace cyberbullying. Next, chapter four outlines the nursing context and highlights a number of factors present in the organisational design and history of the profession that promulgate the existence of high rates of bullying endemic to this profession. Once again, gaps within this body of research are identified, allowing me to situate studies two and three.

In chapter five, the second study explores nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, using a scenario-based interview method. Aside from revealing disparities between nurses' and academic definitions, the findings also allowed me to develop a purpose-specific definition for use in recruiting targets of workplace cyberbullying for study three. This third study is outlined in detail in chapter six. Here, findings around the understanding and impact of targets, along with their responses are discussed in detail. Finally, chapter seven includes an overall discussion of findings, outlining five broad common themes across all three studies. Limitations and areas of future research are also noted, before a discussion of the contributions of this thesis to theory, practice, and policy.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As noted in chapter one, this research aims to explore understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying in New Zealand. However, the contemporary nature and paucity of research focusing exclusively on workplace cyberbullying have meant that much of our current understandings are drawn from the research on traditional workplace bullying. Accordingly, this literature review begins with a section reviewing workplace bullying (section 2.2); built on the understanding that this is a significant problem for both individuals and organisations. Furthermore, since conceptualisation is at the forefront of my research aim, this review has been structured to explore how variations in geographic region, measurement approach, and industry can affect conceptualisations and thusly reported prevalence rates (section 2.2.1). Then, the predominant theoretical model of workplace bullying – the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) – is introduced as the guiding theoretical framework for this research (section 2.2.2). Consistent with this framework, relevant antecedents of workplace bullying are analysed (section 2.2.3), followed by a brief synopsis and evaluation of current intervention efforts (section 2.2.4). The aim of this section is to introduce the theoretical and analytical framework to evaluate, compare, and contrast findings around workplace cyberbullying.

Following this section, the literature on cyberbullying – as a field – is critically analysed in section 2.3, with a focus on comparing and contrasting the two forms of bullying, once again, driven by the aim of conceptualisation. Thus, unique features and risk factors associated with cyberbullying are examined (section 2.3.3), along with assessing its impacts in various contexts (section 2.3.6). Finally, the theoretical perspectives within this field are articulated (section 2.3.9), along with a summary of current gaps within this body of literature (section 2.4). It is here that I situate my research rationale and justification.

2.2 Summary of Workplace Bullying Research

The earliest reference to workplace bullying – as we understand it today – dates back to Carroll M. Brodsky's (1976) *The Harassed Worker*, with Scandinavian researchers then spearheading subsequent research on 'mobbing'. Frequently referred to as 'bullying', this has been defined as the "rather specific phenomenon where hostile and aggressive behaviours, be it physical or non-physical, are directed systematically at one or more colleagues or subordinates leading to a stigmatisation and victimisation of the recipient" (Einarsen, 1999, p. 17). A central element of bullying remains the existence of an actual or perceived power imbalance between the perpetrator and target (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2011) which can prevent targets of this type of behaviour from retaliating or defending themselves (Einarsen et al., 2011). Additional criteria such as intentionality behind the behaviours, while previously emphasised (Leymann, 1996), has since become an issue of contention. Originally included to distinguish workplace bullying from general forms of incivility, the concept of intent – along with its multifaceted connotations (intent to engage in the behaviour, intent to victimise, intent to harm) – makes it nearly impossible to verify, particularly given that much research and intervention is derived from the target's perspective (Einarsen et al., 2011). These considerations, in combination with the fact that the perpetrators' power advantage can serve to effectively veto or refute allegations of bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011), underlie the exclusion of intent from definitions and measurement of workplace bullying. Although there are variations in conceptualisation of this phenomenon (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011), over time a shared understanding of workplace bullying has developed based on the repetition of negative, unwanted acts, resulting in or exploiting the existence of a power differential between the perpetrator and target.

However, two key considerations must be noted. Firstly, workplace bullying is not an 'all or none' phenomena (Einarsen, 1999); bullying behaviours range on a continuum of severity and correspondingly so do the associated outcomes (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). As such, a multitude of detrimental effects have been documented for targets of workplace bullying

including harmful physical and psychological outcomes (Bentley et al., 2009; Cooper, Hoel, & Faragher, 2004; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Vie, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2011) such as depression (Dehue, Bolman, Völlink, & Pouwelse, 2012); Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder-like symptoms such as fear (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002); lower self-worth and self-doubt (Lee & Brotheridge, 2006; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002); and a loss of personal control (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Bullied employees also tend to be absent from work more (Bentley et al., 2009; Dehue et al., 2012; Hoel & Cooper, 2000); report impaired performance (Bentley et al., 2009); and display negative work attitudes such as reduced job satisfaction, commitment, and a higher intent to leave (Bentley et al., 2009; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012) which in turn has productivity and financial costs for the organisation (Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2011; Leymann, 1990). In fact, in 1990, Leymann estimated average cost (per bullied employee) to be between USD$30,000 to $100,000 in terms of productivity, intervention, and replacement expenses for the organisation, the equivalent of between USD$58,000 to $198,000 in present day terms. More current figures have estimated this annual financial cost to be approximately GBP £13.75 billion (Giga, Hoel, & Lewis, 2008), and ranging from AUD$6-$36 billion (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010), vasty surpassing early estimates.

Secondly, and relatedly, many of these behaviours in isolation do not constitute workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011), but it is the systematic and continued exposure to these acts that result in the defencelessness of the target and amplification of harm (Leymann, 1996; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Postigo, González, Montoya, & Ordoñez, 2013). This repeated exposure is one feature that distinguishes workplace bullying from relatively low-level incidents of incivility (Wright & Khatri, 2015) and conflict (Leymann, 1996). It should be noted that while terms such as harassment and bullying have been used interchangeably (Einarsen, 1999) within the European context, with one suggestion that sexual harassment is a sub-type of bullying (Matthiesen, 2006), in this thesis, bullying is differentiated from harassment as the latter is usually directed at a protected group (Cowan, 2011) and a one-off occurrence can qualify as

harassment. Furthermore, Mishna (2012) contends that mislabelling bias-based behaviours as bullying disregards the fact that these behaviours inherently violate the human rights of targets involved. Indeed, in New Zealand, harassment is governed by specific legislature; the Employment Relations Act (2000), as well as the Human Rights Act (1993).

2.2.1 Prevalence rates

This section outlines how differences in geography, methodology, and even industry can result in variations in prevalence rates of traditional workplace bullying.

2.2.1.1 Regional differences

It has been suggested that reported rates of workplace bullying have been increasing since the early 2000s (Dehue et al., 2012), although this is not a uniform trend. For instance, Nielsen et al. (2009) note that Norway has seen a decrease in these rates, potentially due to the influence of socioeconomic factors such as egalitarian values and a prosperous economy. Nonetheless, a meta-analysis of more than one hundred prevalence studies placed global estimates of workplace bullying at an average of nearly fifteen percent (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010). Regionally, however, there is considerable variation – the previously mentioned study in Norway (Nielsen et al., 2009) found that less than 5% of their sample had experienced workplace bullying; in contrast to reported rates of fifty-five percent from a Turkish study (Bilgel, Aytac, & Bayram, 2006). For comparison, in New Zealand reported prevalence rates vary between 15% (Gardner et al., 2016) and 18% (Bentley et al., 2009; O'Driscoll et al., 2011).

Aside from sociocultural values and economic performance, another major influencing factor – at the national level – is policy. This is particularly evident in the Nordic model (Hasselbalch, 1957) where International Standards on Human Rights have long been integrated into the labour laws (for example, laws against victimisation at work). Accordingly, national rates of workplace bullying prevalence are comparatively lower for Scandinavian samples (Nielsen et al., 2010) than in New Zealand, for example, where although WorkSafe (2014) introduced a guide for

employers in preventing and managing workplace bullying, the lack of legislation specifically

addressing the issue means that this falls under the blanket requirement for employers to

"eliminate risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable" (Part 2, 30 (1a); Health

and Safety at Work Act, 2015) and to ensure "the provision and maintenance of a work

environment that is without risks to health and safety" (Part 2, 36 (3a); Health and Safety at

Work Act, 2015). In the absence of dedicated legislation, there may be little to hold employers

accountable for the prevention and management of workplace bullying. In fact, Catley,

Blackwood, Forsyth, Tappin, and Bentley (2017) found that in cases of workplace bullying that

had escalated to the legal system, less than one eighth of the organisations involved had a clear

anti bullying or harassment policy.

2.2.1.2 Methodological differences

In addition, methodological differences in sampling and measurement have also had a major

influence on these rates. Interestingly, Nielsen et al.'s (2010) meta-analysis of workplace

bullying studies highlighted the fact that self-labelling approaches – supplemented by a

definition – were the most utilised approach to measurement; whereas a subsequent systematic

review of (a greater number of) studies, including the broader construct of workplace

harassment, indicated that behavioural inventories were more common (Neall & Tuckey, 2014).

These behavioural inventories tend to measure perceived exposure to specific bullying

behaviours (Escartín, Salin, & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2011), rather than perceptions or

experiences of general victimisation (Nielsen et al., 2010). The 22-item Negative Acts

Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) – designed and validated by (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers,

2009) – is arguably the most frequently used behavioural inventory instrument.

In contrast to behavioural inventory approaches, self-labelling approaches capture an

individual's perception of victimisation, and tend to yield more conservative estimates when

combined with an academic definition (Nielsen et al., 2010; Way et al., 2013). This is

potentially indicative of a discrepancy between academic and lay definitions of workplace

bullying; wherein the former relies on stricter criteria (Nielsen et al., 2010). Yet, it has been argued that target coping is highly reliant on the appraisal process involved in self-labelling (Escartín et al., 2011), and this appraisal itself is linked to broader factors such as gender, power, and position in the hierarchy of social structures (Escartín et al., 2011). These factors remain generally unaccounted for in the behavioural inventory or definition-based approaches to measurement, suggesting there is some value in capturing subjective (lay) perceptions and conceptualisations of bullying. Nevertheless, to a large extent, variations in prevalence rates may in part be an artefact of the measurement approach used.

2.2.1.3 Industry differences

Additionally, industry-specific norms around tolerance of certain negative behaviours (Way et al., 2013) may give rise to further variation in prevalence rates. More specifically, in an Australian study, Way et al. (2013) demonstrated that employees in the construction and health services industries were less likely to self-label their experience as workplace bullying, perhaps due to factors such as an organisational culture permissive of such behaviours in addition to inadequate policies or a lack of clarity around understanding. Unfortunately, previous research has revealed that these very industries – healthcare in particular – have higher than usual rates of workplace bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Leymann, 1996). Explanations for these industry-specific risks can be found in the work environment hypothesis, proposed by Heinz Leymann (1996), discussed further in section 2.2.3.2 (and later in Chapter four).

2.2.2 The work environment hypothesis

According to this perspective, factors within the broader work environment can give rise to and facilitate the occurrence of workplace bullying. These factors include the organisation of work; such as shortages of skilled workers, task and workloads, and role clarity (Leymann, 1996). Additionally, leadership-related deficiencies with regard to management response to and intervention in cases of bullying may interact with poor working conditions to aid workplace

bullying (Leymann, 1996). This work environment hypothesis has received considerable empirical support in the past two decades (Bentley et al., 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007; Skogstad, Torsheim, Einarsen, & Hauge, 2011).

Leymann (1996) advocates against relying on individual-level factors such as personality traits or disposition as a cause of workplace bullying for two reasons. First, it is the responsibility of management to resolve initial low-level conflicts between individuals before this can escalate into more serious bullying behaviours that serve to reinforce and maintain a power differential (Leymann, 1996), and it is argued that an interpersonal focus detracts from organisational responsibility. Second, individuals who are exposed to bullying over an extended period of time may develop changes in their personality or disposition, commonly as a result of post-traumatic stress (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). It is possible then, that these 'symptoms' can be misattributed to as pre-existing individual differences in personality (Leymann, 1996).

While workplace bullying has been acknowledged as a complex, multi-causal phenomenon (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf, 1999), meta-analytic findings have also corroborated the minimal role of individual level differences in causing workplace bullying (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). In fact, it has been argued that since "workplace bullying occurs in work organizations, it is reasonable to assume that the character of these organizations plays a part in bullying in a way that exceeds (yet relates to) the characteristics and behavior of the individuals within them" (Rhodes, Pullen, Vickers, Clegg, & Pitsis, 2010, p. 100). Likewise, organisations also have comparatively less control over individual factors than work environment factors (Salin, 2003a). Correspondingly, I have aligned the focus of my literature review to examine organisational and industry level antecedents of workplace bullying.

2.2.3 Antecedents

The following includes a brief discussion on commonly reported antecedents of traditional workplace bullying. The main focus here is on organisational and industry-level factors, rather than individual factors.

2.2.3.1 Organisational-level factors

Although the work environment hypothesis has primarily been examined at the individual – and particularly target – level of analysis, an investigation around group-level perceptions of the work environment has also revealed factors such as role conflict, organisational climate perceptions, and leadership behaviours as being the strongest antecedents of workplace bullying (Skogstad et al., 2011). More importantly, both targets and non-targets of workplace bullying reported similar perceptions of a poor work environment (Skogstad et al., 2011), mirroring findings by (Einarsen et al., 1994). Yet, the contrary can also be argued: that poor working conditions can result from workplace bullying (Zapf, 1999). For this reason, a broader perspective on the antecedents of bullying is needed; one that elucidates the mechanisms and pathways underlying less-than-ideal working conditions across organisation types.

2.2.3.2 Industry-level factors

Such a perspective can be found in examining the institutional context, rather than focusing on the organisation as an independent entity. Indeed, large organisations, traditionally male-dominated occupations, and institutes in the public sector have generally been noted to experience higher than usual rates of workplace bullying (Hodgins, MacCurtain, & Mannix-McNamara, 2014) and mistreatment (Plimmer, Proctor-Thomson, Donnelly, & Sim, 2017), although such ill-treatment has also been noted amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (Lewis, Megicks, & Jones, 2017). These organisations also typically have long-established hierarchical and authoritarian structures (Seigne, Coyne, Randall, & Parker, 2007) that serve to reinforce power differentials and norms of compliance (Hodgins et al., 2014). Furthermore, leadership styles at either ends of the 'continuum' such as laissez faire or authoritarian can help

establish and shape organisational cultures that tolerate workplace bullying, or perhaps even encourage it (Einarsen et al., 1994; Hodgins et al., 2014; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011), with organisational socialisation processes and social learning further supporting cultural norms and values (Salin, 2003a). More importantly, Chatman and Jehn (1994) have demonstrated that organisational cultures are relatively stable within industries, more so than across industries. Thus, industry characteristics and institutional contexts can dynamically create a work environment conducive to workplace bullying (Lewis, 2004); better explaining the high prevalence rates of this phenomenon in the healthcare sector, as noted earlier (Bentley et al., 2009).

In fact, Salin (2003a) developed a schematic of workplace bullying as a product of interactions between three broad categories of organisational-level antecedents, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. First, necessary or *enabling* structures and process are required, which create favourable conditions for bullying. These include factors such as power imbalances, dissatisfaction, and a low perceived cost for engaging in bullying behaviours. *Motivating* structures and processes – such as competitive environments, differential reward systems, or other benefits – may unintentionally incentivise individuals to partake in bullying. Finally, *precipitating* processes, usually in the form of organisational change, may act to trigger bullying behaviours. All in all, it is argued that *enabling* factors on their own do not necessarily lead to bullying, but require the presence of *motivating* and/or *precipitating* factors before this can manifest (Salin, 2003a). Hence, it is important to keep in mind that inadequate working conditions alone are not sufficient to produce workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994); other interacting factors may be required to incite these behaviours. Furthermore, specific aspects of the work environment may be differentially linked to bullying across occupations and industries (Einarsen et al., 1994), once again highlighting the key role of institutional settings in contributing to, and shaping understandings and experiences of, workplace bullying.

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┌──────────────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────────────┐
│   MOTIVATING STRUCTURES  │◄───────►│   PRECIPITATING          │
│   & PROCESSES            │         │   PROCESSES              │
└──────────────────────────┘         └──────────────────────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │   ENABLING STRUCTURES &  │
                    │   PROCESSES              │
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                         BULLYING POSSIBLE AND
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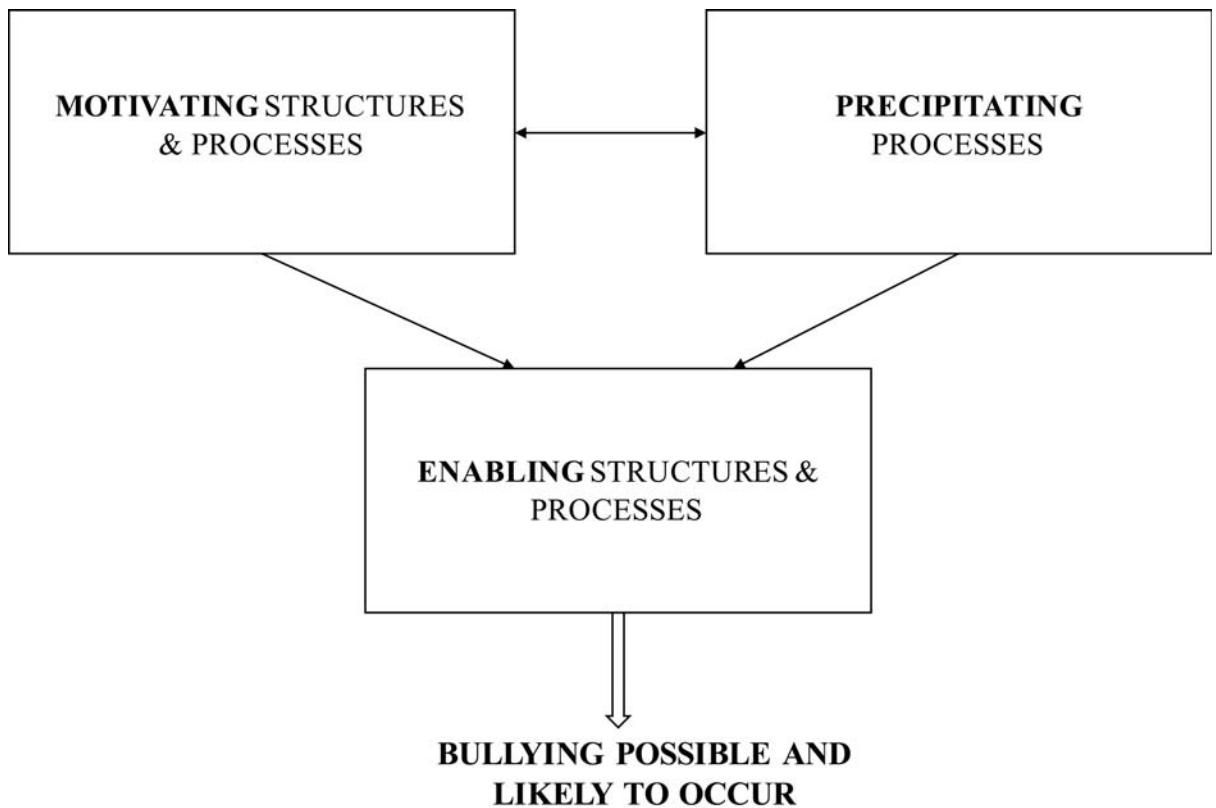
Figure 2. Factors in the work environment contributing to bullying, adapted from Salin (2003a)

To sum up, regional, methodological, and industry- or work-related aspects may result in varying prevalence rates. Critically, these prevalence rates may represent conservative estimates of the rates of actual workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). For one, targets may not necessarily self-identify as being a target of bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) as they may have differing definitions of the phenomenon (Escartín et al., 2011; Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999; Neall & Tuckey, 2014). Kelly (2011) also elucidates how perceptions around bullying being confined to children can create a veil of silence. Thus, like with sexual harassment, there may be perceptions of stigma implicitly associated with a victim status (Magley et al., 1999), which can prevent self-labelling accordingly. Unfortunately, targets who experience persistent or intense bullying can also experience poorer health and well-being outcomes, regardless of whether they have self-identified as being bullied (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vie et al., 2011). On top of this, poor organisational responses – such as reacting

defensively, blaming targets, or failing to intervene appropriately – can reinforce feelings of victimisation and isolate targets. This can act as a powerful signal to witnesses and other individuals within the organisation, dissuading them from self-identifying or coming forward (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2011; Magley et al., 1999), assuming that formal anti-bullying or harassment policies and reporting channels are in place. Thus, it becomes evident that "bullying at work continues only when organizational cultures condone, model, or reward it" (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011, p. 8)

2.2.4 Intervention

Given the crucial role of the work environment in creating and facilitating workplace bullying; it is argued that the organisation – and top management – should be charged with the duty of preventing and intervening in cases of workplace bullying (Namie & Namie, 2009) and that they have an ethical responsibility to do so (Rhodes et al., 2010). This responsibility lies in conjunction with most employment legislation at a national level that puts the onus for the effective prevention and management of workplace bullying on employers (for instance, the Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015). However, having a policy alone is not enough to facilitate change: policies and procedures need to be clearly communicated across the organisation, alongside the education of managers and employees around expectations of appropriate behaviour in the workplace (McLinton, Dollard, Tuckey, & Bailey, 2014; Reason, 1998). This also needs to be embedded within a reporting culture where employees are able to report concerns or incidents without fear of blame, retribution, or punishment (Reason, 1998). Thus, rather than stigmatising targets who do come forward, or solely blaming perpetrators, organisational interventions must equally benefit all affected parties (Georgakopoulos, Wilkin, & Kent, 2011). Beyond this, it is essential to examine the work design, existing structures, and organisational climate perceptions (Namie & Namie, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2010) to determine the enabling, motivating, and triggering factors (Salin, 2003a) underlying these behaviours. Therefore, the multi-level nature of workplace bullying antecedents highlights the need for

effective prevention and intervention efforts to consider the entirety of the work system (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011).

While there is a dearth of peer-reviewed and well-evaluated studies on intervention, an examination of the existing intervention research reveals a discord between theory-based recommendations and existing practices. A review by Hodgins et al. (2014) sheds light on the commonly held belief within organisations that workplace bullying and incivility are essentially interpersonal behavioural problems. This serves to further obscure organisational responsibility in acknowledging structures and processes that perpetuate the problem (Rhodes et al., 2010). Accordingly, individually-geared interventions are deployed (Escartín, 2016), including education and coaching programs (Hodgins et al., 2014); training (Escartín, 2016); resilience building (van Heugten, 2013); as well as attempts at mediation and reconciliation (Kaya Cicerali & Cicerali, 2016; Saam, 2010). Aside from the fact that interpersonal intervention approaches ignore system-wide factors at the root of workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011; Namie & Namie, 2009); their failure can also act to further inflict harm on targets through secondary victimisation (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011) as a result of institutional responses. For instance, mediation is often ineffective at resolving severely escalated cases of bullying, and discounts the critical (and arguably defining) element of the existing power differential between target and perpetrator (Kaya Cicerali & Cicerali, 2016; Saam, 2010). Thus, in the absence of a clear, all-encompassing intervention model (Saam, 2010), a multi-pronged approach is strongly advocated for by many scholars, directed at the individual, organisational, and societal levels (Hodgins et al., 2014; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011), in informing efforts on the prevention and management of workplace bullying.

2.3 Cyberbullying Literature Review

With the advent of the internet and the rapid development and proliferation of ICTDs, several distinct but related bodies of research have stemmed from concern over the negative repercussions of this technology in the workplace. Initial investigations – as early as 2001 –

forayed into concerns associated with virtual work (Broadfoot, 2001); cyber procrastination (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001); as well as internet addiction and online harassment (Griffiths, 2002). The latter is one of the earliest works within the area of cyber ill-treatment at work. A few years later, Baruch (2005) explored the issue of e-mail based workplace bullying, but it was not until the last decade or so that research on workplace cyberbullying began to gain some momentum (see, for instance, Privitera and Campbell (2009a)). In contrast, mirroring the evolution of traditional bullying, the growth of research on cyberbullying in schools – and later, tertiary institutes – was almost exponential. Again, much like the research on traditional bullying, our current understanding of cyberbullying remains largely informed from the literature on children, adolescents, and young adults (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a), with scholars calling for further exploration of ICTD-mediated workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011).

This section of the literature review aims to compare and contrast current theoretical understandings of cyberbullying with traditional bullying; based on definitional features (section 2.3.3) and antecedents (section 2.3.5). A case is made for the significance of this issue within the workplace, based on research outlining the potential impacts and amplified harm experienced by targets of cyberbullying at various stages. Finally, theoretical models are examined (section 2.3.9), and gaps in the literature identified (section 2.4).

2.3.1 Definition

If a universal definition of (workplace) bullying has proved elusive, attempting to reach a consensus in defining cyberbullying remains even more unlikely. Part of this complexity lies in the fact that various terminology – such as 'e-harassment' (Borstorff & Graham, 2006), 'online victimisation' (Staude-Müller, Hansen, & Voss, 2012), 'electronic bullying' (Olweus, 2012), 'online bullying' (Kuzma, 2013), 'internet harassment' (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), and 'cyber abuse' (Piotrowski, 2012) – has been used synonymously to refer to the same phenomenon. These lexical differences may reflect different theoretical perspectives, behaviours

encapsulated, distress outcomes, and defining elements (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Regional differences also play a role here. For instance, European researchers (Leymann, 1990; Zapf, 1999), practitioners (Kaya Cicerali & Cicerali, 2016), and students (Nocentini et al., 2010) tend to favour the term mobbing, whereas bullying is commonly used elsewhere. Further, the term bullying itself is commonly rejected among young adults and college students (Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Faucher et al., 2014; Kamali, 2014) for its juvenile connotations. Likewise, differences in prefixes have been noted even within the European context (Nocentini et al., 2010). Importantly, unlike with traditional harassment (restricted to behaviours directed to a protected class), cyber harassment may refer to illegal or potentially discriminatory behaviours (Citron, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), the bullying of adults (Lindsay & Krysik, 2012), a single cyber (abuse) incident (Beran & Li, 2007), and even more confusingly, used interchangeably with cyber bullying (Beran & Li, 2005).

This inherent plurality about the phenomenon in question, has led to varying definitions of cyberbullying being proposed, including:

> "the use of Information and Communication Technologies to carry out a series of acts as in the case of direct cyberbullying, or an act as in the case of indirect cyberbullying, intended to harm another (the victim) who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Langos, 2012, p. 288)

> "Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278)

> "Cyberbullying is reported as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith et al., 2008, p. 376)

This last definition is one of the most commonly used in the cyberbullying literature (Allison &

Bussey, 2016) and clearly maps on to definitions of traditional bullying (Olweus, 2012)

underscoring the key criteria of repetition and a power differential, implicit in targets' inability

to defend themselves. As noted earlier, while most definitions of traditional bullying are not

contingent on intent (Einarsen et al., 2011), many definitions of cyberbullying include an intent

to harm. Aside from this, the only other point of difference is the use of "electronic forms of

contact" (Smith et al., 2008), therefore the above definition frames cyberbullying as merely an

electronic extension of traditional bullying (see Einarsen et al., 1994), perhaps because initial

inquiry was driven by existing knowledge of traditional bullying (Schultze-Krumbholz et al.,

2014). In fact, many researchers support this argument (Bauman, 2013; Casas et al., 2013;

Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Langos, 2012). While this default understanding of cyberbullying

has informed much of the subsequent research, evidence to the contrary suggests that not only

can cyberbullying operate in slightly different ways, but some of the defining elements of

traditional bullying may not necessarily be valid or meaningful when applied to cyberbullying.

This evidence is examined in exploring the similarities and disparities between traditional

bullying and cyberbullying below.

2.3.2 Similarities with traditional bullying

The basic notion underlying the argument for similarity between the two forms of bullying

developed perhaps as a result of the rationale that technology itself does not create hostile

environments (Borstorff & Graham, 2006), but rather facilitates the ease with which bullying

can be perpetrated. Subsequently, scholars have argued that cyberbullying is not a unique

phenomenon (Bauman, 2013; Beran & Li, 2007; Kowalski & Limber, 2013), but merely

bullying "transposed on a technological platform" (Langos, 2012, p. 285). In fact, a study of

tertiary students in the United States (Bauman & Newman, 2013) found that participants'

ratings of perceived distress in response to pairs of hypothetical scenarios (of traditional

bullying and cyberbullying) did not significantly differ by medium type. However, aside from

issues of external validity and generalisability, only the context of the scenarios (cyber versus in-person) was manipulated without considering the intricacies of digital communication. Thus, sending an explicit photo of the target to others via cell phone is quite obviously very different – and arguably has an increased potential for harm – than showing the same photo to others at school, in-person. This underscores the fact that although both traditional and cyberbullying behaviours may range on a continuum of severity – and harm – it may not be possible to render the two comparable in a meaningful way.

In addition, considerable research reports both forms of bullying are experienced by a large percentage of school children and adolescents (Beran & Li, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007); tertiary students (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2011); and even adults in the workplace (Coyne et al., 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a). In fact, Olweus (2012) goes so far as to argue that cyberbullying creates few 'new' victims. Taken together, these findings suggest that both forms may have a common aetiology, similar target profiles (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), and perhaps even analogous risk factors (Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, & Klockenbusch, 2013). However, the lack of longitudinal studies in this area means that risk factors cannot be unequivocally distinguished from outcomes of being bullied. Moreover, certain cyber-specific risk factors have also been identified as potential antecedents, as discussed in section 2.3.5.

2.3.3 Distinguishing cyberbullying

Despite the two forms of bullying being related, there is also evidence to suggest that the elements of repetition, intention, and power differentials may manifest uniquely in cyberbullying. For this reason, framing cyberbullying as simply the electronic version of traditional bullying may overlook certain intricacies (Dooley et al., 2009). Thus, these three definitional criteria are first explored, in relation to cyberbullying, followed by a discussion of four key unique aspects of this phenomenon.

2.3.3.1 Repetition

According to Einarsen (1999) repetition is one of the most important features of workplace bullying, particularly in distinguishing it from other forms of workplace ill-treatment (Leymann, 1996; Wright & Khatri, 2015). However, the inclusion of this characteristic in definitions of cyberbullying has been contentious because of two cyber-specific aspects: the permanent nature of digital content, and the fact that cyberbullying can have a potentially infinite audience. While these aspects are discussed in further detail below, the key issue here appears to be the lack of control in the sharing and dissemination of information (Dooley et al., 2009), regardless of the original perpetrator's intentions (Kota, Schoohs, Benson, & Moreno, 2014; Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013). This poses some novel dilemmas: if a single act of cyber aggression gets shared online multiple times, can and should this qualify as cyberbullying? Additionally, should the original perpetrator be held accountable for content that gets disseminated beyond their control? Although it had previously been suggested that with indirect cyberbullying – occurring in the public arena – repetition is inherent by virtue of the domain itself (Langos, 2012), this does not take into consideration the ease with which cyber incidents perpetrated through private channels (such as emails, texts, and direct messages) can make their way onto public platforms (such as social media and other content-sharing forums). All in all, these issues question how the notion of repetition is included in definitions of cyberbullying (Corcoran, McGuckin, & Prentice, 2015; Langos, 2012).

2.3.3.2 Intent to harm

It should be noted that most definitions of cyberbullying emphasise the intent to harm (see (Langos, 2012; Smith et al., 2008)), while this criterion is typically downplayed in definitions of traditional bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994; Rayner & Cooper, 2006). The inclusion of this criterion presents certain issues. For one, it is difficult to establish intention due to its subjectivity. Targets will also likely perceive aggressive or unwanted cyber acts as intentionally harmful, whereas perpetrators are likely to deny such claims (Pieschl et al., 2013; Rayner & Cooper, 2006). This may be particularly pertinent in cases of cyberbullying where there is the

potential for additional ambiguity and misinterpretation of 'information' above and beyond what is normally associated with traditional bullying (Kamali, 2014; Nocentini & Menesini, 2009; Pieschl et al., 2013). To some extent, intention may also be evident in repetition of behaviours (Nocentini et al., 2010). However, a distinction needs to be made between intentionality of engaging in a behaviour and the specific intention to harm. For instance, research uncovering perceived and actual motives behind cyberbullying behaviours reveal that these generally involve retaliation and revenge for previous incidents (Faucher et al., 2014; Francisco, Veiga Simão, Ferreira, & Martins, 2015), provocation, and amusement (Francisco et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2008). Yet, it is possible that some form of harm may have materialised for the targets, regardless of what the underlying intent was (Nocentini et al., 2010). In such cases, does the absence of being able to establish an intent to harm result in a failure to classify such behaviour as cyberbullying? Perhaps understanding where the harm lies in cyberbullying will provide further insight into the utility of this criterion.

2.3.3.3 Power dynamics

One of the most distinguishing features of cyberbullying is how power dynamics operate. In traditional forms, bullies may gain power from social status, physical stature, or other demographic factors (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013), and engage in bullying as a means of creating and/or leveraging a power imbalance (Washington, 2015), consequently preventing the target from defending themselves (Einarsen et al., 2011). In the organisational context, due to historical and socio-political factors such as access to education, division of labour, and the control of technology and the means of production (Cockburn, 1981), these sources often correlate so that certain individuals from particular demographics and socio-economic statuses tend to typically be the ones in positions of power. This might explain why with face-to-face bullying, power is often described as a 'zero-sum commodity' (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011), wherein power is viewed as material, and bullying perpetrators seek to capitalise on power differences. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, individuals may engage in cyberbullying for reasons other than to capitalise on power imbalances. Additionally, cyberbullies, may gain

power from numerous other sources such as technological expertise, a larger audience, constant and boundary-less access to the target, and anonymity of the perpetrator (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini & Menesini, 2009; Pettalia, Levin, & Dickinson, 2013; Shariff & Gouin, 2005; Slonje et al., 2013).

It should be noted that targets of cyberbullying are also often acknowledged as having the power to block perpetrator and content online; an option not available in real world interactions (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006). In fact, D'Cruz and Noronha's (2013) exploration of workplace cyberbullying within the IT sector in India demonstrated that targets can often restore power imbalances by utilising their own technological skill in retaliating, or using footprints left by cyberbullying as evidence when reporting these incidents. Since cyberbullying targets potentially have more resources and means to eradicate the bullying and seek redressal, it is possible they might potentially feel less powerless (Nocentini et al., 2010). For this reason, it is argued that the power differentials in cyberbullying are determined more by the target's lack of power than by the perpetrator's possession of it (Dooley et al., 2009; Langos, 2012). All in all, while these additional sources of power mean that power cannot operate in a zero-sum fashion anymore, power dynamics may nonetheless be pertinent during stages such as reporting the behaviour and in seeking redressal.

2.3.3.4 Detached nature and anonymity

The nature of communicating online makes it easier to behave and respond in a hostile and aggressive manner for a number of reasons (Giumetti & Hatfield, 2013). First, since most platforms lack face-to-face interactions, facial expressions and vocal cues are absent, providing ample opportunity for ambiguity and misinterpretation of communications (Baruch, 2005; Borstorff & Graham, 2006). Not only can this result in communications being perceived as (intentionally or unintentionally) aggressive by the receiver, leading to an escalation of conflict, but it can also allow for plausible deniability on the part of the sender (Pettalia et al., 2013; Udris, 2014). Second, a lack of facial and vocal feedback means that perpetrators of

cyberbullying are unable to view the immediate reactions of targets. Described as the 'cockpit effect' (Heirman & Walrave, 2008), perpetrators might continue to remain unaware of the consequences of their actions and the harm that targets experience. Third, and closely associated with this, is the detached nature of online communications; lacking face-to-face interactions, free from social norms and conventions (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), and being potentially ambiguous. This can lead to online disinhibition (Suler, 2004) wherein individuals say or do things online that they never would in the real world. Finally, technology can act as a buffer (Kelly, 2011), providing the freedom to post offensive and malicious content, while remaining behind the safety and security of an electronic screen (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

In addition to these issues, many ICTDs and platforms also allow anonymous or pseudonymous usage. In fact, numerous apps such as Yik Yak, Secret, Formspring, and Whisper have been developed explicitly for the purpose of communicating anonymously. It is unsurprising, then, that these applications are also quite commonly at the centre of many cases of cyberbullying reported in the media (Cook, 2014; Dickey, 2014). As (Dickey, 2014, p. 42) argues "right now anonymity as a business proposition is having a moment". Anonymity on its own is not necessarily a bane, and can be used fairly innocuously in facilitating communication about sensitive topics (Scott & Rains, 2005) or maintaining privacy while browsing the web (Kang, Brown, & Kiesler, 2013). This feature can also be particularly beneficial or protective in allowing individuals access to support groups for domestic abuse, for instance, or maintain the safety of their identities during social communications and transactions (Kang et al., 2013). Even within the organisational context, this can be particularly helpful in providing feedback or informal evaluations (Scott & Rains, 2005). However, the misuse of anonymity can serve to dehumanise others (Dickey, 2014). Indeed, there is research suggesting anonymity itself to be a factor that encourages opportunistic perpetration of cyberbullying (Barlett, Gentile, & Chew, 2014; Snell & Englander, 2010). Paradoxically, such behaviours can impinge upon the privacy of targets while facilitating more privacy for the perpetrators (Adam, 2001). Thereby, in addition to avoiding accountability for perpetrators (Barlińska, Szuster, & Winiewski, 2013),

anonymous bullying simultaneously prevents targets from taking action or being able to effectively resolve the bullying (Staude-Müller et al., 2012).

2.3.3.5 Infinite audience and role blurring

As stated before, one of the key issues with repetition in cyberbullying is the potential for a single cyber incident to be disseminated widely to an almost infinite audience (Langos, 2012). This is further compounded by the speed at which information can be shared digitally. As such, the repeated sharing of digital content can vastly increase the scale of humiliation for the target (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini & Menesini, 2009). In fact, public cyberbullying incidents are generally rated as being more harmful, than private (both cyber and traditional bullying) incidents (Sticca & Perren, 2013). Perhaps this is due to the fact that public incidents provide the opportunity for witnesses to become active participants (Bilić, 2014) – either deliberately or unwittingly – by commenting or further sharing the content. In such cases, duplication of the harmful behaviour has occurred, but not by the original perpetrator (Smith, 2012b), once again raising the argument that it might not be necessary for the negative act to be repeated more than once by the original perpetrator(s) for the behaviour to be classified as cyberbullying (Corcoran et al., 2015; Dooley et al., 2009). Furthermore, a "blurring of roles" may have also taken place whereby bystanders have become secondary perpetrators, raising questions of accountability for the behaviour (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012).

Conversely, while it is possible that having a large audience witness the bullying behaviours may increase the possibility of intervening or reporting the incident(s), research on cyber bystanders generally fails to support this notion. For instance, a Polish study using a series of online lab experiments indicated that when presented with harassing photographs of a (fictional) schoolmate, adolescents were more likely to actively participate in perpetuating the harassment online versus offline (Barlińska et al., 2013). Similarly, other studies have found that few online bystanders who noticed cyberbullying were likely to directly intervene, confirming the presence of a bystander effect (Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Machackova, Dedkova, & Mezulanikova,

2015). This effect may further compounded by the previously mentioned 'cockpit effect' (Heirman & Walrave, 2008) or social risks associated with intervention (Dillon & Bushman, 2015) . Thus, the fluidity of cyber bystander roles (Allison & Bussey, 2016) need to be investigated further, in terms of understanding what specific cyber contexts they are more or less likely to intervene in, as bystanders may be a key avenue for intervention.

2.3.3.6 Permanence of digital content

Relatedly, since digital content has a permanent quality, it becomes much easier to trace, restore, save, and distribute material (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; Staude-Müller et al., 2012). This renders unwanted content almost impossible to erase permanently, resulting in a serious and permanent threat for targets (Staude-Müller et al., 2012), alongside the continued experiencing of harm or humiliation (Dooley et al., 2009). For this reason, it is argued that targets "experience emotional damage that lasts longer than a black eye" (Anderson & Sturm, 2007, p. 26). Alternatively, as noted earlier, the electronic footprints left by certain types of cyberbullying can be used by targets as evidence when reporting the problem or seeking redressal (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), potentially proving advantageous for targets of cyberbullying – as compared to other forms of bullying.

2.3.3.7 Boundary-less spread

Finally, the constant access provided by ICTDs, in addition to the ease of propagation, means that cyberbullying can permeate physical, temporal, and personal boundaries (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). While traditional bullying is usually limited to face-to-face occurrences, cyberbullying can carry on outside of the physical work site and well beyond work hours, infiltrating targets' homes and personal lives. In this way, ICTDs can provide an additional means for bullying (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013) by facilitating continuous access to the targets, and invading their privacy. Research has demonstrated that the pervasiveness and increased accessibility means that targets experience a sense of helplessness

as they feel constantly pursued (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), and are unable to escape the bullying and replenish their coping resources (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). This is yet another reason cyberbullying is thought to have more detrimental effects on targets, compared to traditional bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010).

Thus, aside from the fact that the definitional criteria of repetition, intent, and power imbalance operate differently in cyberbullying, there are also certain intricacies that warrant consideration; particularly because they enable the ease with which cyberbullying can occur, while simultaneously augmenting the potential for harm to targets. Despite a clear definition of cyberbullying remaining elusive (Pieschl et al., 2013), by contrasting the two forms of bullying a *prima facie* argument can be made for the unique nature of cyberbullying. Further support for this argument is derived from examining three key bodies of evidence: prevalence rates, risk factors, and impacts of harm. Once again, findings from traditional bullying are contrasted in illustrating this.

2.3.4 Prevalence

As mentioned earlier, there is considerable research demonstrating that many targets experience traditional bullying and cyberbullying concurrently (Beran & Li, 2005, 2007; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a). This overlap is indicative of underlying similarities between the two forms of bullying. Interestingly, many targets of traditional bullying have also been found to perpetrate cyberbullying (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012); suggesting that perpetration might be easier in digital contexts (Law et al., 2012) and perhaps that retaliation is a primary motive in cyberbullying (Bauman, 2013). Yet, the overlap is not perfect; there are targets who experience cyberbullying alone. Unfortunately, much of the cyberbullying research fails to co-assess traditional bullying forms, as well. Thus, it is important to bear this caveat in mind during the following discussion on prevalence rates.

This discussion of cyberbullying prevalence rates must be also prefaced with the proviso that unlike with traditional bullying where a relatively standardised measurement approaches exists (see Neall & Tuckey, 2014; Nielsen et al., 2010); numerous instruments have stemmed from the lack of agreement on a shared definition of cyberbullying. For instance, the Cyber Bullying Inventory (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2010); the European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (ECIPQ) (Casas et al., 2013); and the Cyberbullying Inventory for College Students (CICS) (Francisco et al., 2015), are just some of the scales used in the literature. It should be noted that these instruments have been predominantly developed within the school and tertiary context, with little evidence to suggest their generalisability and validity within the workplace. Only very recently, Farley, Coyne, Axtell, and Sprigg (2016) developed what could be considered the first workplace-specific cyberbullying instrument; the Workplace Cyberbullying Measure (WCM) which has demonstrated good reliability and validity. However, it is also worth mentioning that the authors operationalise workplace cyberbullying using the same definitional criteria as traditional bullying. As noted before, a stronger theoretical argument may be required before applying this framework to the recent and relatively unfamiliar concept of workplace cyberbullying. Further, a systematic review of 44 cyberbullying instruments by Berne et al. (2013) revealed that more than half of these do not even use the term 'cyberbullying'; instead relying on other terminology such as electronic bullying. Still others rely on definition-based self-assessments of cyberbullying (Ybarra, Boyd, Korchmaros, & Oppenheim, 2012); which in itself is concerning given the previously identified conceptualisation issues.

As a result, these varying instruments have yielded prevalence rates ranging from 6.6% (Smith et al., 2008) up to 58% when accounting for single incidents (Beran & Li, 2007), among children and adolescents. Additionally, to some extent, prevalence rates exhibit regional differences. For instance, a study across three European countries – England, Italy, and Spain – placed cyberbullying rates between 2.1 to 7.3%, with Spanish students experiencing the lowest rates of bullying (Ortega et al., 2012). In contrast, figures within New Zealand lean toward the

higher end with studies revealing that around 23% (Raskauskas, 2010) to 33% (Fenaughty & Harré, 2013) of students reported experiencing cyberharassment. Unfortunately, this form of bullying continues beyond school, with tertiary students reporting experiencing cyberbullying at rates of around 9% (Paullet & Pinchot, 2014; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012) to nearly 40% (Balakrishnan, 2015; Lindsay & Krysik, 2012). Interestingly, Paullet and Pinchot (2014) further demonstrate a link between experiencing cyberbullying in school and at the tertiary level, highlighting previous victimisation as a risk factor.

Although investigations into workplace cyberbullying are relatively scant, prevalence is placed around approximately 10% (Baruch, 2005; Ford, 2013; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a) to up to 46% when accounting for single incidents (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2015). A recent New Zealand study found that only around 3% of the sample had experienced cyberbullying within the past six months (Gardner et al., 2016). A much higher figure was reported by research on Australian public service employees which indicated that 72% of the sample, including both targets and witnesses, had either observed or experienced a form of workplace cyberbullying within the past six months (Lawrence, 2015).

The aforementioned limitations around measurement, as well as variations in prevalence rates, not only prevent a straightforward comparison between the two forms of bullying, but may have the unintended effect of hiding the true magnitude of cyberbullying, hampering progress within the field (Tokunaga, 2010) and leading to a misallotment of resources (Addington, 2013). Bearing these limitations in mind, cyberbullying rates are generally estimated to be lower than for traditional bullying (Olweus, 2012; Ortega et al., 2012). This trend is also evident in the workplace (Gardner et al., 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a), although a study exploring non-sexual harassment among Canadian employees has indicated otherwise; wherein participants experienced this type of harassment more frequently on virtual platforms than face-to-face (Ford, 2013). Regardless, the significance of this issue should not be dismissed as a result of its lower reported prevalence, as it is argued that cyberbullying could potentially be more harmful

than traditional bullying (Bauman, 2013) due to the factors mentioned in section 2.3.3. Furthermore, scholars predict that instances of cyberbullying will continue to increase in the near future (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Kelly, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b), in the absence of effective prevention and intervention measures.

Additionally, a small subset of targets also experiences cyberbullying alone (Olweus, 2012; Pieschl et al., 2013; Raskauskas, 2010). This finding may be indicative of factors relating to the relative ease (or difficulty) of perpetration, as well as cyber-specific risk factors for exposure to such forms of bullying (discussed below). Taken together, the evidence that cyberbullying is experienced less frequently than traditional bullying, as well as the group that only experiences cyberbullying, is another finding contributing to the unique nature of this phenomenon.

2.3.5 Antecedents or "risk" factors

In reviewing the literature on cyberbullying, certain cyber-specific 'risk' factors emerge consistently. It should be noted that these findings are mostly are based on cross-sectional, correlational data, so there is little evidence to suggest the directionality of these factors. Furthermore, reflective of the cyberbullying literature in general, there is a predominant focus on individual-level causes and antecedents; somewhat antagonistic with the focus of this thesis. However, I report briefly on these to build on an argument around the similarities and differences of cyberbullying. Nonetheless, until further longitudinal investigations are carried out to replicate these findings, particularly within organisational settings, caution must be used in interpreting these antecedent or 'risk' factors.

2.3.5.1 Previous victimisation (traditional bullying)

One of the most consistently reported predictors of cyberbullying is previous victimisation – either via traditional and/or cyber methods – as identified by reviews (Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2015; Bauman, 2013) and a meta-analysis (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). Although most support for this is built on correlational overlap of the two

forms of bullying (Ak, Özdemir, & Kuzucu, 2015; Balakrishnan, 2015; Beran & Li, 2007; Casas et al., 2013; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2011; Raskauskas, 2010; West, 2015), more compelling evidence is garnered from longitudinal studies of high school students (Athanasiades, Baldry, Kamariotis, Kostouli, & Psalti, 2016; Chang et al., 2014; Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter, 2012) and by investigations of university students' experiences of bullying in school (Paullet & Pinchot, 2014). It is theorised that injustice perceptions as a result of being targeted can cause individuals to react by directing aggression toward others (Bilić, 2014) or as a means of retribution for being victimised (Athanasiades et al., 2016). The previously mentioned cyber-specific factors (in section 2.3.3) also contribute toward the ease of cyberbullying perpetration, making it easier and safer for the perpetrator to engage in this form of bullying, thus explaining the overlap. It is also worth mentioning that some individuals experience continuation of victimisation from school into the university setting (Beran, Rinaldi, Bickham, & Rich, 2012; Paullet & Pinchot, 2014), and it is theorised that initial experiences of victimisation can also help shape 'roles' that targets adopt in future interactions that guide their own behaviour and others' responses (Beran et al., 2012).

Interestingly, research within the school context generally reveals that although traditional bullying is highest in middle school (equivalent to 'Intermediate school' in New Zealand) and decreases in high school (Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2013), the opposite is true for cyberbullying; older teenagers experience a higher risk (of perpetration and victimisation) compared to children (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2014; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). This is mainly attributable to increased technological skill and use, although reduced parental monitoring may also play a role (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2014). While these reported incidence rates generally decrease in adulthood (Balakrishnan, 2015); it remains unclear whether this is simply a function of reduced reporting, due to issues related to stigma (Corcoran et al., 2015); reduced education and awareness (Lindsay & Krysik, 2012; Yan, 2009); or lack of a clear authoritative body to report to (Addington, 2013).

2.3.5.2 Internet use

Relatedly, and somewhat unsurprisingly, internet use itself presents another key risk factor for experiencing and perpetrating cyberbullying. This risk manifests in two aspects: duration of internet use, as well as risky online behaviours. Prolonged internet use and a constant online presence probabilistically increases the risk of being exposed to negative or unwanted cyber acts (Balakrishnan, 2015; Baldry et al., 2015; Bauman, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kamali, 2014; Kowalski et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), as well as being an antecedent for perpetrating aggressive online behaviours (Casas et al., 2013; Kowalski et al., 2014; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Likewise, risky internet behaviours – such as disclosure of personal information online or increased contact with strangers – are also consistently found to increase the risk of experiencing cyberbullying (Casas et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2014; Chen, Ho, & Lwin, 2016; Kowalski et al., 2014), particularly for females (Lindsay & Krysik, 2012), although technological skill can act as a buffer against this risk (Staude-Müller et al., 2012).

Thus, these cyberbullying-specific risk factors also go some way toward distinguishing cyberbullying from other traditional forms of bullying, and may hold the key to informing future interventions in this area (Barlett, 2015). This section also highlights the increased vulnerability that targets of cyberbullying might experience, in terms of multiple victimisation from two (or more) forms of bullying and abuse (Raskauskas, 2010). Finally, this section also serves as a reminder that ICTDs have become so entrenched in our daily lives, and this in itself potentially exposes a large majority of the population to the risk of experiencing cyberbullying.

2.3.6 Associated outcomes

Although much of our knowledge on the outcomes or impact of cyberbullying is informed by correlational self-report research, predominantly based on school children and adolescents, many of these findings are mirrored in the relatively fewer studies focused on the university and workplace settings, as summarised in sections 2.3.6.1 and 2.3.6.2 below.

2.3.6.1 Cyberbullying among university students

In contrast to the literature on cyberbullying among children and adolescents, comparatively little is known about the phenomenon among adults. Within this sphere, research has mainly stemmed from tertiary students, with little focus on cyberbullying in the workplace. However, the associated outcomes of cyberbullying are discussed below. Among these, similar feelings of depression and anxiety (Beran et al., 2012; Rivituso, 2014; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Selkie, Kota, Chan, & Moreno, 2015; West, 2015); lowered self-esteem (Rivituso, 2014); suicidal ideation (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; West, 2015); and impaired mental health outcomes (Faucher et al., 2014) are experienced by targets. Likewise, university students who experience cyberbullying also report diminished academic performance (Beran et al., 2012; Faucher et al., 2014; West, 2015) and absenteeism behaviours (Beran et al., 2012; West, 2015); although once again, it is difficult to establish the direction of these relationships (Beran & Li, 2007). Finally, an experimental study has demonstrated links between experiencing online incivility and reduced energy levels and engagement, changes in affect, and impaired performance (Giumetti & Hatfield, 2013); although the ecological validity and generalisability of these findings remain questionable.

Nonetheless, these outcomes may be particularly alarming, in consideration of the risk of experiencing cyberbullying as a function of increased internet and social media use. University students are especially reliant on the internet not only for daily communication, and academic purposes (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012) but also in seeking romantic partners (Na, Dancy, & Park, 2015); putting them at a heightened risk of exposure to cyberbullying and harassment behaviours, and consequently, a risk of experiencing these negative outcomes. Further, unlike with school children, less effort is directed at educating adults on the risks associated with cyberbullying. As a consequence, high school students demonstrate a more sophisticated understanding of these risks, in comparison to tertiary students (Yan, 2009).

2.3.6.2 Workplace cyberbullying

Among the few studies with a focus on the workplace, cyberbullying has been linked to a number of unfavourable outcomes for the individual and the organisation. For instance, Ford (2013) linked virtual (non-sexual) harassment to impaired psychological health outcomes; while Coyne et al. (2016) highlighted associations between cyberbullying and general mental strain, particularly dependent on targets' self-blaming. Similarly, research on educators' experiences of cyberbullying has uncovered links to diminished affect and mood (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017); physical aches and ailments, sleep disorders, and weakened immune systems (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017). These experiences of negative physiological and psychological outcomes may also be gendered, with women reporting worse outcomes than men (Gardner et al., 2016). Beyond this, targets exposed to prolonged cyberbullying also experience psychosocial effects that hamper the quality of social interactions, mainly attributable to increases in conflicts (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017).

From the organisation's perspective, this can also impinge upon employee productivity (Baruch, 2005; Borstorff & Graham, 2006; Van Gramberg, Teicher, & O'Rourke, 2014) and negatively affect organisational attitudes. In fact, Baruch's (2005) study of UK employees found that e-mail bullying was associated with reduced job satisfaction and was a significant antecedent of intent to quit. The relationship between cyberbullying and intent to quit has also been supported by research on Swedish and US employees (Jönsson, Forssell, Bäckström, & Muhonen, 2017). Similarly, in a study of UK trainee doctors Farley et al. (2015) identified that cyberbullying was negatively associated with job satisfaction, even after controlling for general levels of job stress. These findings are similar to research conducted by Lawrence (2015) among Australian public sector employees. Here, cyberbullying was linked to job stress, impaired performance, and reduced job satisfaction (Lawrence, 2015). Employee engagement may also be negatively affected (Jönsson et al., 2017). Aside from the costs associated with reduced productivity and turnover, cyberbullying also imposes potential costs associated with litigation and recompense (Baruch, 2005; Borstorff & Graham, 2006; Van Gramberg et al., 2014). Such incidents –

particularly in the public sphere – can also create negative publicity for the organisation involved and pose risks to the company's image (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; Cain, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009a).

These outcomes are similar to those reported in the traditional workplace bullying literature (see section 2.2). However, unlike with cyberbullying among children and adolescents – where there is evidence that the outcomes can be worse than traditional forms of bullying (for instance, see Callaghan, Kelly, and Molcho, 2014; Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, and Kift, 2012; Sticca and Perren, 2013) – there is only preliminary support for this, in the work context (Coyne et al., 2016). This notion is a struggle to ascertain for two main reasons. First, aside from a notable dearth of such research, investigations into cyberbullying generally yield low response rates and small samples; perhaps due to a lack of general understanding of the phenomenon among adults (Blizard, 2015), as well as the perceived stigma and embarrassment around experiencing cyberbullying (Minor, Smith, & Brashen, 2013). These small sample sizes make it difficult to yield broad generalisable comparisons. Second, there appears to be a considerable overlap between the two forms of bullying – even greater than for younger groups – within the work context (Privitera & Campbell, 2009a), making it impossible again to isolate the harm experienced from each form.

2.3.7 Cyberbullying as a continuum

Much like traditional bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), in line with conceptualising cyberbullying behaviours on a continuum it can be expected that certain behaviours are more harmful or create more distress than others (Langos, 2014). In fact, it has consistently been demonstrated that respondents view cyberbullying involving images or videos as more damaging than other forms (Menesini, Nocentini, & Calussi, 2011; Pieschl, Kuhlmann, & Porsch, 2015; Smith et al., 2008). It is postulated that such visual material is no longer confined to the online sphere and transcends into the physical 'real' world, creating a genuine threat for

targets (Staude-Müller et al., 2012), particularly in light of cyber-specific factors such as permanence online and potentially infinite audience. Further, cyberbullying behaviours perpetrated in public spheres are often perceived as more distressing than those that occur via private channels (Pieschl et al., 2015; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015), as expected. Findings on the distressing nature of anonymity vary; some research finds anonymity of perpetrator as not distressing (Fenaughty & Harré, 2013); while other research highlights that targets report more distress when the perpetrator is known to them (Staude-Müller et al., 2012). However, in general, reported levels of distress are particularly high for targets when the cyberbullying impacts daily life (Staude-Müller et al., 2012).

2.3.8 Cyberbullying and gender

Finally, unlike with traditional workplace bullying (Hayman, 2015; Salin, 2003b); there is generally no clear significant difference reported between genders with regard to the risk of experiencing cyberbullying at any age (Balakrishnan, 2015; Barlett, 2015; Buelga, Cava, Musitu, & Torralba, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Raskauskas, 2010; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). It should be noted that the works of Hayman (2015) and Salin (2003b) were specific to male-dominated workplaces. Of further importance is the fact that to date the lack of large-scale comprehensive prevalence studies on workplace cyberbullying makes it difficult to ascertain whether no gender differences exist in experiencing cyberbullying within organisational settings, with the exception of (Cassidy, Jackson, & Faucher, 2016) who found that female faculty members were more likely to be targeted than males, within a university setting.

However, gender differences do emerge when examining perceptions and reactions to the behaviours. Specifically, compared to males, females tend to report experiencing more distress in response to hypothetical (Pettalia et al., 2013; Pieschl et al., 2013) or actual cyberbullying incidents (Faucher et al., 2014; Staude-Müller et al., 2012), similar to traditional workplace bullying (Escartín et al., 2011; Salin, 2003b). Further, among children and adolescents, females

are also more likely than males to report their experiences of cyber victimisation to an adult

(Pettalia et al., 2013; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015) or engage in help-seeking behaviours

(Faucher et al., 2014; Orel, Campbell, Wozencroft, Leong, & Kimpton, 2015). While this claim

cannot be extended to workplace cyberbullying as yet, the research on traditional bullying

research suggests that female targets are more likely to use internalising and withdrawal coping

strategies (Salin, 2003b). To summarise, while there is evidence that bullying itself is a

gendered phenomenon (Escartín et al., 2011; Lee, Brotheridge, Salin, & Hoel, 2013; Salin,

2003b) such a perspective is absent from the research thus far on workplace cyberbullying.

While these findings – drawn from research on adolescents and students – are not indicative of a

definitive gender difference in reported experiences of cyberbullying, this does not disparage

the very real gendered nature of online abuse. In fact, females generally are at a substantially

greater risk of experiencing online sexual harassment and cyberstalking behaviours (Chemaly,

2014; Shariff & Gouin, 2005; Staude-Müller et al., 2012), mirroring offline risks of stalking,

harassment, and physical and sexual violence (Lindsay & Krysik, 2012). This is particularly

evident in the seemingly endless array of cyber-misogyny behaviours such as morphing (Halder

& Karuppannan, 2009), virtual rape (Faucher et al., 2014) and revenge porn (Chemaly, 2014). It

has been argued that such behaviours function to "stake out the internet as a male space… by

eliminating and muting women's voices from the internet" (Citron, 2009, p. 391). Thus, gender

itself is inherently linked to a power disadvantage when operating online; to say nothing of

individuals from other marginalised groups – such as those with a disability (Fevre, Robinson,

Lewis, & Jones, 2013), non-heterosexual, non-cisgender (Lewis, Giga, & Hoel, 2011), and/or

persons of colour (Hollis, 2016) – who may experience a compounded risk of harassment, as a

result of the duality of their membership (Shaw, Chan, & McMahon, 2012; Stoll & Block Jr,

2015; West, 2015). Much of this can be traced back to the hierarchies of power present online –

not only among those who profit from its use, but also individuals tasked with administrating

and operating systems, and creating policies (Shariff & Gouin, 2005). Further, institutions such

as schools – and by extension, workplaces – may continue to preserve these hierarchies by

failing to address the problem of cyberbullying effectively (Shariff & Gouin, 2005). Although this thesis does not address these issues directly, these perspectives are important to note throughout the discussion of findings and with regard to implications.

2.3.9 Theoretical perspectives

Owing to the relatively recent emergence of the phenomenon; in addition to a preoccupation with establishing prevalence rates; the cyberbullying literature has been critiqued for being relatively atheoretical (Tokunaga, 2010). Within the subset of studies that do incorporate a theoretical model or framework, most draw on existing theories frequently applied in the traditional bullying literature, with limited attempts to develop a new cyber-specific theoretical approach. A few relevant theoretical perspectives are elaborated on briefly below.

A number of psychological theories have been proposed at the individual level. For instance, social rank theory has been used to explain victimisation (Beran & Li, 2007), while the generalised aggression model (Kowalski et al., 2014; Pieschl et al., 2013) and social dominance theory (Beran & Li, 2005; Walker, 2014; Washington, 2015) remain popular in explaining cyber perpetration. Further, general strain theory has been used (Ak et al., 2015) to explain the overlap between victimisation and perpetration. Stress-related models have also been used to account for cyberbullying outcomes, including the conservation of resources theory (Gardner et al., 2016; Giumetti & Hatfield, 2013), and the stressor-strain model (Ford, 2013; Vranjes, Baillien, Vandebosch, Erreygers, & De Witte, 2017); although the transactional model of stress and coping (Nixon, 2014; Ortega et al., 2012; Vollink, Bolman, Dehue, & Jacobs, 2013) is frequently used to account for variations in outcomes experienced and the more damaging nature of cyberbullying in comparison to traditional forms.

Due to the potential for cyberbullying to be carried out on public forums, and by multiple aggressors, group-level theories such as social norms theory (Cross et al., 2015), as well as criminology theories such as neutralisation theory and rational choice theory (Zhang & Leidner,

2014) have been proposed in explaining why individuals may engage in cyberbullying. A number of studies have also utilised and expanded on the bystander intervention model (Barlińska et al., 2013; Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2014). Of note is the fact that the theoretical underpinnings of many adult- and workplace cyberbullying studies rely heavily on notions of power, such as Foucault's power relations theory (Blizard, 2015); the power and control model (Cassidy et al., 2016); and dysempowerment theory (Coyne et al., 2016; Farley et al., 2015). Ironically, despite utilising theories of power as a framework, most of this research does not adopt a critical stance in terms of seeking explanations beyond the individual or organisational level.

Moreover, although these models do an adequate job of explaining various facets of cyberbullying; they do not take into account the unique features associated with cyberbullying. To date, only three cyberbullying-specific models have been developed; the Barlett and Gentile Cyberbullying Model (Barlett, Chamberlin, & Witkower, 2016); the Social Media Cyberbullying Model (Lowry, Jun, Chuang, & Siponen, 2016); and the Emotion Reaction model of workplace cyberbullying (Vranjes et al., 2017). The first two models draw on social learning theory and include media-specific characteristics in explaining cyberbullying perpetration as a learned behaviour; while the third expands on affective events theory in predicting cyberbullying and victimisation. All three models have predominantly focused on adults, and demonstrated validity and reliability. It is interesting that theoretical explanations thus far are mainly focused on the individual level – and to a lesser extent, the group level; when in fact, traditional bullying research has indicated the crucial role of features in the wider work environment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Leymann, 1996) in giving rise to and facilitating workplace bullying (Salin, 2003a). In the absence of such a perspective, the present research utilises the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) as a guiding framework in comparing and understanding findings. More specifically, beyond examining individual-level factors in the understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, my research seeks to identify broader factors in the work environment that might contribute to this phenomenon.

2.4 The Present Research Focus

Workplace cyberbullying remains an underexplored yet crucial challenge for organisations to tackle, with growing evidence highlighting detrimental consequences for individuals and employers. Yet, the key issue underlying this emerging body of research remains a lack of clarity around conceptualisation, which subsequently has implications for its measurement as well as guiding effective intervention. In fact, current estimates of workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) and cyberbullying (Piotrowski, 2012) are believed to be conservative. Unfortunately, underreporting of the problem can lead to the problem being discounted or overlooked, as well as a misallocation of resources (Addington, 2013). Additionally, framing the phenomenon as being merely an electronic extension of traditional workplace bullying may not only overlook the intricacies of cyberbullying (Dooley et al., 2009), but could also prevent victims of certain kinds of cyber abuse behaviours from being able to seek help or support if their experience does not fall within the confines of this categorisation, further perpetuating the problem. This impasse in conceptualisation has led to calls for a 'future-proofed' universal definition of cyberbullying (Betts, 2016).

However, my subtle realism worldview leads me to believe that we are unlikely to be able to develop a universal definition of a social phenomenon that is representative of a multiplicity of views. Rather, this paradigm lends itself well to exploring how workplace cyberbullying is understood from different viewpoints. In fact, a recent systematic review of the workplace harassment and bullying literature has emphasised the need for engaging multiple perspectives in order to further construct understanding (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). This endeavour was a primary aim of the present research in exploring how workplace cyberbullying is understood and experienced, within New Zealand. As a starting point, research objectives one and two (below) have been formulated to explore how workplace cyberbullying is understood among subject matter experts, as well as within a specific profession – nursing.

RO1: Explore expert understandings around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying

RO2: Explore nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, in order to identify salient features in their definitions

Furthermore, as indicated above, quantitative, single-source cross-sectional research dominates the cyberbullying literature (Tokunaga, 2010). As such, measurement instruments generally lack sound construct development or validity, and studies on risk factors and associated outcomes are relatively atheoretical. Unfortunately, this does little to quell conceptualisation issues. Thus, while several reviews of the cyberbullying instruments and literature have been conducted (see for instance, (Berne et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2010; Vivolo-Kantor, Martell, Holland, & Westby, 2014) – our understanding is contingent on the quality of studies included (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). While this concern has been previously raised with respect to the traditional workplace bullying and harassment literature (Neall & Tuckey, 2014), arguably due to the infancy of the field, such issues are much more rampant within cyberbullying research. The dearth of investigations on workplace cyberbullying, in conjunction with initial insights into the potentially detrimental associated outcomes, also highlights the importance of research within this area. Therefore, what is required is qualitative, in-depth investigations of how cyberbullying is understood and experienced (Agervold, 2007; Branch et al., 2013; Forssell, 2016), reflective of the subjective nature of bullying (Dawood, 2010) as well as its surrounding complexities (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). The three present research studies are situated within this methodological gap, and utilise qualitative, semi-structured interview approaches in order to explore and contrast a multiplicity of views on cyberbullying, with a view to inform prevention and intervention.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY ONE – EXPLORING EXPERTS' UNDERSTANDINGS
OF WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the first of three studies exploring the topic of workplace cyberbullying within the New Zealand context. Specifically, study one examined subject matter experts' perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon, along with their recommendations for measurement and management. The key research objective here was to:

RO1: Explore expert understandings around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying

The chapter begins by justifying the rationale of this study (section 3.2), along with outlining the specific research objectives and methodology (section 3.3) guiding this research. Next, three top level themes extracted from the data are discussed in relation to the research aim and relevant literature (section 3.4). The theoretical framework of the work environment hypothesis is also reintroduced in this section. Finally, the research and practice implications of findings are summarised in the conclusion (section 3.5).

3.2 Study Aim and Rationale

The term 'experts' refers to respondents in this study, who are academics and practitioners who specialise in the field of workplace bullying and cyberbullying. As noted in the previous chapter, there has been a call to incorporate multiple perspectives in studying workplace bullying – and by extension, cyberbullying (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). This is because, at present, the majority of the research on workplace bullying and cyberbullying has focused on target perspectives (Neall & Tuckey, 2014), with little attention devoted to other key stakeholders who may play a role in the course of the bullying incidents. This proclivity to examine target points

of view is perhaps dictated by pragmatic constraints, given the challenges and biases associated with collecting data from self-identifying perpetrators of bullying (Seigne et al., 2007). Witness perspectives also continue to remain limited (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). However, previous research has highlighted the benefits of engaging industry specialists such as consultants, managers, and Human Resource (HR) professionals on the topic of traditional workplace bullying (Catley et al., 2013; Cowan, 2011, 2012). Many of these individuals will have knowledge or direct experience of the management and prevention of workplace bullying. Thus, examining expert understandings not only addresses a gap within the literature around perspectives, but also tackles the parallel aim of conceptualisation. Efforts toward this are especially relevant within the area of workplace cyberbullying, since these individuals will be tasked with the prevention and management of this issue (Cowan, 2011), if they are not already.

A similar study has previously been published by West, Foster, Levin, Edmison, and Robibero (2014) around the same time that the present research was undertaken. The study explored nine Canadian Human Resource professionals' perspectives on their organisation's workplace policies and practices with respect to cyberbullying. The authors concluded that there was no common definition of what constituted workplace cyberbullying, and that the absence of national-level legislation hindered HR professionals from being able to effectively address the issue within the workplace (West et al., 2014). It should be noted that this study was conducted as part of a pilot project prior to the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act being enacted toward the end of 2014. Similar to the present study, qualitative interviews were used to explore experts' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying. However, the present research extends this work by including a larger (*N*=20) and broader (academics, HR professionals, and external consultants) sample to investigate this phenomenon within the New Zealand context specifically. The inclusion of academics in this sample is appropriate particularly since many of these individuals have also been involved in projects with regulatory bodies such as WorkSafe New Zealand. Further, contrary to the study by West et al. (2014), the Harmful Digital Communications (HDC) Act (2015) had just come into effect at the time of interviewing

participants in this study, providing a general legislative guideline around cyberbullying at a national level; although this was not specific to workplace cyberbullying. Two final points of difference were that the present study explored the additional topic of measuring and assessing cyberbullying, and that respondents were asked about the management of workplace cyberbullying in general, beyond the restriction of organisational policies and procedures. This allowed for a broader discussion of prevention and intervention strategies.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Overview of research design

A qualitative interview design was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts in the area of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Although other quantitative survey methods have previously been deployed in this area – for instance, in analysing Human Resource Management perspectives on workplace bullying practices (Salin, 2008) – an interview design was deemed most appropriate for this present study as it allowed me to gain an in-depth and focused perspective (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009) of experts' perceptions and understandings of workplace cyberbullying, consistent with the aim of conceptualisation. Likewise, although the Delphi method remains a popular technique in research evaluating expert knowledge, particularly in the workplace bullying field – (see Knapp et al., 2014; Rodríguez-Carballeira, Solanelles, Vinacua, García, & Martín-Peña, 2010) – this strategy's predominant goal of reaching conformity in group responses (Aichholzer, 2009) did not align with my research aim of exploring potential variations in expert understandings. Pragmatic considerations in terms of the geographical spread and time constraints for potential respondents also factored into this decision, and accordingly the use of focus groups was also ruled out.

3.3.1.1 The expert interview

Since this study relies on interviewing subject matter experts, a brief discussion on the expert interview is warranted. In recognition of the multiplicity of understandings around what

constitutes an 'expert' – see for instance Bogner and Menz (2009) who outline the varying conceptualisations of experts, such as through virtue of an individual's role as an informant; one who possesses institutionalised authority to construct reality; or even persons who have specialsed knowledge in relation to specialised problems in a professional role – this section is prefaced by a definition of experts as "people who, on the basis of specific knowledge that is derived from practice or experience and which relates to a clearly demarcated range of problems, have created a situation where it is possible for their interpretations to structure the concrete field of action in a way that is meaningful and guides action" (Bogner & Menz, 2009, p. 54). This characterisation of experts for the purposes of the present study, emphasises the social relevance of these individuals' knowledge (Bogner & Menz, 2009) in terms of their ability to affect practice. Further, although there is no single form of 'the expert interview'; the present study employed this method as a primarily exploratory tool with the aim of advancing conceptual understandings and uncovering avenues for future research. The objective here was not to seek standardisation across responses (systematising expert interview) or theory-generation (Bogner & Menz, 2009) but to explore any potential variations in understandings.

3.3.2 Recruitment strategy

Purposive sampling was utilised in order to identify potential respondents by searching tertiary institutes within New Zealand for academics who had published research within the field of workplace bullying and cyberbullying. Likewise, an online search through Google was conducted to find consultants and practitioners who specialised in providing workplace bullying-related services, across the country. Identified individuals were then contacted with the aims of the study outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A), and were invited to participate. One individual (academic) declined, and a few (practitioners) did not respond; resulting in an initial pool of fifteen respondents. A key advantage of expert interviews is that experts, if willing, could act as gatekeepers in terms of providing wider access to other potential (expert) interviewees (Bogner et al., 2009). In fact, snowball sampling was used to recruit an additional five experts, although it should be noted that this could act as a potential source of

bias if experts were likely to recommend other individuals who hold similar opinions and world views to themselves.

A related concern around sampling bias is also worth noting. On the one hand, my search strategy inherently favours researchers and practitioners who are established within the field and have a relatively public online profile, posing a concern of elite bias, where certain high status informants are likely to be overrepresented in the sample (Myers & Newman, 2007). Alternatively, there is no clear method of subjectively or objectively determining the "quality" of experts (Gläser & Laudel, 2009); though given the earlier definition of expert, this concern is less relevant. Nonetheless, the sampling strategy for the present study was designed to include as many subject matter experts as possible, from the wider population within New Zealand. Thus, gaining insight from a wider group of experts who were in positions to influence practice outweighed the potential limitations mentioned above. It is also acknowledged that this study may have benefitted from the inclusion of a wider range of expert voices, such as trade union representatives or IT professionals involved in cybersecurity and protection of organisations, and this is recognised as a limitation of the present study. Accordingly, it is recommended that a wider range of perspectives be explored in future research, which will no doubt shed added insight on this phenomenon.

3.3.3 Participants

The final sample (N=20) included eight academics researching in the area of workplace bullying/cyberbullying, as well as ten consultants and two Human Resource professionals who were industry specialists in the field (henceforth referred to as 'practitioners'). It is likely that academic understandings of workplace cyberbullying were largely informed by their own research and published scholarly literature on traditional forms of workplace bullying. Similarly, practitioners in this study had experience primarily in investigating – either internally within their own organisation or externally – cases of traditional bullying, which may have predominantly shaped their understandings of cyberbullying, explaining the increased focus on

its management, as seen in the findings. However, it should be noted that some of the academics were involved in the development of the WorkSafe Bullying Guidelines (originally published in 2014) and the vast majority of practitioners utilised or referred to these existing guidelines, suggesting that to some degree there was a shared understanding of (traditional) forms of workplace bullying. Within the exception of two international academic experts who were familiar with the local context, all other participants were located in New Zealand. The sample included almost the entire population of New Zealand-based bullying experts; hence the study was constrained by the availability of potential interviewees (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012).

3.3.4 The interview process

Once respondents had agreed to participate in the study, a convenient time (and location) was set up for the interview. Financial constraints prevented travel beyond the greater Auckland region, so respondents located elsewhere were requested to participate in a phone or Skype interview. Considerations around this potential limitation are explored in some detail below. Most face-to-face interviews took place at the respondents' workplace, with one occurring at a public location (café), and two at their residence. These two residential interviews involved two practitioners (P002 and P003); one of whom, once contacted – as the owner of the consulting business – suggested that I also interview her business partner simultaneously. Thus, while I had endeavoured to conduct the interviews in a relatively formal manner, the residential and café settings no doubt added a slightly more relaxed quality to the interview process. In general, interviews lasted approximately half an hour with some exceptions. One participant alerted me at the outset that she was only able to spare twenty minutes for the interview, and mindful of the time constraints, the actual interview itself was restricted to less than twenty minutes. On the other hand, the interviews conducted at the café and residence went on for more than an hour due to spontaneous digressions on related topics of bullying. However, this type of unplanned conversations is noted as part of exploratory expert interviews (Bogner & Menz, 2009) and enabled me to further establish rapport and credibility with the interviewees.

In consultation with my supervisors and colleagues and with reference to the Massey University risk assessment guidelines, I was able to determine that the study posed minimal risk to potential participants. Accordingly, a Low Risk Notification was submitted and approved (application ID: 4000015058) prior to recruitment, and a statement on ethics was included on the information sheet (Appendix A) sent out to potential participants. Prior to beginning the interview, respondents were requested to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) and asked for their permission to audio record the interview; all consented. Participant rights were briefly reiterated at this point, covering issues such as voluntary consent, anonymity, the right to pause or stop the recording/interview at any time, as well as the right to withdraw their data (as set out in the information sheet). If respondents had no further questions, I began the recording, explained the aims of the study and began the interview. The interview schedule focused on three aspects of workplace cyberbullying: (i) its nature and extent, (ii) best measurement approaches, and (iii) management strategies. At the end of the interview, respondents were provided with an opportunity for further questions or additional comments. Once the recording had stopped, I thanked them again for their contribution and provided them with my own contact details, as well as my main supervisor's, in case any further issues arose. Respondents were also able to indicate if they would be interested in receiving a summary of findings once data analysis was completed, and this was emailed out accordingly.

3.3.4.1 Phone and Skype interviews

As noted above, respondents located beyond the greater Auckland region were interviewed via a phone or Skype call. In these cases, consent forms were emailed and electronically signed prior to the interviews, and interviews were recorded by the device (laptop or phone) that was not currently in use. Since my research was not fairly explicit and reconstructed knowledge, phone and Skype interviews were deemed suitable for this study (Christmann, 2009). For the most part, electronic interviews provide a convenient, safe, and easily accessible method for interviewing respondents, and are becoming an increasingly common data collection method (Christmann, 2009; Oates, 2015). However, the absence of facial expressions and visual cues

did pose somewhat of a challenge in terms of identifying the nature of pauses; that is, whether the interviewee was merely pausing to think or had concluded their response; an issue previously noted by Christmann (2009). This was particularly difficult to assess via phone calls or when the respondent had chosen to participate in an audio-only Skype call. Thus, aside from relying on other audio cues, during particularly ambiguous or lengthier pauses I tended to mirror respondents' ideas back to them (Myers & Newman, 2007) to clarify meaning or react to their statements. This then allowed respondents to either concur or elaborate further. A further consideration with these electronic interviews was a slight tendency for participants to forget the original question, which might have been an impediment to the flow of the interview.

3.3.5 Researcher's role

In line with suggestions by Myers and Newman (2007), and consistent with a subtle realist perspective (Hammersley, 1992), I actively reflected on my role, particularly in the context of conducting expert interviews. Although I was relatively new to the field of workplace bullying, I had spent the previous year engaging with the research on cyberbullying in preparing my literature review. Thus, to some extent, I not only shared a common background with the experts I was interviewing, but had a basic understanding of the topic and planned on conducting further research in the area. Therefore, I situated my role beyond a naïve researcher and leaning slightly toward being a co-expert. This allowed me to engage in substantive discussions on the topic, and potentially provided me access to knowledge and information that I might not have been privy to otherwise (Bogner & Menz, 2009). Similarly, establishing myself as somewhat of a co-expert also resulted in the occasional instance where I was also providing further information to respondents, particularly with regard to the then-recent HDC Act (2015). As Bogner and Menz (2009, p. 58) notes, of the co-expert researcher: "not infrequently, the conversation ceases to be a consultation and takes on the character of a discussion between specialists". However, throughout the interviews and during analysis, I also had to ensure I was vigilant about my own assumptions and how these might influence the inferences made (Hammersley, 1992).

3.3.6 Approach to data analysis

All interviews were transcribed using intelligent verbatim, and thematically relevant sections (Meuser & Nagel, 2009) were coded with the assistance of NVivo software. I began my analysis by developing a preliminary list of provisional *a priori* codes, as determined by the interview guide (Bowen, 2008) in order to meet the study's research aims (Brooks, McCluskey, King, & Turley, 2015; Saldaña, 2009) of exploring expert perceptions around three broad topics. My coding strategy was chosen to align with template analysis: a specific type of thematic analysis based on hierarchical coding, and used particularly within organisational research (Brooks et al., 2015). Template analysis emphasises the development of an initial coding template, based on the identification of *a priori* themes and categories, which is subsequently refined in relation to where the richest data are found (Brooks et al., 2015). This method is not bound to any particular epistemology, and the detailed guidance provided by the authors (Brooks et al., 2015) and systematic nature of this method were particularly helpful.

I then re-familiarised myself with the transcripts by reading through them thoroughly, while annotating my initial thoughts on key ideas and highlighting prominent quotes, as recommended by (Bowen, 2008). In addition to the list of provisional codes, I used holistic coding to chunk passages into broad topic areas, during first cycle coding. Saldaña (2009) recommends holistic coding as a preparatory approach that is particularly helpful for beginner qualitative researchers, and this step allowed me to become better acquainted with the data and coding techniques. I then went over transcripts using a mixture of structural and descriptive coding. Structural coding, which is a content-based coding strategy (Saldaña, 2009), was predominantly helpful in the sections of transcripts describing the processes and strategies around the measurement and management of cyberbullying, as well as predicted trends in its prevalence. Descriptive coding – a method of reducing passages of qualitative data based on the topic (Saldaña, 2009) – was used to a lesser extent, mainly in coding cyber-specific features. After the fourteenth transcript, no new codes were being generated, resulting in an initial coding template containing a total of

fifty-eight codes. By the sixteenth transcript, this was refined and collapsed down into a total of fifty-four codes and five broad categories or themes, forming the final coding template (Brooks et al., 2015).

After re-applying this coding template to all transcripts, I went back to my initial annotations and used this to scrutinise the data further (Bowen, 2008). Although comparison between the groups (academics and practitioners) was not a primary aim of this study, the comparative technique mentioned by Bowen (2008) lent itself well to the data. Therefore, for each category, I compared general trends and patterns in responses across the groups. This allowed me to refine my categories into top-level themes and subthemes. Following the steps outlined for template analysis (Brooks et al., 2015), I also began to identify how themes related to each other. This was particularly helpful in linking the notion of digital evidence across the themes of conceptualisation, measurement, and management themes, as discussed in section 3.4 below.

3.3.6.1 On saturation

The sheer volume of works that have attempted to describe saturation proved somewhat daunting, particularly for a beginner qualitative researcher, and the concept of saturation remained abstract and elusive. However, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) outline a much more accessible notion of saturation, defining it as "the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (p.65). Thus, in examining the development and progress of the coding template, it could be determined that saturation of themes had occurred after the sixteenth interview, suggesting I could remain relatively confident with the sample size of twenty interviews. Aside from the idea of saturation, Bowen (2008) and O'Reilly and Parker (2012) also advocate for considering the concept of sample adequacy, in terms of whether the sample is appropriate for addressing the research question or aims. Previous research by Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986) has demonstrated that competent informants tend to produce stable results with relatively small sample sizes. Therefore, since respondents were domain knowledge experts, and were a largely representative subset of the

wider population of New Zealand experts in the field of bullying, it is likely that the sample size

was adequate to address my research objective and that through my analysis saturation had been

achieved.

3.4 Findings and Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore how workplace cyberbullying was understood among New

Zealand subject matter experts. To this end, twenty experts (eight academics and twelve

practitioners) were interviewed and through the use of template analysis, three top-level themes

were extracted around topics of *understanding, measuring,* and *managing* workplace

cyberbullying. Findings for each theme are discussed in detail below, with reference to relevant

literature.

3.4.1 Theme 1: Understanding workplace cyberbullying

This top-level theme reflects experts' understandings of workplace cyberbullying with relation

to three sub-themes: distinguishing cyberbullying from traditional bullying; evaluating the

extent of workplace cyberbullying in New Zealand at present; and forecasting predicted patterns

and trends in its prevalence.

3.4.1.1 Theme 1a. Distinguishing cyberbullying from traditional bullying

Throughout interviews, participants identified certain unique features that manifested in cases of

cyberbullying; distinguishing it from traditional forms of bullying, as summarised in Table 1

below. Relatedly, these features were also believed to potentially have a more harmful impact

for targets of cyberbullying.

Table 1. Distinguishing features of cyberbullying

Theme	Sub-theme	Concepts explored
Distinguishing cyberbullying from traditional bullying	*Digital trail and permanence*	Permanence of digital trail and content as beneficial (utility of evidence in reporting and management) as well as potentially more harmful (publically accessible) than traditional bullying
	Expanded reach	Cyberbullying as impinging upon work-life boundaries, while also presenting legal and ethical challenges for employers
	Anonymity	Anonymity may prevent targets from identifying the perpetrator and taking action, as well as likely being more threatening, resulting in an increased potential for harm

Digital trail and permanence

The most frequently (*n*=13) raised feature was that online communications left a digital trail, with a few participants (*n*=3) mentioning the related permanence of digital content. Interestingly, this feature was framed as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, participants mentioned "*the good thing about cyberbullying*" (P016) with reference to utilising this digital evidence in the reporting of incidents. In fact, practitioners within the sample often advocated that targets of workplace cyberbullying keep evidence of the communications as it aids in the management of this issue – this is explored further in theme 3 (section 3.4.1). For this reason, a few participants also mentioned that being aware of the digital trail could deter cyber abuse from occurring in the first place. This finding highlights the utility of digital evidence for targets, consistent with the literature (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Nocentini et al., 2010). However, this finding also uniquely accentuates the benefits of digital evidence from a management perspective; a feature not previously explored within the research.

On the other hand, a few participants did acknowledge the limitations to obtaining and utilising digital proof. One expert maintained that although:

> "*you might be able to capture evidence of the bullying, with screenshots and so on...*
>
> [but] *you don't really have evidence of the harm, necessarily*" (P004)

Thus, digital evidence alone does not speak to a target's perceptions and experiences of harm, nor the intent behind the behaviours, perhaps somewhat cautioning against an over-reliance on objective evidence. Again, the implications for management are explored in a later section.

Additionally, because digital content can be difficult to erase permanently, particularly on public platforms, the offending material "*is there forever*" (P008) and can be viewed by a wide audience. This increase in the breadth of the audience – particularly in the public domain – was seen by participants to be particularly more damaging than with traditional bullying due to the sheer "*volume*" (P010) of abuse creating an "*exponential impact*" (P011) on targets. Aside from an amplification of injurious effects, cyberbullying can also result in an array of unforeseen consequences for the target. This is particularly evident in one participant's narrative whose organisation was (at the time) experiencing anonymous workplace cyberbullying:

> "*I suppose because face-to-face bullying, there may be witnesses around but cyberbullying you have no idea who's seeing it. So it almost feels like... and certainly with the situation that we've had... you sort of think that now that it's somewhere out there on the internet, could a future employer see that and google my name and see that there's this article? So I actually think it's worse*" P012

This finding is in line with previous research by (Pieschl et al., 2015) highlighting the increase in distress for targets of relatively public cyberbullying incidents. In this way, cyberbullying is not only distinct from traditional bullying, but has the potential to be more harmful.

Expanded reach

The second distinguishing feature noted by participants was the expanded reach provided by ICTDs resulting in the blurring of boundaries (*n*=6). In fact, one participant recounts:

> *"I think because of technology, the whole work-life boundary has become very*
>
> *smudged, hasn't it? I mean, like, once upon a time, when you were at home, the only*
>
> *time you would ever have been contacted for work would have been by landline*
>
> *telephone and it just didn't happen"* P002

This is reflective of participants' understanding that increasingly obscure work-home boundaries could result in workplace cyberbullying occurring beyond the physical confines of the workplace. As mentioned in the literature review, such types of cyberbullying could result in an enduring and prolonged effect on the receiver (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010) and prevent targets from being able to replenish their coping resources (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) and cope effectively in the long term.

Legislative considerations were also raised and contrasted by two participants. One expert noted that Australian anti-bullying laws dictated that the incidents had to occur in the place of work, to be considered an occupational issue (P007). The other participant – in reference to New Zealand legislation – emphasises that such incidents of workplace bullying are not constrained to the work location or premises:

> *"it's not where you bully, it's the fact that* […] *you're in an employment relationship*
>
> *with this person"* (P008)

Thus, although cyberbullying affords perpetrators an expanded reach and is clearly not confined to any physical or temporal boundary; to a large extent national-level policy and legislation will dictate how 'workplace' bullying and cyberbullying is defined. In fact, experts in this study unanimously agreed that bullying after hours or beyond the work premises would still be considered a workplace issue, at least in New Zealand. While this is not necessarily a 'novel' finding of this study, it does allude to the contextual nature of workplace cyberbullying, and perhaps outlines some of the difficulties in trying to develop a common or universal definition.

Nonetheless, this also presents a series of challenges for employers in terms of having an extended responsibility for their employees' wellbeing outside of work, without extensively

intruding on their personal lives. For instance, when work devices are involved, this might pose dilemmas of when monitoring becomes surveillance. In New Zealand, the Privacy Act (1993) acts as a general deterrent to employee monitoring (Everett, Wong, & Paynter, 2004). Legal constraints aside, even in organisations that do rely on monitoring, filtering, and blocking of devices, it has been argued that the required software is not only expensive but generally slow to keep up with developments in technology use resulting in under- or over-inclusive blocking (Chou, Sinha, & Zhao, 2008); not to mention the previously noted concern that digital evidence does not capture intent, harm, or perceptions of victimisation.

Anonymity

Anonymity was the third factor raised – by around a third of participants – as not only being unique to cyberbullying, but also being more detrimental to targets. Discussions around anonymity involved concealed identities and online personas, as expected, although two experts also alluded to the possibility that anonymity facilitates anti-social behaviour. This was often contrasted with school bullying and traditional workplace bullying, where identities were far more likely to be known. In the case of anonymous cyberbullying, it was noted that targets may not be able to identify the perpetrator(s), and therefore are impeded in taking effective action against the bullying. Further, anonymity was also seen as being more intimidating for targets, as explained by one expert:

> "*you* [target] *don't know where it's coming from, and that's what makes it even more insidious* […] *that creates an entirely different layer to the impact for the person*"
> (P010).

In some ways, this anonymity can negate any advantage for the target gained from having a digital footprint, leaving the target feeling more helpless and anxious about the future. The same cyberbullied participant recounts:

> "*The situation we had with this anonymous website – there was nothing we could do. We actually felt really powerless, because we tried to respond to the people who hosted*

the website and they weren't interested. If we replied to the actual blog or whatever, then they wouldn't always post what we had said. And so yeah we felt completely powerless. And 'cause we didn't know who it was, we only had suspicions of who it was, so yeah... we felt completely powerless and quite anxious in a way, to be like 'oh what are we gonna do next?!'" (P012)

As mentioned in the literature review, unlike with traditional bullying, cyber perpetrators may gain power from numerous other sources such as technological capabilities, a wider audience, expanded reach, and anonymity (Dooley et al., 2009; Pettalia et al., 2013). Accordingly, it is argued that the power differentials in cyberbullying are determined more so by the targets' lack of power than by the perpetrator's possession of it (Langos, 2012). Thus, the inability to trace and identify anonymous perpetrators swings the power differential in their favour, and can also prevent these individuals from being held accountable for their behaviour. In fact, with regard to the specific case of the anonymous blog mentioned above, the participant also noted that since the IP address had been traced to an overseas location, this was outside the jurisdiction of current New Zealand legislation, and in effect nothing could be done about it. This finding therefore highlights the unique challenge posed by anonymous cyberbullying, while highlighting limitations in our current legal system.

The respondents largely agreed that the permanence of digital evidence, the expanded reach, and the anonymity afforded by workplace cyberbullying appeared to be key factors that distinguish this concept from traditional workplace bullying, with potentially more nefarious consequences for targets. Each of these facets – permanence, reach, and anonymity – may be particularly damaging when they act to provide a power imbalance in favour of the perpetrator. As a result, workplace cyberbullying can be particularly detrimental when the behaviours cross physical and temporal boundaries, are played out on a public platform, or are untraceable to the original perpetrator(s). The resolution of these incidents – and whether they are classified as employment issues, in the first place – is also largely influenced by the prevailing legislation, reflecting the context-specific nature of how workplace cyberbullying might be understood and

experienced. While it is possible for targets to accumulate some power in terms of capturing evidence, the combination of these above-mentioned factors, was taken to reflect experts' understandings of cyberbullying as being a distinct and more damaging form of bullying, compared to traditional bullying.

3.4.1.2 Theme 1b. Perceived extent of workplace cyberbullying

Although the majority of participants (*n*=13) noted that cyberbullying was a significant issue, all were unaware of the extent to which it occurred in workplaces, mainly due to a lack of data. While two participants said the problem was worse than most people realised – one of them being a target of workplace cyberbullying themselves – around a third (*n*=5) said it was not a huge problem or not one they had encountered in their own experience or profession. In general, this lack of clarity around prevalence is reflective of the cyberbullying literature, where prevalence rates have been known to drastically vary (see section 2.3.4).

Importantly, however, a few participants distinguished between prevalence and magnitude of impact, arguing that while overall prevalence may be relatively low (or undetermined), it was still a significant issue.

> "*How much of a problem it is – there's two parts to that. One is how prevalent it is; how much of it is going on. We don't know. You know, technically the data that we've got shows that there's numerically less of* [cyberbullying] *happening... But in terms of its impacts, that's the other part… there's prevalence but there's also severity.*" P006

It should be noted that the expert in the above quote was referencing the study by Gardner et al. (2016), where approximately 3% of the sample had experienced workplace cyberbullying. However, this figure may be a conservative measure, given the lack of clarity around conceptualisation and measurement, as noted by the authors (Gardner et al., 2016).

Thus, while there is a paucity of prevalence or incidence data on workplace cyberbullying – particularly in New Zealand – the finding from the present study indicates that most academics

and practitioners in the sample were aware of its nature and significance. Of note is the fact that despite not all experts having previously dealt with instances of workplace cyberbullying, they were still able to take a contemplative stance on the issue. This may be reflective of the quantity and content of news media coverage around incidents of cyberbullying, often involving high profile cases such as the 'roast busters' (Newshub, 2015) or the NZCU 'lewd' cake incident (Sharpe, 2015). This sub-theme also reflects the notion that prevalence cannot – and should not – be conflated with severity or harm (Bauman, 2013); particularly in light of the aforementioned features of cyberbullying in theme 1a above.

3.4.1.3 Theme 1c. Predicted trends in workplace cyberbullying

Despite participants being uncertain about the current extent and prevalence of workplace cyberbullying, nearly all (*n*=17) predicted that instances of workplace cyberbullying would increase over the next few years. Interestingly, a preponderance of experts (*n*=16) in this study attributed the predicted rise in workplace cyberbullying to our increased reliance and the accessibility of ICTDs.

> "*I think where you've got an increase in one channel, in one communication media, there's always the potential you know potentially you might get an increase in the amount of negative use of it*" P014

> "*I'd say unless there's something done about* [workplace cyberbullying]*, it's likely to increase. Partly because the tools… there's obviously a wider selection of tools that individuals can use, and it's become probably easier and more accessible to a greater number of people to be able to cyberbully others*" P009

This is potentially reflective of an awareness of the ease through which cyberbullying can be perpetrated – intentionally, or otherwise – due to technology having become so entrenched in all aspects of our daily lives, as noted by (Giumetti & Hatfield, 2013). A lower number (*n*=9) anticipated that the entrance of digital natives into the workforce would have an impact on this also. On the other hand, three participants did not anticipate any change in prevalence rates of

workplace cyberbullying, citing our increased awareness of digital traits, as well as pushback and willingness for people to "*out*" bullies online (P015).

Thus, while some participants were of the opinion that workplace cyberbullying might be confined to certain generational groups, the overwhelming majority acknowledged the ease of perpetration through ICTDs across all demographics. Once again, this is reflective of initial predictions within the field of workplace cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Considering that experts were selected based on the social relevance of their knowledge and the ability to affect practice, this finding is somewhat encouraging, as it might also be indicative of an increased ability – on the part of consultants, organisations, and institutions – to take a preventative stance and engage in awareness and education measures on the issue of workplace cyberbullying.

3.4.2 Theme 2: Measuring workplace cyberbullying

Participants were also asked to shed their expert insight on the best approach for measuring workplace cyberbullying. In general, nearly half of the participants recommended the combined use of a behavioural inventory as well as a self-labelling measure. The rest of the sample supported the use of a self-labelling definition-based checklist with three experts advocating for alternate approaches. Interestingly, while there was no accord within the sample as a whole, in comparing across academics and practitioners, group-based distinctions in suggested measurement approaches emerged. It should be noted again that the sample was not 'split' in analysis, since this was not the objective of the present study. However, group-based patterns emerged in themes two and three – which, themselves were linked – with enough distinction that they warranted comment. These differences are discussed below, with reference to their implications.

All academics (n=8) advocated using a behavioural inventory in the measurement of workplace cyberbullying. This is unsurprising, given that behaviour-based instruments – particularly the

Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) developed by Einarsen et al. (2009) – are generally the predominant approach to measurement within the field of workplace bullying. More specifically, two academics in this study suggested modifying the NAQ-R to include cyberbullying-type behaviours; for the particular purpose of maintaining consistency around how bullying was measured in the workplace, as well as for comparison. This is highlighted in a quote by one academic:

> "*it's like when you do a census – the reason that you ask the same questions is so that you can get that moving picture*" (P010)

Thus, aside from comparing relative prevalence rates, such a measure would also shed light on the overlap between the two forms of bullying.

However, many more academics advocated for the development of a fit for purpose cyberbullying-specific inventory. This is reflective of experts' understanding (across the board) of cyberbullying as being a distinct phenomenon, as outlined in the previous theme. It is expected then, that in conceptualising workplace cyberbullying as being a unique form of bullying, it becomes futile to rely on measures developed and established to detect traditional forms of bullying. For this reason, it was argued:

> "*I think you have to start from scratch. We're looking at a new phenomenon* […] *They're different things. They work in different ways*" (P006)

Irrespective of the type of behavioural inventory used, nearly half of the sample advocated for its use in conjunction with a self-labelling measure. This is because participants – particularly academics – noted that the NAQ-R and other behavioural instruments measure exposure to bullying-type behaviours, but they do not specifically ascertain impact, perceptions of harm, or victimisation, as the research suggests (Nielsen et al., 2010).

With regard to the self-labelling approach, a noteworthy trend emerged among the practitioners, as they often recommended providing a clear definition of workplace cyberbullying alongside a

bulleted checklist or flow-chart (*n*=9). Specifically, it was suggested that potential targets would be more easily able to identify and label their experience as such, if they were provided with a diagrammatic checklist of the key elements of workplace cyberbullying. This is a concern echoed by (Tokunaga, 2010), particularly given the multifaceted definitions of workplace cyberbullying. Including a few examples of the different types of cyberbullying behaviours were also recommended to supplement this. As one respondent concluded:

> *"I'd be suggesting, you know, that you have maybe four of those key words that can you*
>
> *get the ticks in all four of these boxes.. or three... or however many you decide. So if*
>
> *you tick all of those, then you've been the subject of* [workplace cyberbullying]" (P010)

This strategy emerges as a more concise hybrid of the behaviour/self-labelling approach, outlined above, and fundamentally appears to be aligned with the detection and management of workplace cyberbullying. Thus, it could serve as an effective assessment or labelling tool, once such behaviour has been recognised or reported. In fact, several practitioners noted that this strategy would not only assist in making their job easier, but it would be more transparent for all parties involved. This is once again explored more in section 3.4.1.

Nonetheless, this self-labelling strategy might not be particularly effective at a population level, in terms of determining comparable prevalence rates or discriminating between the various types of cyber ill-treatment. For instance, specific types of cyber abuse such as cyber sexual harassment and cyber stalking may be enveloped into this broad category by targets, which can become problematic if such behaviours are already governed by specific legislation and policy. As noted in the literature review, unlike with bullying, harassment or discrimination based on social groups is unlawful in New Zealand, and employees would be protected from cyber sexual harassment under the Employment Relations Act (2000) and the Human Rights Act (1993). Regardless, it appears that these the behavioural inventory and self-labelling approaches capture slightly distinct pieces of the puzzle, and for this reason, the combination of the two approaches

have been advocated for by experts – both in this study, and in the body of literature (Menesini et al., 2011; Nielsen et al., 2010).

Finally, three experts noted alternate approaches to the measurement of workplace cyberbullying; including data-mining or monitoring (*n*=2), and examining case law (*n*=1). Interestingly, there has been a growing trend within the cyberbullying literature looking to refine data-mining and the detection of cyber-abuse, though these tend to be restricted to specific platforms such as Twitter (Hon & Varathan, 2015), Ask.fm (Van Hee et al., 2015), and Instagram (Hosseinmardi et al., 2015). In fact, this is consistent with many social media companies' initiatives in managing such forms of cyber abuse. For instance, Twitter has recently implemented a blocking feature so that users are able to filter out abusive content and messages. Without detracting from the value of such approaches, there are still a few considerations to be noted with data-mining strategies (Chou et al., 2008). First, since many of these tools are designed for and confined to specific platforms, it remains uncertain whether these instruments can be adopted across platforms. Further, the constant updates and changes to applications could render instruments obsolete if and when these platforms shut down. Second, although such methods may be particularly efficient at detecting certain behaviours such as flaming, denigration, trolling, or the use of obscenities, as established in the literature review, cyberbullying behaviours range on a continuum and more nuanced and subtle bullying can go undetected. This is of course ignoring the finding that proof of such behaviours, once again, does not necessarily demonstrate the harm experienced by the target (as mentioned in theme 1a). Thus, although data-mining techniques appear to be promising in the detection and measurement of specific types of cyber abuse, this requires further refinement before they can be effectively implemented as a reliable gauge of cyberbullying.

3.4.1 Theme 3: Managing workplace cyberbullying

Finally, participants were also consulted around the management of workplace cyberbullying. Although not all participants had encountered instances of workplace cyberbullying in their

profession, it was reasoned that they would be able to shed insight on the phenomenon, based on their often-thorough knowledge of and experience in the management of traditional workplace bullying. Several strategies were put forward on the prevention and intervention of workplace cyberbullying by experts in this study; ranging from proactive to reactive approaches.

Organisational policy

The most frequently mentioned recommendation (*n*=16) was around the necessity of having a clear organisational policy and established procedures for the reporting and management of workplace cyberbullying – intriguingly, the phrase "clear expectations of behaviour" was spontaneously expressed by several participants. Taken together, these findings suggest that experts acknowledge the inadequacy of relying on a policy alone; organisations must also unmistakably communicate expectations around acceptable versus unacceptable behaviour to all employees and work groups, and this needs to be embedded within and reinforced across all levels of the organisation (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011). In fact, the idea was raised that it might:

> "*be worthwhile for managers to have conversations with their work teams around what bullying is, what does it actually look like in this work group… not just having a policy and have everyone train on it, but let's go through it as a team and let's work out what it looks like for us, you know. Cause it looks different in nursing, than what it does for doctors, than what it does for firefighters*" (P007)

This argument echoes the intervention research on traditional workplace bullying (McLinton et al., 2014), highlighting the crucial role of communicating policy and appropriate guidelines around behaviour (Cowan, 2011). In light of the earlier finding that national-level legislation can shape understandings of workplace cyberbullying, this present finding further supports the notion of workplace cyberbullying being highly context-specific. Moreover, such

understandings link well to the regional- and occupation-specific nature of traditional workplace bullying (Hodgins et al., 2014; Way et al., 2013), discussed in the literature review.

The Harmful Digital Communications (HDC) Act

Also noteworthy is the fact that at the time of the interviews, the HDC Act (2015) had already passed, which not only set out ten principles for online communication, but also proposed a penalty for violating any of these principles. Experts were also consulted on their views around the usefulness of such legislature; operating at a national level, yet divorced from the workplace setting. Due to the recency of the Act, reasonably most participants were not thoroughly familiar with the legislation. Nonetheless, two contrasting views emerged on the topic.

There were a few participants who noted that the Act could prove particularly helpful for targets, as far as having an external, unbiased body with "*some form of agency who can actually have power to make any change*" (P001). This is particularly because targets of (traditional) workplace bullying find it particularly difficult to report such behaviour, due to the stigma associated with being a victim (Forssell, 2016; Magley et al., 1999), as well as organisational norms that act to silence targets who come forward (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Magley et al., 1999). Further, two other participants acknowledged that although WorkSafe had previously introduced guidelines for bullying in 2014 (later updated, see: WorkSafe, 2017), there is currently no legislation that deals with bullying specifically. For these participants, the HDC Act (2015) signalled the start of an era "*representative of society's views to say that it's* [cyberbullying] *not okay, and to lay responsibility where it needs to lie*" (P002).

Notwithstanding the important role of legislation and policy – particularly in raising awareness of the issue – a contrary view was put forward by three participants. Specifically, it was argued that such policies – particularly those existing outside of the employment relationship – can have a tendency to "*criminalise bullying behaviour*" (P004, P006), while simultaneously alleviating employers from the burden of responsibility for preventing and managing workplace

cyberbullying incidents. Therefore, while the HDC Act was recognised as a pioneering piece of legislation, in terms of being reflective of society's views around acceptability and accountability of cyberbullying behaviours, the absence of any dedicated piece of legislature governing workplace bullying or cyberbullying, still remains an area requiring further attention.

It is also worth mentioning here that the HDC Act (2015) requires that a violation of one of the communication principles must have caused, or should be deemed likely to cause harm in order to meet the "suitably high" threshold for proceeding. Thus, it is possible that even with objective proof, targets may not necessarily achieve restitution or justice. In fact, this was evident in a case – that has since been repealed in the High Court – where a District Court judge ruled against conviction of an offender who had engaged in revenge porn against his ex-wife, because there was "not enough evidence that harm was caused" (Gibson, 2017). Not only would this impede targets from receiving the adequate help and support they need, but it may act as a deterrent for other individuals to come forward in reporting their experiences. This exposes a deficiency in the current system, and highlights the need for including some degree of subjectivity in terms of target perceptions of harm or effect on the target.

Utilising digital evidence

As mentioned in theme 1a the utility of digital proof was raised quite frequently, particularly in relation to managing workplace cyberbullying incidents. In general, experts advised that targets of potential workplace cyberbullying keep evidence of the behaviours and communications, and use this to report the incident(s). Yet, in analysing this theme, it became apparent that practitioners (*n*=6) largely linked the function of digital evidence to aiding the investigative process, as well as being "*fairer for all parties*" (P018), including the alleged perpetrator. Likewise, another practitioner recounts:

> "*I've spent days cross-examining people and trying to get the flavour of what's going on, people can be very evasive. But the benefit of cyberbullying is that it's much easier to deal with... in terms of proof*" (P016)

This pattern of response is unsurprising, given that practitioners, more so than academics, are actively involved in the management of workplace bullying, and other ill-treatment issues (Cowan, 2011). In line with this, it is expected that practitioners would favour a more neutral and unbiased approach. However, in the absence of specific organisational policy around workplace bullying and cyberbullying, HR professionals and practitioners may be relatively powerless in dealing with the situation (Cowan, 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011). Unfortunately, as identified by Catley et al. (2017), less than one eighth of organisations involved in legal cases of workplace bullying had an existing policy around this. The lack of a clear policy communicates to employees that tackling bullying is not a priority for the organisation (Cowan, 2011). Further, bullying-specific policies need to be addressed, as it is argued that harassment policies on their own are inadequate since they do not offer employees any protection against bullying (Cowan, 2011), and harassment has its own legal remedies. It becomes evident then that this finding around the utilisation of digital evidence should be embedded within clear organisational policies and reporting systems around workplace bullying and cyberbullying.

Conversely, it was also pointed out by a number of academics (*n*=6) that bullying is fundamentally a very subjective and context-bound phenomenon; similar to conceptualisations in the traditional bullying literature (Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Rayner & Cooper, 2006). Interestingly, Catley et al. (2017) emphasise that the work context and behavioural norms also largely dictate management responses and handling of complaints. Likewise, Salin (2003b) illustrates that social and cultural contexts – and indirectly, social power – might govern target sense making and reactions to workplace bullying. Relatedly, work by (Escartín et al., 2011) highlights that appraisal and coping are linked, while Vie et al. (2011) further extend this link by demonstrating the crucial role between self-labelling as a victim and experiencing negative health outcomes. Thus, while a more objective and unbiased approach is often sought by those

involved in management, it also becomes important to reflect on the implications of striving to eliminate subjective perceptions and decontextualising behaviours.

Additionally, an emphasis on collecting evidence of their cyberbullying to enable "fairer" management processes puts the onus on targets to not only collect evidence and be proactive in the management of their own bullying, but to come forward and report this. However, non-reporting occurs for a number of reasons – beyond a lack of 'proof' – such as when targets feel ashamed (Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Faucher et al., 2014), have little faith in management (Carter et al., 2013), or when organisational power dynamics are at play (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Somewhat paradoxically, a focus on the behaviours themselves – rather than seeking to address underlying causes – is often linked to common refrains such as switching off or blocking abusers (Wolak et al., 2006). Aside from the fact that avoidant or passive coping strategies serve as little more than a band aid solution, such a response discounts the ever-growing importance of having a social media presence and the need to be constantly accessible in many lines of work. Such strategies could in fact be to the target's occupational detriment (Citron, 2009). For this reason, while research on the best-practice management of workplace cyberbullying is still a long way off, it is unlikely that the solution lies in ignoring broader contextual factors or subjective target perceptions.

The importance of the work environment and culture
Finally, while most participants focused on approaches such as increasing awareness and education around workplace cyberbullying; in addition to having clear policies and reporting procedures, fewer mentioned a more proactive and systemic approach. In fact, academics (*n*=6) more than practitioners (*n*=3) tended to promote ideas of creating a work environment that was conducive to the prevention and successful intervention of workplace cyberbullying. Crucial aspects noted included effective leadership and role modelling, as well as the importance of a positive organisational culture. These findings are consistent with the literature on workplace bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Einarsen et al., 1994; Hauge et al.,

2007; Skogstad et al., 2011) supporting Leymann's (1996) work environment hypothesis. Thus, based on the findings of subject matter experts' endorsements, this same theoretical framework could prove useful in applications of workplace cyberbullying.

Thus, while most of the intervention and management strategies recommended by participants reflected a reactive approach – invoking the 'ambulance at the bottom of a cliff' metaphor – nearly half of the sample also asserted the importance of considering a more proactive and system-wide stance. Although previous victimisation and (risky) internet use have been theorised as antecedents for cyberbullying in general, workplace cyberbullying-specific antecedents have yet to be ascertained. Hence, research is a long way from determining best-practice management strategies for this issue. However, targeting systematic factors in the wider work environment, particularly through managing and shaping a positive organisational culture, will likely bring about a more effective and sustained change lasting much longer than any individual within the organisation (Reason, 2000).

3.5 Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to engage subject matter experts – individuals involved in the prevention, and intervention of workplace bullying and cyberbullying – on the topics of conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying. The findings provide valuable insight on industry specialists' perceptions and ideologies around workplace cyberbullying in New Zealand; perspectives that remain relatively unexplored within the research literature (Neall & Tuckey, 2014). In summary, a large majority of experts were cognisant of the distinguishing features of this type of bullying, and how these could play out in the target's favour or to their detriment. Experts also generally acknowledged the accessibility afforded by ICTDs, and coupled with our increased reliance on such technologies, it was anticipated that this could be a central driving factor behind the predicted increase of workplace cyberbullying. Furthermore, a majority did not view the problem as being confined to a certain generation or demographic, suggesting that most workplaces may be equally vulnerable to

workplace cyberbullying. Together, these findings highlight the importance of research creating awareness and education around the topic so that organisations can adopt a more proactive approach to the prevention of workplace cyberbullying.

In fact, experts frequently discussed the importance of having clear expectations of behaviour, intertwined with explicit policies and procedures around workplace cyberbullying. Beyond holding organisations responsible for the health and safety of their employees, this also provides management with an effective and fair means of investigating reported incidents of workplace cyberbullying. In line with this, the value of digital evidence was often highlighted, particularly by practitioners who were concerned with being impartial and neutral purveyors of justice. On the other hand, academics commonly referred to the subjective nature of workplace bullying and cyberbullying, underscoring that harm may reside within the context of the bullying behaviours itself, and that evidence of this may not necessarily be able to be captured. Thus, the findings indicate the tensions that management may have to negotiate in dealing objectively with an inherently subjective workplace issue. To this end, prevention and interventions must consider the work system in its entirety, acknowledging factors in the work environment (Hauge et al., 2007; Leymann, 1996) that can inhibit and facilitate the reporting and management of workplace cyberbullying.

The findings also revealed another contrasting approach with regard to the proposed measurement approaches wherein academics tended to advocate for the combination of a behavioural and definition-based approach with the purpose of comparison against traditional bullying rates. In contrast, practitioners often linked measurement to the assessment and management of workplace cyberbullying, and advocated for a self-labelling bulleted checklist based on a clear definition. Taken together, this illustrate the importance of co-assessing workplace bullying when measuring workplace cyberbullying, not just for comparison, but to also identify targets of both types of bullying behaviours, as previous research indicates these individuals may experience heightened outcomes (Raskauskas, 2010). While this is something a

self-labelling approach is likely to miss, there is value in also adopting a subjective approach, particularly when exploring harm or in the investigation process, as outlined above.

The research objective (RO1) for study one was to explore subject matter expert understandings around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying. The findings go some way toward distinguishing cyberbullying from traditional bullying, while highlighting the crucial role of context in creating and shaping understandings, experiences, and reactions to workplace cyberbullying. Such a view is consistent with the subtle realist perspective, which embraces the fact that there can exist multiple, non-contradictory, and valid understandings of a social phenomenon (Hammersley, 1992). In the end, where we draw our boundaries with regard to definitions may prove to be an arbitrary concern, in comparison to determining the key elements that make workplace cyberbullying particularly detrimental for those who experience it. Beyond measuring prevalence, research exploring experiences of workplace cyberbullying in-depth is also required. Alongside this, our growing understanding should act to inform and reform prevailing legislation and policy in order to enact change.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING CONTEXT –

THE NURSING PROFESSION IN NEW ZEALAND

Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all

– Gregory Bateson

4.1 The Focus on Nursing

This chapter represents a theorising stage of "desk research", wherein findings from the previous study on experts helped to inform the direction and development of studies two and three. Accordingly, this narrowed my research focus to a specific context: the nursing profession in New Zealand. The chapter begins by justifying the research focus, with links to study one (Chapter 3) and the relevant literature. The research context is then introduced in section 4.2, shedding light onto the background of the nursing profession in New Zealand, as well as briefly outlining the profession's historical development (section 4.3). This is followed by a concise summary of relevant research highlighting the issue of workplace bullying among nurses (section 4.4). In essence, this chapter serves as a preface for studies two (Chapter 5) and three (Chapter 6).

One of the most informative findings from study one was the notion that workplace cyberbullying would manifest differently across countries, industry settings and occupational groups. Indeed, experts spoke to the highly context-specific nature of workplace bullying and cyberbullying, as illustrated in the following quote:

"*what does it* [bullying] *actually look like in this work group* […] *Cause it looks different in nursing, than what it does for doctors, than what it does for firefighters*" (P007, Study 1)

This finding is also reflective of the literature review section on traditional workplace bullying, where it was noted that industry-specific features can interact with factors in the work environment to shape norms around self-labelling of bullying (Way et al., 2013), as well as

prevalence rates (Bentley et al., 2009). One such occupational group governed by prevailing

norms of silence and a culture against reporting (Hutchinson, Wilkes, Jackson, & Vickers,

2010) is the nursing profession.

Nurses represent an interesting paradox as the profession has developed out of a history of

caring, and remains governed by strict professional ethical values of nonmaleficence,

beneficence, and justice (Matt, 2012); yet, this group consistently experiences above-average

rates of traditional workplace bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Spector et al., 2014; Wright &

Khatri, 2015), discussed further in section 4.4 below. Certainly, as Gaffney, Demarco,

Hofmeyer, Vessey, and Budin (2012) contend bullying diametrically opposes the ethical values

embedded within nursing education as well as those championed by healthcare organisations.

Thus, exploring this issue within nursing becomes warranted in light of findings from the

literature that traditional forms of workplace bullying often co-occur with cyberbullying

(Privitera & Campbell, 2009b). Even more alarming, are predictions from scholars within the

field (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b) along with those by subject

matter experts (in study one) that instances of workplace cyberbullying are likely to increase in

the not-too-distant future. Yet, this line of investigation has been surprisingly neglected. To the

best of my knowledge, there has not been a single study published on workplace cyberbullying

among nurses. In response, my research aimed to address this inadequacy, by exploring the

issue of workplace cyberbullying within the nursing profession, in New Zealand.

However, if workplace cyberbullying transpires differently across occupations, understandings

and conceptualisations of this phenomenon can be expected to vary accordingly - to say nothing

of existing variation in terminology and definitions among academics in the field. Therefore, in

order to explore these understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, some

consensus on a meaningful definition specific to the group, is required. Accordingly, the

following research objectives were developed:

RO2: Explore nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, in order to identify salient features in their definitions

RO3: Explore targets' understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, within the nursing profession

These research objectives guide the development of studies two and three, outlined in chapters five and six, respectively. However, it is important to first situate the research focus domestically.

4.2 The New Zealand Context

Like in other countries sharing links to Britain, the nursing profession in New Zealand developed as a result of the Nightingale scheme of hospital-based training, and became regulated by the government only at the turn of the twentieth century (Grehan, 2014), being the first country to do so. This scheme moved to tertiary-based education and training in the 1970s, and has resulted in a system of regulation and registration (Grehan, 2014). As of 2010, in accordance with the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003) three current scopes of nursing practice are listed: Enrolled Nurse, Registered Nurse, and Nurse Practitioner (Nursing Council of New Zealand, n.d.). Full descriptions of these scopes of practice are available in Appendix C. Within New Zealand, nursing practice is categorised into *direct care* nurses are those involved in directly providing health services to the public (which can include all three scopes of nursing practice), while *practising* nurses include those exclusively involved in broader roles such as administration, management, education, policy development, and research (Huntington, 2013). Nurse Practitioners may be *practising* and/or *direct care* nurses. Further, nurses work in a variety of settings including publically-funded (District Health Boards and Primary Health Care) and private healthcare systems. My research (studies two and three, in chapters 5 and 6, respectively) included both direct care and practising nurses.

The most recent report on nursing workforce statistics by the Nursing Council of New Zealand (2016) indicated that as of March 2016, there were more than 53,900 practising nurses in New Zealand, experiencing a two percent growth in numbers from the previous year. Previous years have also seen growth in the workforce due to a significant increase in the number of nurses under thirty and Internationally Qualified Nurses, coupled with a slight decrease in the number of nurses over fifty (New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO), 2016) . Despite this, the profession continues to face a global anticipated shortage of experienced and specialist nurses (Daly, Speedy, & Jackson, 2014), owing to an aging workforce and growing demands for public healthcare (Stanley, 2010) as well as retention issues stemming from workplace well-being concerns such as burnout (Stanley, 2010) and bullying in particular (Hogh, Hoel, & Carneiro, 2011; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2005; Jackson & Daly, 2004).

In the face of record immigration in New Zealand, attracting skilled internationally qualified nurses may not necessarily be a key concern faced at present, but the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO, 2016) report advises that these complex shortage forecasts may produce mixed results with regard to stability. Further, immigration policy reforms – dependent on the current international and local political climate – could potentially complicate the development of a sustainable workforce. In connection with this, there is also a shortage of Māori and Pacific nurses to contend with (NZNO, 2016) in order to meet population and cultural needs. All this, within the context of steadily declining health funding – a conservative estimate of a reduction of NZD$1.2 billion in the health budget over the last six years (Rosenberg & Keene, 2016) – adds increased pressure to health care organisations. Thus, the recruitment and retention of a healthy and sustainable nursing workforce continues to remain a key challenge both nationally and globally.

It should also be noted that the profession remains highly unionised in New Zealand, with a vast majority – 47,400 practising nurses or 88% of the workforce – being members of the NZNO (NZNO, 2016), in comparison with approximately 20% union density in the general workforce

(Statistics New Zealand, 2016). In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015), the NZNO advocates for workplaces free from physical and emotional harm with workplace bullying identified as a significant hazard to this. Aside from outlining the complaints processes and NZNO resources, the union also recognises the value of the Worksafe Bullying Guidelines (2017) in dealing with this issue, and has released several publications in their *Kai Tiaki* journal on this topic.

4.3 History of the Profession

The ever-growing body of research highlighting the issue of workplace bullying among nurses, as well as the union and District Health Boards' (DHBs) increasing efforts to deal with the issue, reflect the fact that bullying is rife within nursing. This can be traced back to the profession's roots in a traditionally male-dominated and hierarchy-bound medical field (Daly et al., 2014; Wright & Khatri, 2015; Youn Ju, Bernstein, Mihyoung, & Nokes, 2014), as well as the gendered history of the profession (Stanley, Martin, Michel, Welton, & Nemeth, 2007). In fact, a majority of the nursing workforce – 92 percent in New Zealand – is female (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2015). As a result, it has been argued (e.g. Bradley, 1992; Hutchinson et al., 2010) that nurses have been socialised to expect and tolerate abuse from those in positions of power – such as physicians, or more senior ranking nurses – within the healthcare hierarchy; both in teaching and practice. Consequently, (Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2006a) argue that the nursing profession remains "doubly oppressed through gender and medical dominance".

More importantly, Daly et al. (2014) argue that society itself places nurses in a relatively subordinate position within this healthcare hierarchy. Beyond the realm of practice, nurse education and research also continues to remain particularly devalued. Phibbs and Curtis (2006) argue that the low impact factors assigned to nursing journals and performance-based research funding systems, in combination with the inherently feminine norms of nursing and gender discrimination in academia act to "doubly disadvantage nursing as a discipline" (p. 5).

Therefore, it is possible that over time these views have become internalised and integrated into students' and young graduates' perceptions of the nursing profession (Hutchinson et al., 2006a). In fact, Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2011) expound on how the process of 'naturalization' decontextualises human interactions from their socio-cultural and historical backgrounds, resulting in an acceptance of "the way things are around here" with little resistance to change.

This is further compounded by the fundamental pluralism at the core of healthcare organisations (Ramanujam & Rousseau, 2006) wherein a multiplicity of missions, professions, cultures, hierarchies, and demands are constantly operating in opposition with each other. As a result, features of healthcare systems such as high workloads (Wright & Khatri, 2015); 'tough' culture (Katrinli, Atabay, Gunay, & Guneri Cangarli, 2010); performance-based work design (Katrinli et al., 2010); cost containment (Hutchinson et al., 2010); and authoritarian leadership styles (Wright & Khatri, 2015) also make these environments rife for bullying and abuse. Additionally, professional emphasis on values such as empathy and care have meant that aggression and violence from patients were seen as an expected and accepted 'part of the job' for a long time (Ferns & Chojnacka, 2005). Although more recently many hospitals and healthcare organisations have instituted 'zero tolerance' policies against violence from patients, internal sources of bullying and aggression continue to persist.

4.4 Nursing and Bullying

A meta-analysis by Spector et al. (2014) of 160 nursing samples worldwide placed overall prevalence rates of bullying at nearly forty percent; although this prevalence varied regionally, and the samples were not standardised. Similarly, a 2011 press release by the NZNO reported that workplace bullying affected nearly forty percent of workplaces (NZNO, 2011). It should be noted that this report emerged prior to the introduction of the Workplace Bullying Guidelines in February 2014, and since then, issues relating to prevalence have not been investigated among New Zealand nurses. Nonetheless, research is consistently indicative of a higher prevalence of bullying for nurses than for other healthcare workers (Bentley et al., 2009; Quine, 2001).

These rates are particularly high for graduate nurses and new entrants into the workforce (Berry, Gillespie, Gates, & Schafer, 2012; Gaffney et al., 2012). Young graduates report bullying from a wide range of sources (Katrinli, Atabay, Gunay, & Guneri Cangarli, 2010; Matt, 2012; Timm, 2014), although bullying from a supervisor appears to be most common (Jackson, Clare, & Mannix, 2002; Youn Ju et al., 2014). In fact, teaching by humiliation and enforcing hierarchies have been noted as strong aspects of the socialisation and enculturation into the profession; whereby acceptance of this type of behaviour is viewed as a milestone of having been successfully socialised (Timm, 2014). It is possible that this has arisen as a result of the shift from an 'apprenticeship model' to a 'student-centred model' of nurse training and education (Adlam, Dotchin, & Hayward, 2009); resulting in differing expectations for graduate nurses. Accordingly, practising nurses may expect and require recent graduates to be fully trained and prepared to meet the challenges of the complex healthcare environment; whereas nurse educators may hold the view that graduates are simply novice practitioners committed to and requiring lifelong training (Adlam et al., 2009). These divergent beliefs and expectancies have been identified as a stressor for both graduates (Adlam et al., 2009; Spence Laschinger, Grau, Finegan, & Wilk, 2012) and practising nurses (Adlam et al., 2009), potentially creating conditions for workplace bullying.

Nonetheless, powerful norms of bullying behaviour and exertion of power are particularly evident during the newcomer socialisation stage (Wright & Khatri, 2015), and have thought to be associated with high resignation rates among new graduates during the first year (Gaffney et al., 2012), with one review reporting turnover rates of up to 60% (Stanley, 2010). These findings are also in line with a New Zealand study indicating that approximately a third of first year nurses have considered exiting the job as a result of experiencing distressing behaviours (McKenna, Smith, Poole, & Coverdale, 2003). This can present significant organisational costs, in the amount of NZD$23,800 per registered nurse, as estimated by a New Zealand study (North et al., 2013). These costs include expenditure related to temporary cover, recruitment, selection, and training of replacements.

Unfortunately, rather than being seen as problematic, this notion of turnover culture has become accepted and normalised, reflective of the view that "a nurse is a replaceable unit of labour" (North et al., 2013, p. 426). As mentioned previously, over the past few years in New Zealand, there has been an increase in nurses under thirty entering the workforce (NZNO, 2016) placing this cohort at an elevated risk of experiencing and perpetuating workplace bullying. In addition to turnover intent and actual turnover, research has also consistently highlighted a number of other detrimental outcomes for nurses who have experienced workplace bullying, including poor mental and physical health, reduced job satisfaction, and burnout (Jackson et al., 2002; Katrinli et al., 2010; Timm, 2014; Youn Ju et al., 2014). Not only do these outcomes negatively impact productivity (Berry et al., 2012; Hutchinson et al., 2010) and affect nurses' career progressions (Hutchinson et al., 2010), but they also pose critical risks to patient safety and quality of care (Katrinli et al., 2010; Kline, 2013; Stanley, 2010; Wright & Khatri, 2015). Taken together, this no doubt contributes to the retention problems and long-term skill shortages faced by the nursing profession both locally and globally (Hutchinson et al., 2005; Stanley, 2010).

Since bullying has become so entrenched within the work setting, as well as the fact that the nursing profession remains bound by norms of power and hierarchy, workplace bullying – particularly from those in positions of power – often goes unreported by targets, even in the presence of 'zero tolerance policies' (Hutchinson et al., 2010). For instance, the study by McKenna et al. (2003) found that around half of the distressing incidents experienced remained unreported. Underreporting occurs for a number of reasons including fears of retribution or damaging career prospects (Cleary, Hunt, & Horsfall, 2010; Griffith & Tengnah, 2012; Matt, 2012; Wright & Khatri, 2015), fears associated being labelled a 'whistle-blower' (Cleary et al., 2010; Griffith & Tengnah, 2012; Wright & Khatri, 2015), a professional culture of conflict avoidance (Nicotera & Mahon, 2013), an inability to recognise or label their experience as bullying (Cleary et al., 2010), as well as a general lack of faith that the situation will change

(Cleary et al., 2010; Matt, 2012). In fact, instead of reporting, targets may engage in avoidance and withdrawal behaviours (Hutchinson et al., 2010), as evidenced in the high turnover rates.

This fear of reporting is intrinsically rooted in a blame culture (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Nicotera & Mahon, 2013) as well as a culture tolerant of – and perhaps even benefitting from – bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2010). In their model of workplace bullying in nursing, Hutchinson et al. (2010) outline how certain types of bullying may be rewarded and legitimised, and this serves to perpetuate an organisational culture of bullying. Hand-in-hand with this, is the pluralism underlying the operation of publically-funded healthcare organisations (Ramanujam & Rousseau, 2006), who are often held accountable and criticised by government and public alike when targets are not met. In fact, the NZNO report (2016) notes that despite cuts to the healthcare budget, the targets themselves remain unchanged. This might serve as another incentive for utilising and tolerating bullying behaviour in order to achieve goals and get the job done (Lewis, 2006). Furthermore, the deeply embedded assumptions and norms around bullying behaviours as commonplace may influence responses such that targets and witnesses may believe these behaviours are an expected part of the job (Katrinli et al., 2010); preventing intervention or victims from seeking help. This is further compounded by an overall culture of conflict avoidance that dominates the profession (Nicotera & Mahon, 2013). A quote by Hutchinson et al. (2005, p. 335) encapsulates the issue precisely: "unfortunately, organizational systems tend to protect the organization's pathologies over both its profits and its future".

As evidenced in this chapter, workplace bullying in nursing does not occur in a vacuum (Jackson et al., 2002); it transpires as a result of a multiplicity of interacting factors at the organisational, industry, and societal level (Blackwood, Bentley, Catley, & Edwards, 2017). Therefore, the tendency for organisations to view workplace bullying as an individual or interpersonal issue not only hampers successful interventions (Hutchinson et al., 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011), but serves to propagate this behaviour. As argued by Lutgen-Sandvik (2003), the cyclical nature of employee abuse is indicative of a problem within the broader

organisational culture, rather than within any specific employee. For this reason, many scholars within the nursing research highlight the importance of investigating organisational and work-related factors in the study of workplace bullying (Gaffney et al., 2012; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Nicotera & Mahon, 2013), with frequent reference to Leymann's (1996) work environment perspective (Blackwood et al., 2017; Cleary et al., 2010; Katrinli et al., 2010).

It is argued that nurses have an ethical and societal obligation to do good without harming others – including other nurses – yet workplace bullying inherently violates this (Gaffney et al., 2012; Matt, 2012). Given the host of negative outcomes associated with bullying, and in the face of workforce shortage (Hutchinson et al., 2005), this is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately for ethical reasons, as well as in order to develop a healthy and sustainable workforce in an area that is so crucial to well-being of the wider community (Stanley, 2010).

CHAPTER 5: STUDY TWO – CONCEPTUALISING WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING

5.1 Introduction

In acknowledging that understandings of workplace cyberbullying may be contextually bound – a pertinent finding that emerged from study one (Chapter 3), and ever present in the literature (Salin, 2003b) – adopting a group-specific conceptualisation might be more useful in conducting in-depth explorations of this phenomena, particularly in the early stages of a research field. Accordingly, study two was designed to address the following research objective:

> *RO2: Explore nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, in order to identify salient features in their definitions*

The chapter begins with an outline of the study aims and justification, by briefly re-examining the context for this study (section 5.2). Next, the methodology is detailed, focusing on the scenario-based design that guided the interviews (section 5.3). Here, issues of access and other challenges that arose during data collection are noted. This is followed by the findings and discussion (section 5.4), where scenario categorisations (section 5.5) and four top-level themes are then explored (section 5.6). Based on this, an initial definition of workplace cyberbullying is formulated for use within the nursing setting (section 5.7), and this definition is briefly contrasted with those within the related literature, followed by concluding comments (section 5.8).

5.2 Study Aim and Justification

As indicated in chapter four, workplace bullying is a chief concern for the nursing profession, locally (North et al., 2013) and globally (Spector et al., 2014), with studies outlining a host of negative consequences for targets (Katrinli et al., 2010), organisations (North et al., 2013),

patient safety (Wright & Khatri, 2015), and the industry as a whole (Jackson, Mannix, & Daly, 2001). These effects are further compounded by the particularly toxic combination of the long-standing institutional structures that facilitates workplace bullying (Daly et al., 2014) as well as a culture tolerance of such behaviours (Hutchinson et al., 2010). In addition, findings from study one – outlined in chapter three – on expert predictions of cyberbullying reinforce views within the literature (Copley et al., 2014; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Kelly, 2011) of a potential increase in this phenomenon within the workplace setting. Taken together, this builds a compelling case for the investigation of workplace cyberbullying among nurses. Yet, to date, there have been no efforts toward this, representing a lacuna in the academic literature.

However, the longstanding dissensus around the conceptualisation and definition of cyberbullying among academics remains a significant hurdle to be addressed. While a multiplicity of understandings is not epistemologically inconsistent with subtle realism, Hammersley (1992) argues that reality is always constructed from a specific point of view, thereby making certain features of social phenomena more or less relevant across perspectives. In fact, a similar argument has been made by Rayner and Cooper (2006) that definitions of workplace bullying vary depending on their actor perspective. Thus, in seeking to represent reality – of how workplace cyberbullying is experienced within nursing – it becomes crucial to first explore how the issue is understood by this group. Such a notion is supported by calls within the cyberbullying field to prioritise how subjects of research and populations of interest understand the phenomenon (Kota et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010). In fact, Lewis (2006, p. 56) argues that "an essential meaning of bullying governs how others react to it, and indeed how differing groups may or may not share common understandings; for meanings are not fixed". Therefore, the present study was designed to identify particularly salient features of workplace cyberbullying, with the aim of developing a definition of workplace cyberbullying that would inform subsequent research.

As mentioned previously, a scenario-based interview design was adopted for this study. Although scenario-based methods are not uncommon within the bullying (Katrinli et al., 2010) and cyberbullying literature (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Pettalia et al., 2013; Pieschl et al., 2013; Spears, Campbell, Tangen, Slee, & Cross, 2015b; Sticca & Perren, 2013); these scenarios are predominantly abbreviated and shaped into questionnaire designs, thus preventing participants from fully engaging with salient aspects of the scenarios in any meaningful or in-depth manner. Further, these methods have exclusively been utilised within the school or university setting. Nonetheless, two qualitative scenario-based studies – using focus groups – are of particular note as they have adopted a similar approach to the present study. First, Nocentini et al. (2010) used scenarios with adolescent respondents in three European countries (Italy, Spain, and Germany) to explore variations in terminology, behaviours, and definitional elements of cyberbullying. While this last element is similar to the aims of the present study; the main focus of Nocentini et al.'s (2010) research was on cross-cultural comparison. Further, differences in age and regional settings prevent immediate generalisations to studies of workplace cyberbullying in New Zealand, and particularly within the nursing profession. Slightly more relevant is the study by Kota et al. (2014) on US college students' understandings of cyberbullying. This study is more comparable to the present study's aims and findings and draws on a somewhat similar sample. However, aside from the fact that the scenarios utilised varied, once again regional differences – along with the specific focus on a particular professional group – distinguishes the present study. A further distinction is the fact that the present study also investigated participants' recommended responses to each of the scenarios in order to enable comparisons with actual responses of cyberbullied targets in study three (Chapter 6).

<center>**5.3 Methodology**</center>

5.3.1 Overview of research design

In order to address research objective 2 (listed above in section 5.1), the present research was designed as an exploratory study, with the dual aims of:

> (i) examining how workplace cyberbullying is understood in nursing, and,

> (ii) developing a meaningful definition of workplace cyberbullying for subsequent research in this area

Accordingly, a qualitative approach was adopted; one that is noticeably limited within the field of cyberbullying research. Furthermore, an inductive approach was utilised, in contrast to traditional approaches that use prescribed definitions of cyberbullying and ascribe these as being meaningful to participants (Ybarra et al., 2012). Inductive research has been deemed most suitable for exploratory purposes, particularly when there is little consensus or knowledge around a phenomenon (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). In line with this, semi-structured interviews – based on four cyber-related scenarios – were conducted with nurses in training and practice (herein referred to as 'nurses' within this study), across the country.

5.3.1.1 Scenario studies

Scenarios or vignettes have been defined as "short stories about hypothetical characters in specific circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond" (Finch, 1987, p. 105). Numerous scholars have expounded on the advantages of scenario methods. First, its fictional and nonthreatening nature provides a means of depersonalised engagement with sensitive topics (Barter & Renold, 2000; Poulou, 2001; Spalding & Phillips, 2007); particularly relevant for cyberbullying research (Bauman & Newman, 2013). This depersonalisation has the additional benefit of minimising risks of social desirability bias in responses (Poulou, 2001). Second, it has also been argued that the increased researcher control in manipulation over the

content of scenarios and variables included can improve internal validity (Poulou, 2001), while circumventing ethical concerns associated with experimental designs, such as within the area of bullying. Thus, scenarios remain well suited for exploring interpretations and meanings (Barter & Renold, 2000). Third, as outlined by Barter and Renold (2000) scenarios can be employed in quantitative and qualitative inquiry, on their own or in combination with another method, equipping researchers with a flexible data collection tool (Barter & Renold, 2000). Fourth, this somewhat unconventional research strategy has the added appeal of being a varied and more interesting format for participants (Barter & Renold, 2000). In fact, this was reflected in my own experience of conducting interviews, as several participants provided feedback at the end of interviews in this study acknowledging that they had enjoyed the format. Finally, scenarios can act as something of a benchmark in terms of comparing interpretations, understandings, and responses to a topic (Poulou, 2001), particularly in the absence of participants' own personal experiences (Barter & Renold, 2000) or technical knowledge. This benefit was once again realised when a participant admitted she was unfamiliar with the term 'cyberbullying'. Although this might have normally halted or deterred the course of an interview on its own, through the use of fictional scenarios, she was still able to engage with the topic and material nonetheless.

Despite these advantages, scenario studies are not without their limitations; a major critique being its limited ecological and external validity (Barter & Renold, 2000; Poulou, 2001) as it does not inform real-life behaviour. This concern appears particularly pertinent since participants in this study were asked on suggested courses of response for the targets in each scenario. However, actual responses by targets who have experienced workplace cyberbullying are investigated in study three (chapter six). Thus, comparisons can be made between both studies, in terms of contrasting hypothetical versus actual responses to workplace cyberbullying. Further, findings on recommended responses in the present study may also shed light on understandings of what is typically believed to be suitable responses to workplace cyberbullying

within nursing. To some extent, this might also be reflective of broader societal views on the matter.

The scenarios

Interviews were designed to explore participant responses to four hypothetical scenarios (see Appendix D). These vignettes were purpose-designed to depict: (a) a fairly 'typical' case of workplace cyberbullying; (b) a performance management scenario conducted electronically; (c) a one-off cyber incident that had been shared by other cyber witnesses; and (d) an instance of cyberbullying where the target did not feel victimised or harmed. Details on each scenario are presented in Table 2 below. For brevity, these scenarios will subsequently be referred to as 'prototypical cyberbullying', 'performance management', 'one-off incident', and 'target not victimised', respectively. These last two scenarios were designed to highlight the crux of the definitional debate among cyberbullying researchers. It is also important to note that these scenarios were designed as demographically neutral, to purposely avoid any depiction of harassment or discrimination, since this was not the main focus of my research. However, this did not preclude any discussion of discrimination to emerge from the data, as evident in theme 3a below. Furthermore, while these scenarios were not cognitively tested amongst diverse groups to ensure understanding, they were peer-reviewed by my supervisors as well as other academics who were part of my confirmation committee, and revisions were made accordingly. Although, ideally, I would have liked to have included a broader range of vignettes, Finch (1987) advises that four complex scenarios can be fairly cognitively demanding on participants in a single interview.

Table 2. Summary of Scenarios

Scenario	Designed to depict	Relevant features
A "Prototypical Cyberbullying"	Typical case of workplace cyberbullying (as per *Smith et al., 2008* definition)	Aggressive behaviour; repetition; power differential (hierarchical position, gender, age) in favour of perpetrator. Set within a hospitality company.
B "Performance management"	Performance management being carried out via internal Instant Messaging system	Content not inappropriate but tone of messages relatively ambiguous (all capital letters) and messages interrupting work and communicated via chat messages. Target is also a longstanding staff member (not necessarily incompetent). Set within a call-centre.
C "One-off incident"	One-off incident where embarrassing photo of target was posted online anonymously, then shared by other co-workers	Repetition due to sharing content beyond original perpetrator; role blurring of audience members; permanence of digital content and ease of sharing. Long-standing tension between perpetrator and target (relational context).
D "Target not victimised"	Anonymous cyberbullying but target is not threatened	Escalation of behaviours; anonymity of perpetrator(s); target perceives power advantage (high-performer, technologically savvy and able to trace IP address and report, if he chooses to) and does not appear worried. Set within a performance-driven, competitive workplace.

The scenarios were used as a tool to explore participants' perceptions and understandings of the various features of cyberbullying, by providing concrete examples of the ways in which cyberbullying behaviours can manifest and enabling discussions around this (Barter & Renold, 2000) in a way that simply asking participants to define cyberbullying might not have. General guidelines on scenario development were followed (Barter & Renold, 2000; Finch, 1987): vignettes were written to be sufficiently detailed yet purposefully vague, to elicit participants' assumptions and force them to fill in the blanks, as well as draw on their own experiences if they needed. Thus, character motivations, intent, and reactions were often depicted ambiguously. Scenarios were not drawn from real life incidents in order to minimise distress and potential harm to participants, since informing them about this might have been distressing, especially if they were in a similar position (Barter & Renold, 2000). For this reason, vignettes were also set in occupations outside of healthcare, in order to add another level of distance for participants. In this way, risk to participants was determined to be minimal, and accordingly, a Low Risk Ethics Notification was submitted (application ID: 4000015376), and the relevant statement of ethics included in study materials, as per study one.

5.3.2 Recruitment strategy

The sampling strategy for this study was very much constrained by pragmatic considerations, and recruitment was the most challenging part of this project. Initially, I considered recruiting participants through the various District Health Boards (DHBs). Three local DHBs were contacted with the initial aims of the study and were invited to participate, but after this proved unfruitful, I was left to consider a more general recruitment strategy (not confined to any organisation). Thus, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) was contacted and, following approval, a recruitment advert (see Appendix E) was run through their *Kai Tiaki* publication in the form of a letter to the editor. Unfortunately, although this yielded a few responses – with interested individuals contacting me via email and text – this recruitment strategy only resulted in two interviews. Despite the flyer stating that participation would require a 'thirty-minute [face-to-face] interview' a few respondents were under the impression

that this was an online questionnaire that had to be completed and were not interested in participating in an in-person or phone/Skype interview.

Following this process, a multi-pronged approach to recruitment was devised and approval was sought from the relevant nursing heads of department from tertiary institutes in New Zealand, and recruitment flyers were circulated. Dissemination of flyers was done electronically and in-person. A few department heads stated that they would send out electronic announcements to enrolled nursing students themselves, while others permitted me to place and circulate flyers across the campuses (for local institutes). One institute required that I mailed them hard copies of the flyers for their own dissemination. After a few months, I followed up with these institutions and requested whether another announcement could be sent out. I also went back to local campuses to replace and add more flyers. This strategy generated a slow but steady stream of participants, resulting in a total sample of sixteen.

5.3.2.1 Challenges and issues – reflections

Access to health care organisations was one of the key issues encountered during this research process. A few DHB representatives acknowledged that workplace bullying was an issue, but were unable to accommodate my request for participation as they had their own workplace programs around health and safety, or simply because they were inundated with external research requests. This was not unexpected, as similar concerns about member fatigue are echoed by the NZNO, and research has reported institutional access to be a challenge with healthcare professionals in general (VanGeest & Johnson, 2011). Certain DHBs also had pre-established procedures where external researchers were required to collaborate with an internal research officer on projects. Likewise, with regard to tertiary institutes, even among department heads who responded favourably, the recruitment process was controlled – and understandably, there was some degree of gatekeeping operating in terms of disseminating flyers. Thus, beyond following up with reminders – as recommended by VanGeest and Johnson (2011) – I had little option but to trust that this was being done.

Relatedly, a low response rate from interested participants – resulting in a relatively smaller sample – was another challenge. Issues with response rates in nursing and healthcare professionals have previously been identified as particularly challenging for survey studies (VanGeest & Johnson, 2011), much less qualitative research requiring substantially more time and effort on the part of participants. This is not unfathomable, given the already high workloads and demands faced by the profession (VanGeest & Johnson, 2011). Further, while the study was advertised with the title 'Exploring Perceptions of Workplace Behaviours' – so as to not steer participant responses in the direction of bullying or cyberbullying – the relatively generic term may have generated disinterest or could have been seen as less relevant. Although this is another barrier to participation noted by VanGeest and Johnson (2011), framing the research as such was crucial for the aims of the study.

5.3.3 Participants

As is common with qualitative research, the sampling strategy relied on individuals self-selecting to participate in response to recruitment flyers. A final sample of sixteen participants (nurses practicing and training in New Zealand) were interviewed. Two thirds of participants were aged 35 and younger, and the sample was predominantly female (n=14). Further, while most of the respondents (n=11) were located in Auckland, there was some geographic distribution with five individuals located elsewhere in the country. Although the sample was predominantly recruited via tertiary institutes, clinical and practical experiences are a core feature of nursing education in New Zealand. Therefore, from the second year onwards nursing students are required to be rostered on rotating placements, so nearly the entire sample had some form of work experience in the profession. Indeed, most (n=11) respondents were already practicing nurses and were studying at postgraduate levels to further their qualifications. Thus, on the whole, this sample could be considered broadly indicative of the wider nursing population.

5.3.4 Study procedure

Potential participants who had contacted me were sent the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F) outlining the aims of the study as well as what participation would involve. Interviews (at a location convenient for participants) were then conducted in-person for those residing within the greater Auckland region, and who preferred this format. Alternatively, participants were provided with the option of a phone or Skype interview. In such instances, I emailed the list of scenarios to them and requested that they not read this prior to the interview. Consent forms were signed (the design of this followed the consent form included in Appendix B, with a modified title), and all participants agreed to be recorded. Participants were informed of their right to pause or terminate the recording or interview at any point, as well as their right to withdraw data up to a week following the interview. They were also guaranteed anonymity during the data analysis and write-up stages. Similar considerations with phone and Skype interviews noted in Chapter three (section 3.3.4.1) were relevant here.

Participants read one scenario at a time – the order of these was randomised – and after each scenario they were asked to explain what they understood to be occurring, their thoughts on the behaviour of various characters in the scenarios, as well as their own suggestions for the targets in each case. On completing all four scenarios, participants were then prompted to provide their own description or definition of workplace cyberbullying, and to identify the scenarios in which this appeared to be occurring. Following this, participants were provided with an academic definition of cyberbullying by Smith et al. (2008) – provided below – and asked their thoughts on this definition. They were also provided with the opportunity to reassess and reflect upon their responses. This particular definition by Smith et al. (2008, p. 376) was chosen, not only because it is one of the most frequently used definitions within the cyberbullying research (Allison & Bussey, 2016), but also because it mirrors all four elements commonly present in definitions of traditional bullying: "An *aggressive*, *intentional* act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, *repeatedly* and over time against a victim who *cannot easily defend* him or herself [emphasis added]". Throughout the interview, participants

were encouraged to freely discuss their perspectives and views in relation to the scenarios (Barter & Renold, 2000). At the end participants were asked if they had any further questions or comments, thanked for their time, and the recording stopped.

5.3.5 Approach to data analysis

Consistent with the inductive nature of this research, thematic analysis was utilised as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), assisted by NVivo. This approach entails searching for patterns of meaning across data sets, and has been noted for its flexibility and accessibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a first step, using the audio recordings and my own hand-written notes (collected during the interview), I transcribed the interview data verbatim. I then familiarised myself with the data by reading over transcripts of interviews – although to some extent, this 'immersion' process had already occurred during the interviewing and transcription phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similar to study one, I annotated transcripts with my initial thoughts and ideas, and began initial coding using a mixture of structural and provisional coding methods (Saldaña (2009). This resulted in an initial total of 82 codes across the data set.

At this stage, the transcripts and codebook were searched for broad categories, resulting in an initial thematic map. Saturation – the point when new data resulted in little or no change to the codebook (Guest et al., 2006) – occurred after the twelfth interview. The codebook was then reviewed at the level of the data extracts as well as transcripts in their entirety (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here, the second cycle coding method of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2009) was implemented to refine and develop the thematic map. As presented in Table 3 below, four top-level themes were prominent across the data. These are discussed in the section below.

Table 3. Thematic findings from Study 2

Themes	Sub-themes	Concepts explored
Cyber-specific features that amplify harm	*Anonymity*	Anonymity facilitating online disinhibition; inability for targets to defend themselves; potential power advantage for perpetrator
	Invasion of boundaries	Cyberbullying as an intrusion on personal life; target having to think about the bullying constantly; repetition not perceived as crucial defining element
	Rapid dissemination to a potentially wide audience	Difficulty of containing or intervening in relatively public cyber incidents; violating targets' privacy; role blurring of witnesses; exposure of incident to target's social circles; concerns around professional repercussions
	Permanence online	Notes as beneficial (evidence of bullying in reporting) and harmful (difficulty erasing content) to targets
The role of context		Target perceptions of victimisation prioritised over intent; role of ongoing relationship in contextualising behaviours as cyberbullying or not; role blurring of witnesses (intentional and unintentional)
Underlying systemic factors that facilitate bullying behaviours	*Vulnerable targets*	Migrant and/or non-English speaking employees; younger or less experienced employees
	Ineffective leadership	Poor leadership behaviours such as favouritism and micromanaging; inappropriate use of communication channels and breaching professional boundaries
	Work design and organisational culture	Organisational change; issues with the industry or workforce such as shortages of skilled employees, constraints on resources, and time or financial pressures; institutional bullying; work setting and environment conducive to or tolerant of bullying; likelihood of other targets
The importance of reporting		Potential for incidents to escalate. Low-level responses favoured, but recognising that practical and power imbalances might require reporting to someone in a position of authority (higher up); with reporting to external agencies as a last resort

5.4 Findings and Discussion

The second part of the interview involved definitions and categorisations of workplace cyberbullying, and these findings are briefly described below. Following this, the four top-level themes extracted from the data; including (1) cyber-specific features that amplify harm, (2) the role of context, (3) underlying/broader systemic factors that facilitate bullying behaviours, and (4) the importance of reporting, are discussed in detail in section 5.6. The first two themes directly align with the research objective of exploring how workplace cyberbullying is perceived by nurses. This then allowed me to craft a definition of workplace cyberbullying. The last two themes reflect a broader and dynamic understanding of this issue by nurses.

5.5 Descriptive Findings: Summary of Scenarios

After responding to each scenario, participants were asked to describe workplace cyberbullying in their own words, and indicate in which (if any) scenarios this appeared to be happening. They were then presented with an academic definition of cyberbullying by Smith et al. (2008), and provided with the opportunity to change or justify their responses.

5.5.1 Scenario A

Scenario A was designed to reflect a 'typical' case of workplace cyberbullying – per the academic definition – and this was reflected in participant responses. Specifically, all participants identified Mel as being cyberbullied by her manager Glen; both before and after being provided with the academic definition.

5.5.2 Scenario B

This scenario was designed to reflect a case of performance management being inappropriately conducted via the company's internal messaging system, with some ambiguity around the tone of the message itself. Six participants were unsure if Sean was being cyberbullied by his supervisor Frank; six thought he was; and four reflected that he was not but suggested that

Frank's behaviour could be "borderline" bullying. After considering the academic definition however, a few more participants classified Sean as being cyberbullied (*n*=9) while (*n*=5) still maintained that he was not. Participants who were unsure of whether Sean was being cyberbullied did not view the behaviours as aggressive, and suggested that they were work-related rather than personal. Nonetheless, they remained conflicted about the fact that Sean was feeling "picked on".

This scenario was not designed to depict workplace cyberbullying, and it is likely that employees had picked up on this. However, Salin (2003b) also notes gender differences in their study on Finnish employees, wherein male employees tended to focus more on work-related behaviours as being bullying, as opposed to female employees who prioritised social and person-related bullying. Further, female employees in 'traditional' female work settings tended to perceive negative behaviours directed toward them as part of the role. Thus, it is possible that the sample characteristics (predominantly female, reflective of a traditionally female-dominated profession) might have influenced responses here. This is something future research on nursing could explore.

5.5.3 Scenario C

Scenario C was aimed to elicit discussions around repetition of content (rather than behaviour) when the 'bullying' behaviour was carried out once on a public forum, and then perpetuated by other cyber witnesses. Additionally, it sought to explore the role of witnesses and co-perpetrators in relatively public cyberbullying incidents. With the exception of two participants – one of whom was unsure – almost all viewed Charlotte as having been cyberbullied by her colleague Kim. Interestingly, a small number of participants also held the co-workers who shared the image around, just as responsible. After being provided with the academic definition, one more participant changed their response toward Charlotte not being cyberbullied in adherence to the definition of cyberbullying being "repeated over time".

5.5.4 Scenario D

This scenario was constructed around an internet savvy target of anonymous cyberbullying (Mark) who did not appear particularly affected by the behaviours. Thus, the vignette was designed to elicit understandings around the operation of power dynamics and perceptions of harm and victimisation; particularly in the absence of the target feeling affected by the behaviours. In this case, the anonymity of the perpetrator(s) is balanced or negated by the target's technological skills and ability to trace and report the behaviours. Initially, all participants believed Mark was being cyberbullied anonymously. However, after being provided with the academic definition, two participants said he was not, as he had the ability to defend himself.

Two implications are worth noting here. First, it is promising that nearly all participants had agreed that Mark was being cyberbullied, since once again findings by Salin (2003b) indicate that male targets are less likely to label themselves as having been bullied, or report the behaviours. Thus, it is possible that bystanders and witnesses who are able to notice and acknowledge that bullying is occurring, may be a particularly effective avenue for workplace cyberbullying intervention. Second, the finding that two participants indicated – according to the definition provided – that Mark had the ability to defend himself, is perhaps indicative of somewhat problematic thinking around the notion of cyberbullying targets being expected to manage their own bullying if they have a means of capturing evidence. As noted in chapter three, digital evidence can be particularly useful for a number of targets, but by no means is it the silver bullet solution to the rather complex and multi-faceted problem of workplace cyberbullying.

5.6 Thematic Findings and Discussion

As mentioned above, the four top-level themes extracted across the data – presented in Table 3 above – are discussed in detail.

5.6.1 Theme 1. Cyber-specific features that amplify harm

Certain features unique to cyber communications were consistently mentioned by participants, with reference to their potential for being more damaging than face-to-face bullying. This finding is similar to that from study one, but a wider range of features were raised here; perhaps as a result of the scenario method itself. Four features encapsulate this theme.

5.6.1.1 Theme 1a. Anonymity

Throughout the discussion of scenarios – and particularly with reference to the 'one-off incident' and 'target not victimised' scenarios – participants alluded to the emotionally detached nature of online communications. In particular, participants often referred to the tendency for individuals to say things or behave in a manner online that would be otherwise inappropriate during face-to-face interactions, "*like they don't have a filter there for their communications*" (NS013). It was apparent that participants were essentially describing the phenomenon of online disinhibition (Suler, 2004), wherein the detached nature of digital communications makes it easier and less risky to engage in behaviour that would be otherwise inappropriate for face-to-face interactions. Participants also linked this feature to the potential anonymity afforded by cyberbullying. For instance, in the case of the 'target not victimised' scenario, even though the target had the technological skills and ability to uncover the anonymous perpetrators' identities, it was occasionally noted that there was danger and unpredictability associated with anonymous individuals, and that "*somebody who's hiding and then gets found out could turn really nasty, really fast*" (NS003). For this reason, around two-thirds of participants said it was best to not confront the perpetrators directly, but instead report the incidents through official channels, most often 'management' or the Police. Unfortunately, as indicated by one of the experts in study one, such agencies – at least in New Zealand – are often not equipped to deal with anonymous bullying, and this issue can sometimes fall beyond the scope of legal jurisdiction.

Alternatively, with the 'one-off incident' scenario, participants generally focused on the inability to defend oneself against an anonymous perpetrator, particularly when their identity is

concealed or the target is unaware of the extent and nature of the behaviours. In fact, one participant recounted her own (unprompted) experience of online exclusionary behaviours: *"because often sometimes too you don't know – with the cyber world and social media – stuff's happening, you could be at work, you don't know ... it's all happening, but it's all that behind your back stuff"* (NS015). Recall in the literature review that findings around the perceived distress or threat around anonymity were mixed (see section 2.3.7). However, it appears in the present study anonymity is perceived to increase the threat for participants, echoing research by Pettalia et al. (2013). This finding also alludes to the potential power advantage that anonymity offers for perpetrators (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Thus, participants focused on differing facets of anonymity such as the ability to conceal identities preventing targets from taking steps to alleviate their situation (Staude-Müller et al., 2012), as well as the inherent danger in anonymous perpetration – amplified further by online disinhibition. These features reflect a general perception of anonymity as being a negative feature of digital communication, resulting in potentially amplified manifestations of harm for the targets.

5.6.1.2 Theme 1b. Invasion of boundaries

The constant accessibility provided by *"twenty-four hours-based technology"* (NS002) was noted to serve as a continuous pathway for cyberbullying. This was especially relevant in discussions of the 'prototypical cyberbullying' scenario, where the target is receiving abusive texts outside of work hours by her manager, and is *"having to think about his behaviour twenty-four seven, whereas if she just had to deal with it at work... but now he's almost, you know, coming into her private life"* (NS011). In this way, the bullying behaviours were seen to invade spatial and temporal, as well as personal boundaries. This is a consistently noted feature of cyberbullying in the literature (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), primarily due to the fact that it prevents targets from being able to replenish their coping resources, from a stress perspective (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Relatedly, this feature was also raised in study one; however, discussions there revolved more around the organisational challenges in managing boundaries. Unsurprisingly, and somewhat in line with the subtle realist paradigm,

different features of the same phenomena tend to become more or less relevant (Hammersley, 1992), yet equally valid, depending on the perspective of the social actor (Rayner & Cooper, 2006).

Intriguingly, although the target in the 'not victimised' scenario was also receiving messages that invaded his work-life boundaries – particularly with threatening messages indicating that the whereabouts of his residence was known – participants did not tend to draw a parallel between this and the aforementioned scenario. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the target in the 'not victimised' scenario appeared to be unaffected by the messages, and so these threats were not seen to be an intrusion into his personal life. Nonetheless, it is apparent that through a continuous barrage of unwanted and intrusive behaviours, participants reflected – unprompted – that cyberbullying could be potentially more damaging for targets than traditional bullying.

Further, given the potential for negative cyber incidents on public platforms to escalate exponentially to an almost infinite audience, along with the permanent nature of this type of communication, nearly two-thirds of participants did not consider repetition as a crucial defining element for cyberbullying. This was attributable to several reasons. For one, it was suggested that a single negative cyber incident could be considered cyberbullying in the context of an ongoing toxic relationship or within a broader pattern of (traditional) bullying; discussed further in theme 2 (section 5.6.2). Additionally, a relatively public cyber incident could be classified as cyberbullying given the widespread reach and potentially repetitive impact it could have on the target. Finally, participants argued that depending on severity, a one-off incident could be enough to create significant trauma and have a lasting influence. While in contrast with the academic definition provided, this is in line with the approach many scholars in the cyberbullying field advocate for (Corcoran et al., 2015; Dooley et al., 2009; Langos, 2012; Nocentini & Menesini, 2009).

5.6.1.3 Theme 1c. Rapid dissemination to a potentially infinite audience

Hand-in-hand with the boundary-less nature of digital communications, was the potential for rapid dissemination of information online to an almost infinite audience. This feature was noted to be damaging in multiple ways. Firstly, participants in the study identified the difficulty of containing a cyberbullying incident on a relatively public forum. In fact, two participants mentioned the risk of targets becoming 'memes'. While memes can often be humorous and light hearted, there are particularly disturbing trends of public naming and shaming individuals on social media, such as a recent incident where a 70-year-old woman's privacy was invaded when she was body shamed at the gym (Yuhas, 2016). Yet, one individual observed that even well-intentioned attempts to intervene can have unanticipated consequences by drawing more attention to the content and by providing validation for the perpetrators.

> *"I suppose you* [as a witness] *could comment on it and say 'please take it down' but you know people can read your comments, so that's like sharing it around as well… all of your friends can now read your comments … I used to think 'oh I need to answer', but by answering it, you're kind of acknowledging it and you're feeding it"* (NS010)

In discussions around the 'one-off incident' scenario, a third of participants also emphasised that incidences of public bullying and shaming often violate the target's privacy and violations of consent. Participants also addressed the added risk of witnesses becoming co-perpetrators in the bullying through sharing the content, either for malicious reasons or without an awareness of the original context, discussed further in theme 2 below. In addition to amplifying the volume of cyberbullying, this can also expose the incident to the target's wider social circle, including family, friends, co-workers, and even management. Beyond causing the target to feel socially isolated, participants also noted that such incidents can be held against the target and used as the basis for disciplinary action, including termination. This was consistently raised as a concern for the target in the 'one-off incident' scenario, who was noted as having her professional reputation ruined with the publishing of an embarrassing photo online amongst her colleagues. One participant voiced the fear that it might be used as *"justification at some point, to then bully*

her about not getting positions that she wants because of what she might do in her social life"
(NS015). It thus becomes easy to see how an instance(s) of indirect or public cyberbullying,
could dramatically increase the scale of humiliation, and have potentially ongoing impacts on
the target.

It is particularly noteworthy that concerns of professional image and reputation were mainly
raised with reference to the target – as compared to the perpetrator(s) – in the 'one-off incident'
scenario. To some extent, this possibly reflects public discourse where victims of various
malicious cyber-attacks such as revenge porn and hacking are often blamed and held
accountable for engaging in 'risky' behaviours online, more so than the perpetrators who leak
such material. However, the career-related concerns raised by participants in this study are
arguably a product of the "employee-as-brand" mindset (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015) inherent
in the nursing profession's requirement to control employee behaviour and uphold certain a
certain organisational image in the public eye. This is especially evident in the social media
guidelines implemented in the education and registration of nurses; which is more focused on
maintaining professional standards, client trust, and integrity, rather than serving to prevent or
assist in cases of workplace cyberbullying. This mindset is likely a function of the pluralism of
healthcare organisations (Ramanujam & Rousseau, 2006), as noted earlier, however, such views
also become embedded and further supported in the public psyche. In fact, one participant in
this study recounted an anecdote where a member of the public had complained to the Nursing
Council about her neighbour – a nurse – who did not mow her lawn regularly.

5.6.1.4 Theme 1d. Permanence online

Lastly, the permanence of digital content was noted to be both damaging as well as beneficial,
depending on the situation. On one hand, in addition to controlling its spread (as mentioned in
theme 1c above) it was noted by around a third of participants that it is often difficult to erase
digital content, particularly from public platforms, since "*the internet never forgets*" (NS005).
However, the advantages this may provide for targets of cyberbullying were not lost on

participants. In fact, referring to the 'prototypical cyberbullying' and 'target not victimised' scenarios, participants often recommended that the targets warn their perpetrators that they were keeping a record of evidence of the bullying, and use this evidence in seeking help through the appropriate channels, with one suggesting *"I'd take the text messages to there ... Human Resources... So he's* [perpetrator] *kinda shot himself in the foot by doing that"* (NS004). This was also the reason two participants re-categorised Mark as not being cyberbullied after being presented with the academic definition of cyberbullying. Thus, it appears that like with the practitioner experts in study one, nurses in this study viewed workplace cyberbullying as being potentially easier to deal with.

The implication of this finding is that digital evidence has the potential to be the downfall of cyber perpetrators, and a source of power for targets. However, this may be contingent on the degree to which the target feels they are in a position to act on this digital evidence. In fact, as mentioned in study one, digital footprints may not necessarily capture evidence of 'harm' for the target. Further, this line of thinking may be reflective of the fact that targets are often seen to be responsible for dealing with or managing their own cyberbullying. However, chapter four outlines a number of factors underpinning low reporting rates of workplace bullying, particularly within the health sector and nursing (section 4.4). Digital evidence alone does not negate deeply entrenched power differences in professional or hierarchical positions (Daly et al., 2014). In fact, the effects of norms around silencing (Hutchinson et al., 2010) and organisation cultures tolerant of bullying (Gaffney et al., 2012), should not be underestimated. Finally, as indicated in the categorisations of the 'performance management' scenario (section 5.5.2) nurses may not necessarily even recognise or label bullying behaviours if they are seen as being related to work (Salin, 2003b). Thus, while being able to capture digital evidence might be particularly beneficial for targets of cyberbullying and provide them with some agency, it may prove to be relatively meaningless or futile within an organisational climate – and wider society – that is unlikely to actually intervene in cases of cyberbullying. Broadly speaking, since power dynamics may operate in unique ways for workplace cyberbullying, it is argued the

power imbalance here is determined more by the target's lack of power (Dooley et al., 2009; Langos, 2012).

Overall, this theme captured features – spontaneously mentioned by participants – such as anonymity, the detached and potentially ambiguous nature of communicating online, the permeance of boundaries, widespread dissemination, and arguably permanent nature of digital content, that distinguish cyberbullying from traditional forms of bullying, and in some cases can be potentially more damaging for targets in the long term.

5.6.2 Theme 2. The Role of context

An interesting pattern emerged throughout the interviews, wherein participant responses consistently hinged on their perceptions of the underlying context in each scenario. In fact, their decision to classify whether a scenario represented workplace cyberbullying was often contingent on two main factors: (1) target perception of the incident(s) and (2) the ongoing relationship. Of primary importance was the degree to which the target felt victimised or harmed in any way. This was particularly evident in the assessment of the 'prototypical cyberbullying' scenario, which all sixteen participants classified as cyberbullying. In doing so, participants often referred to the target feeling isolated at work and dreading her job. While target perception was not the only reason participants identified cyberbullying occurring in this scenario – given that it was designed to reflect a clear-cut typical cyberbullying case – it was an important facet of participants' responses nonetheless. In fact, target perception was also prioritised in the 'one-off incident' and 'performance management' scenarios.

> *"I guess if the victim feels they're the victim, then it will be counted as cyber workplace bullying* [sic] *… like if someone's not feeling okay or they can't handle what's happening then like that's definitely clearly cyberbullying. Even if the other party doesn't think so."* (NS001)

This is consistent with some academic thinking, arguing for the prioritisation of target perceptions in definitions of workplace bullying (Gaffney et al., 2012) and cyberbullying (Walker, 2014). Prioritising target perceptions may also enable the validation of their experiences, and facilitate the transfer of blame externally (Vie et al., 2011). To a large extent, targets' definitions and understandings shape the impact of their experience as well as coping (Agervold, 2007; Escartín et al., 2011). For instance, research on traditional workplace bullying suggests that for targets who experience lower levels of exposure to bullying, self-labelling is related to impaired health outcomes (Vie et al., 2011). Yet, social standing – and relatedly power – largely influences appraisal processes in the first place (Escartín et al., 2011); particularly for women in gender-traditional jobs where negative behaviour may be seen as a function of the role they are in (Salin, 2003b). Likewise, males – who arguably have increased social power – are less likely to self-label or report being bullied, perhaps due to beliefs around masculinity and not appearing "weak" (Salin, 2003b). Thus, while it remains important to prioritise target perceptions in order to understand experiences and reactions to workplace bullying (Agervold, 2007), it is also important to identify the broader social and cultural contexts within which individuals identify (or do not) as targets.

However, in contrast, with the fourth scenario - 'target not victimised' - although many participants specifically identified the target as not appearing affected by the anonymous threats, all sixteen participants still initially classified him as being cyberbullied. Perhaps this is due to the potential danger associated with anonymous perpetrators, the repetitive nature of these behaviours, and the threatening content of the messages. Thus, it would appear target perceptions of victimisation play an important role in determining whether a situation is classified as cyberbullying, possibly to the extent where physical harm has not been threatened. This notion is somewhat supported by research highlighting that at relatively high levels of exposure, targets may experience ill-effects of bullying regardless of self-labelling (Vie et al., 2011). Moreover, Rayner and Cooper (2006) argue that a failure to self-label at present does not preclude the target's ability to do so in the future.

Nonetheless, given that cyberbullying was believed to depend on individual perception, the inclusion of intent in the academic definition of cyberbullying was frequently contested by participants. The underlying argument was that regardless of intent, cyberbullying-like behaviours can have just as much of a damaging effect on targets; a notion alluded to in the literature review (Nocentini et al., 2010). In arguing so, a few participants also referred to the unintentional bully.

> "I'm not agreeing with 'intentional' because some people will just do it as a joke, it's not meant to harm someone, but then from that person's perspective it does harm them. So it's all about perspective … it doesn't matter if they intended to make the person feel bad, or.. the intent doesn't matter… it's more about the consequences and the damage that has been done" (NS005).

In addition to target perceptions, the ongoing relationship(s) within which the behaviours were occurring were often taken into account, as a supplementary factor in determining if an incident was workplace cyberbullying. This dynamic was particularly evident in the 'one off incident', where the target and perpetrator had longstanding interpersonal tensions. For instance, a quarter of participants suggested that certain behaviours – such as posting an embarrassing photo on social media or an 'I know where you live' message (as in the 'target not victimised' scenario) – could be seen as humorous or banter when done between close friends. Alternatively, this same behaviour was often seen as intentionally hurtful and malicious, in the context of a pre-existing terse relationship between the target and perpetrator(s). For this reason, it was identified that an ongoing negative relationship might play a more important role in determining whether a behaviour(s) was considered cyberbullying, in the case of single public incidents. In fact, nearly all participants suggested that Charlotte had been cyberbullied – even after being provided with the academic definition.

"Because this definition includes 'repeatedly', C might be out because it's a one-off situation, which I guess is maybe.. I don't think something necessarily has to be.. well.. repeated and that sort of thing. Although in C there is the assumption that these two co-workers not getting along is a long-term thing, and so the repeated nature of it may actually just be in part of that long-term thing, whether or not those repeated.. you know, electronic forms of it." (NS014)

With regard to other cyber witnesses and co-perpetrators in the 'one off incident', it was frequently noted that these individuals could have been completely unaware of the context behind which the photo was posted – or Kim's reasons for doing so – and might also be oblivious to the fact that it was posted without Charlotte's consent. A few also noted that it was human nature to share around humorous content; explaining the popularity and magnitude of meme-sharing online.

"So they're all really.. they all have bought into that type of behaviour. So sensationalism, I suppose is how I'd describe it. Like 'oh look what I've seen!' 'oh look what I've got!' you know? So it's quite.. so no they've all probably bought into this.. which is silly really. It's just one of those silly things that people get themselves caught up in." (NS011)

However, although participants often identified that sharing the image might be a genuine error on the part of the colleagues, many felt that this did not absolve them of their responsibility in the cyberbullying. Nonetheless, they were often held less accountable than the original perpetrator – in this case; Kim. Aside from highlighting the complexities around intent, this theme also highlights the ways in which repetition can manifest in cyberbullying, beyond the frequency of an incident. Of interest, is the fact that most participants did not identify the viral nature of sharing content as being relevant to the element of repetition. This is contrary to research reported by Kota et al. (2014) where tertiary students have noted that repetition may be

"viral rather than purposeful" (p555). However, in light of the fact that participants in this study prioritised target perceptions – and the social context – more than the element of repetition; whether or not the incident was viral might prove to be a moot point.

Taken together, these findings reflect the role of context – particularly target perceptions of harm or victimisation, as well as the pre-existing relationship – in perceptions of workplace cyberbullying among nurses. Further, in light of these factors, the features of intent and repetition were seen as less relevant, generally echoing findings of past research (Corcoran et al., 2015; Dooley et al., 2009; Kota et al., 2014). Beyond delineating the definitional parameters of workplace cyberbullying within nursing, this finding also highlights the contextual features that need to be taken into account when managing or dealing with such incidents in the workplace.

5.6.3 Theme 3. Underlying systemic factors that facilitate bullying behaviours

Throughout interviews, participants consistently (and unprompted) referred to various factors in the work environment that were thought to play an important role in facilitating negative or cyberbullying behaviours across all scenarios. The following broad factors were thought to be attributable not just to overt cases of cyberbullying, but were also identified for their role in creating unpleasant or toxic work environments for targets of this type of behaviour, and encouraging the existence of hostile behaviours in the first place. These features are listed in Figure 3 below, and organised at the micro (individual), meso (organisational), and macro (institutional and industry) levels, as explained in themes 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Figure 3. Underlying Systemic Factors Thought to Facilitate Bullying Behaviours

5.6.3.1 Theme 3a. Vulnerable targets at work

At the micro-level, participants generally touched on factors that placed certain individuals or groups at a heightened risk of being bullied. For instance, two participants reflected on their own migrant backgrounds in highlighting the bullying that foreign, non-English speaking workers might face, with one noting that they are "*easy targets*" (NS006). Two other participants also identified that younger workers – particularly those just entering the workforce – are more vulnerable since they tend to lack experience, insider knowledge, and strong collegial relationships as they are "*so new that* [they haven't] *made those connections yet*" (NS003). These newcomers – as in the 'prototypical cyberbullying' scenario – may also be reliant on gaining a good job reference in order to progress in their chosen careers, and three participants identified that while the target in this scenario may be tempted to quit her job, there may be practical constraints preventing her from doing so: "*if this is her first job it's really hard ... you know she's got no work references to sort of move on*" (NS010). Similar issues have

been identified in Clendon and Walker (2012)'s study of young nurses in New Zealand; reflecting very real concerns by participants in this sample.

Additionally, participants also highlighted the difficulty of raising a formal complaint as a newcomer – as with the target in the 'not victimised' scenario – since this can isolate them from their colleagues and causing further distress. In fact, one participant mentioned the fact that within the nursing profession in New Zealand "*everyone knows each other*" (NS015), and this can make it difficult to distance oneself from their reputation, thereby potentially affecting career growth and movement, following negative publicity.

This finding warrants particular consideration due to current nursing demographics patterns in New Zealand. As mentioned in chapter four (section 4.2) there are a significant portion of younger nurses and internationally qualified nurses practising within the profession, with these figures only expected to grow as the workforce ages (Clendon & Walker, 2012). Together with research supporting the increased rates of workplace bullying faced by younger nurses, particularly in their first year of entry into the profession (Berry et al., 2012; Gaffney et al., 2012; Timm, 2014), concerns mentioned by participants not only highlight the increased risk of exposure to workplace bullying (both traditional and cyberbullying), but also the factors acting to prevent reporting of such incidents (Hutchinson et al., 2010; Wright & Khatri, 2015).

5.6.3.2 Theme 3b. Ineffective leadership

At the organisation or meso-level, ineffective leadership was consistently identified as playing a crucial role in facilitating workplace cyberbullying, as well as exacerbating the negative effects for targets and others involved. This is of course, one of the key contributing factors noted in the traditional workplace bullying literature (Leymann, 1996; Skogstad et al., 2011). Participants consistently identified poor leadership styles and behaviours across the 'prototypical', 'performance management', and 'target not victimised' scenarios that were not just directly impacting on cyberbullying but that could also prove problematic for other work-

related outcomes. This is noteworthy in itself, as only the first two scenarios were designed to explicitly reflect poor management behaviour; suggesting participants reflected on the scenarios at a deeper level. Indeed, with the 'target not victimised' scenario, participants pointed out that Mark's superiors could potentially be displaying favouritism; another example of poor management which can then breed resentment and bullying behaviours (Berry et al., 2012).

In some cases, participants themselves had anecdotal evidence of similar management issues in their own line of work. Micromanaging, for instance, was seen as particularly frustrating for long-standing staff members such as in the 'performance management' scenario. Participants often took into account Sean's work experience and seniority when assessing his supervisor Frank's behaviour, and suggested that long-standing staff should generally be given some level of autonomy and discretion. In this case, micromanaging was seen as counter-productive; it negatively affected Sean's performance and the quality of customer service, in addition to raising questions about the impact on Frank's own work efficiency and productivity. Relatedly, overly critical leadership was seen as interruptive and participants often suggested that it could be detrimental to job performance and create an uncomfortable work environment for employees. Such behaviours have generally been associated with toxic leadership (Tavanti, 2011), analogous with bullying (Serrat, 2017).

Beyond work-related criticism, those of a personal nature – as in the 'prototypical cyberbullying' scenario – were also consistently identified as clear examples of abhorrent management, and participants often questioned Glen's suitability not just within the managerial role, but also within the wider context of the hospitality industry.

> *"Quite shocking, like even if you're a manager or not a manager, I mean, who says that*
> *to people – "nobody likes you at work, why don't you just quit?" … you know, you*
> *can't be a nice person to begin with, and maybe you shouldn't work around people or*
> *in a hospitality industry if you're gonna be like that. Yeah, I mean if he does that to his*

staff members, what's he gonna be like when he meets clients and everyone else?"

(NS004)

Another common thread throughout the discussion was around what participants considered inappropriate behaviour. In spite of these behaviours occurring beyond work hours, all participants still viewed this as a case of workplace cyberbullying; similar to study one. Furthermore, it was noted that these management behaviours were infringing on the target's personal life, with twelve participants viewing this as a breach of professional boundaries.

"I think from a professional perspective, obviously, he's a little bit unprofessional...

he's actually you know.. impending on her private life sort of" (NS011)

Here, the use of electronic channels to discuss work-related or performance issues was also seen as unacceptable and inappropriate by around two-thirds of participants. This was mainly attributed to the invasiveness and power disadvantage for the person receiving these types of communications, which participants believed needed to occur in-person. In fact, discussions of the 'performance management' scenario revolved around the degree to which professional boundaries had been violated in the process. It is important to mention that the focus on distinguishing what is appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour might be reflective of the professional thinking and norms within nursing; supporting the finding from study one that norms around behavioural expectations might be highly context-bound. Interestingly, in the present study, it was not so much the content of the work-related communications that were deemed inappropriate (the tone here was designed to be purposely ambiguous), as much as the fact that these types of behaviours were occurring through incorrect channels.

Whether the behaviour in this particular scenario was attributed as intentional, part of the manager's personality or disposition, a lack of leadership or interpersonal skills, or a misguided attempt at being helpful, the general consensus was that these scenarios reflected poor management. Thus, throughout the discussion of these scenarios, the importance of good

leadership was emphasised – not just to manage incidents of cyberbullying, but also in identifying and preventing them.

5.6.3.3 Theme 3c. Work design and organisational culture

Other macro-level features such as the design of work itself were also raised as potential stressors and facilitators for cyberbullying. These include organisational changes such as new management, workforce- and industry-specific issues, as well as the prevailing organisational culture. Additionally, the crucial role of workplace policy was often highlighted, in combination with other factors, to combat such workplace cyberbullying incidents.

Many participants noted that a change in management is often challenging for both existing employees as well as the new management, since this can create conflicting ideologies, priorities, and values, as illustrated in the 'performance management' scenario. Aside from allocating time for these changes to be implemented, ongoing training and evaluation was advocated by participants to support these new systems, particularly during the initial period. This was seen as especially important for new leaders who may be finding their feet. It is interesting that participants reflected on organisational change as a source of tension, since research by Hutchinson et al. (2005) has highlighted how such change processes can often be used to mask and legitimise workplace bullying.

Importantly, workforce-level issues such as short staffing and shortages of skilled workers, as well as time pressures, deadlines, and constraints on other resources were often noted as be significant stressors at work, where negative behaviours could manifest. Participants reflected on their own line of work in making these observations. In fact, these stressors were also seen to exert significant pressure on employees and middle management, with the organisation being the 'bully', in one sense. In this case, one participant believed there was little hope for change in raising the issue higher due to constraints in the work structure.

"So, the manager's probably got someone on his back, so again it's that domino effect of things... [the target] is probably now expected to do two people's jobs. [the target's] getting stressed, and the manager's stressed because he needs to get his staff to achieve those goals – [the manager's] head's on the line... I guess, again that whole.. it's a form of bullying, but is it...? I don't know if it's actually [the manager] bullying... you wonder what's coming from up top, and the expectations on people now is huge" (NS015)

A few participants also reflected on how performance-driven or competitive work environments – such as in the 'target not victimised' scenario – and differential incentive systems can not only inspire hostile behaviours from disgruntled colleagues, but also set up a competitive culture where bullying behaviours are not just tolerated, but are seen as part of the job. Once again, these factors have been identified as playing a key role in 'facilitating' or triggering workplace bullying (Salin, 2003a).

Interestingly, a significant number of participants felt that when one character in a scenario was being cyberbullied by an individual(s), there was an extreme likelihood that this was happening to others in the workplace as well. Furthermore, those who held such a view were more likely to suggest that the target of this bullying should quit – as opposed to trying to resolve the issue – as it was quite apparently not a healthy or supportive environment to work in. Reflecting on their own experience of bullying, one participant shared:

"It's like, it comes out of the blue, it doesn't make you feel like you've got a secure, honest workplace. It makes you feel on edge, like you don't know what's happening because you go and check your e-mails and you've been told off..." (NS015)

All in all, participant discussions of the factors that enabled or facilitated workplace cyberbullying in the scenarios were predominantly focused on broader organisational and work-level factors. Even discussions of individual-level factors were more related to vulnerabilities of

younger workers than related to disposition. Taken together, these findings suggest nurses in the sample largely perceive workplace cyberbullying as a system-wide problem. This provides further support for the utilisation of the work-environment hypothesis, at least within the nursing profession (Leymann, 1996).

However, while it was acknowledged that an organisational-wide change would be required to resolve issues evident in some of the scenarios, a few participants were somewhat cynical about whether things could change. For instance, it was mentioned that while most workplaces do not condone bullying, not all of them are willing to dismiss the perpetrator (if warranted), especially if they are exceptional at their job or have a longstanding relationship with the company. In these cases, participants noted that the organisation might – in weighing up the pros and cons – decide to relocate the target as a 'band aid' solution, without addressing the underlying problem that the perpetrator might continue to target others. Not only does this unfairly punish the target, but it can lead to them feeling resentful and upset that they worked for an organisation that condones bullying.

> *"I mean one of them could leave, but then that person would still have that feeling of like 'I worked in a company that supported bullying' and it can be quite upsetting. I mean, for Charlotte's case she might always feel that over her head like I've been bullied, this is what happened to me and I don't really wanna be in a place that supports this. And she might have lost confidence in her other peers, so maybe she won't be able to connect with them in the same way she used to, now that they've laughed and they've seen another side of her that she's tried to keep away from others."* (NS009)

Similar to findings from study one, participants in the present study generally attributed workplace cyberbullying in the scenarios to factors in the wider work system. Taken together, findings across both studies are indicative of the utility in adopting a multi-pronged approach to the intervention of workplace cyberbullying, echoing recommendations by Lutgen-Sandvik and

Tracy (2011). However, unlike the experts in study one, a few participants were somewhat sceptical of whether such organisation-wide change was possible. It is possible that participants in this study are reflecting on similar issues in their own workplace. Indeed, research has indicated that in organisations experiencing workplace bullying, targets and non-targets alike report similar perceptions of a poor work environment (Einarsen et al., 1994; Skogstad et al., 2011). Therefore, this finding once again highlights the crucial role of embedding workplace cyberbullying and bullying intervention strategies within a positive organisational culture (Reason, 1998). In the absence of such a culture, intervention strategies on their own are likely to be ineffective, and could potentially lead to the disillusionment of employees.

5.6.4 Theme 4. The importance of reporting

The importance of responding appropriately to the cyberbullying on the part of the target, the perpetrator, and even management was also stressed due to the theorised psychosocial impacts on targets – such as depression, anxiety, fear, lowered self-esteem, demoralisation, and embarrassment – but most notably the potential for bullying behaviours to escalate dramatically if left unreported or unchecked. An additional concern was the fact that cyberbullying could cause the target's job performance and quality of work to become compromised. Moreover, cyberbullying was also seen to damage targets' personal and professional reputations. This notion of being 'professional' was a recurrent idea across the data; considering the societal and job-related pressures on nurses to maintain a particular image and uphold standards of practice. Accordingly, participants noted that cyberbullying and other forms of bullying can be seen to impact professional standing within the wider community, and call into question the integrity and conduct of everyone involved. One participant argued:

> *"She's* [perpetrator] *obviously just tried to you know obviously just embarrass her* [target] *with posting this photo, and in the bigger scheme of things or from a work perspective, you know she's jeopardising not only her own integrity but also the integrity and the professionalism of the other person involved."* (NS011)

Accordingly, participants often highlighted the importance of being able to report these incidents early on, so they are addressed and managed effectively. Indeed, when recommending suggestions for targets in the scenarios, almost all participants tended to favour addressing the situation with relatively low level responses. At the lowest level, confronting the perpetrator(s) and having a discussion about the events was suggested. This was the most commonly suggested solution for the 'performance management' scenario; where participants often recommended Sean approach Frank (the perpetrator) and discuss how the behaviour was interrupting his work and affecting himself. This approach was advocated given that Sean was not being personally attacked, it was a work-related issue, and Sean was seen as being in a reasonable position to defend himself.

On the contrary, while some participants also recommended that Charlotte (the target in the 'one off incident' scenario) confront Kim (the perpetrator) – or the co-workers involved – about the situation, others suggested that due to their already deteriorating relationship, this might not be the most effective means of resolution. In this case, it was seen as more beneficial to report the incident to someone in a position of power higher up, and follow organisational protocol around reporting procedures. Similarly, participants anticipated difficulty in confrontation particularly when the perpetrator is in a position of power over them. This was particularly the case with Mel (the target in the 'prototypical cyberbullying' vignette), who was not only in a subordinate position within the company, but was also especially vulnerable being a new worker and potentially not having many connections within her workplace. It was also noted that companies in the hospitality industry were not always equipped with unions, and when they were they usually lacked the power necessary to raise these issues and bring them to any sort of effective resolution. For this reason, while it was suggested that Mel raise the issue with someone higher up within the company, more often than not participants suggested getting help from an external agency such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Citizens Advice Bureau, or seeking legal advice. Many participants also noted the importance of keeping evidence such as the text messages, and using these in reporting the incidents.

Interestingly, while some participants also suggested a similar procedure for Mark (in the 'target not victimised' scenario) in reporting the incidents to someone higher up and seeking help from an external agency – most commonly the police – others were unsure of the right pathway for Mark, suggesting that he should decide when it becomes a problem for him. In fact, formal reporting procedures were seen to be ineffective by some, and thought to potentially escalate the situation as it put the target in the position of being the "*nark*" (NS012). One participant also reflected that it would be particularly difficult given his position as a newcomer and therefore potentially having few or no friends at his workplace. Similar to Mel, it was also recommended that Mark keep the messages as proof of the bullying, particularly in reporting to external agencies such as the police. Therefore, in more drastic cases of cyberbullying or for particularly vulnerable targets, the importance of reporting the incident internally was highlighted.

> *"I suppose um.. cos a lot of managers don't do anything unless someone reports it first. Yeah. But then you know, if people don't know.. they don't know what they don't know"* (NS004)

> *"Like [Mark] really should be reporting it, all this stuff that gets swept under the carpet, the reason that it's allowed to go on is because it gets swept under the carpet. If people had to deal with all of it, and there's consequences to these actions, then maybe they wouldn't... this person that is doing this would think twice. There doesn't always seem to be consequences."* (NS015)

Thus, in almost all the cases that participants considered cyberbullying was occurring, the most common suggestion was for targets of the bullying to follow their workplace protocol and report the incident(s) to someone in a position of authority, who was not involved. The emphasis here was on following established protocol, before considering a more drastic approach such as involving an external agency. However, it was noted that reporting does not often accomplish desirable outcomes for targets of bullying. In fact, a few participants acknowledged that targets

might also have to deal with the repercussions of reporting cyberbullying incident(s) "*and be prepared that the* [perpetrator] *might get disciplinary action or fired, and that might make life a little bit unsettled for a while*" (NS010). This phenomenon – frequently linked to whistleblowing – serves to propagate a blame culture, and may act as a barrier to reporting (Cleary et al., 2010; Griffith & Tengnah, 2012; Wright & Khatri, 2015). Unfortunately, underreporting and silence becomes almost cyclical and feeds into the perpetrator's power advantage (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003). In fact, a few participants identified that such a tactic can often be used to manage people out of jobs.

Indeed, quitting was sometimes recommended, although it was noted that this does not always resolve the problem of an insidious organisational culture, as discussed in theme 3c. Furthermore, participants also acknowledged that while quitting might be an attractive option, realistically it is difficult to leave a job due to financial pressures or lack of job experience. Nonetheless, it was noted that targets might often not want to report the incident or feel like it is not worth the hassle.

> *"But I mean often in these little hospitality industries you know, that's it. So you know like finding someone of some power to help you; sort of talk it through, if you feel like you wanna fight it – you might not feel like it, 'cause you're so belittled."* (NS010)

Yet, this suggestion appeared to have some merit for Mark who was seen to be in a position of power because of his technological competence as well as his ability as a high performer. Thus, given the bullying culture prevalent within the organisation, and his future employment potential, some participants suggested that quitting would be a more effective solution.

Thus, it is apparent that participants generally preferred relatively low-level approaches in dealing with instances of (potential) cyberbullying such as directly addressing the person(s) involved and seeking support from peers and family. However, when it was realistically difficult for the perpetrator to do so – such as due to relationship standing or power differentials – following company protocol and reporting procedures were always recommended,

supplemented by evidence of the bullying. Indeed, participants reflected on their own line of work, referring to a code of conduct and policies around social media use embedded in their training. Finally, in more drastic circumstances – such as when threats were being issued – or where organisational support was seen as lacking or inadequate, external agencies were suggested as a last resort. Essentially, it was highlighted that change could not occur if these incidents were not reported and dealt with, and that often underreporting perpetuated this type of bullying behaviour. Unfortunately, reporting itself was not without its potential unwanted consequences, highlighting that this cyclical process of "bullying – silence – more bullying" only serves to strengthen existing norms and culture.

5.7 Toward a Definition of Workplace Cyberbullying

The findings from this study add some theoretical and practical contributions to a slowly expanding knowledge base around workplace cyberbullying. Reflecting on the themes explored earlier, it appears the original definition of cyberbullying as "*an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself*" (Smith et al., 2008, p.376), may not be wholly appropriate – at least in the present context – for two main reasons. For one, target perceptions of harm were often prioritised over the intent behind perpetrators' behaviours, with participants frequently contesting the inclusion of 'intent' in the academic definition. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of participants did not consider repetition as a crucial defining element for cyberbullying since – depending on context and severity – a one-off incident could be enough to create significant trauma and have a lasting influence on targets. While similar findings have been reported in student samples (Kota et al., 2014), the present study is the first to explore and validate such conceptualisations within the workplace setting.

These findings provide further support for the fact that participant definitions of workplace cyberbullying do not always necessarily map directly onto academic ones (Corcoran et al., 2015; Walker, 2014), as the latter generally rely on more stringent criteria (Nielsen et al., 2010).

Therefore, cyberbullying research that uses a definition hinging on the aforementioned elements, may unintentionally exclude certain individuals who have experienced behaviours they perceive to be cyberbullying but not currently recognised under present definitions. Unfortunately, as evident from the findings, the magnitude of harm experienced does not appear to be contingent on intentionality (at least from the perspective of 'bystanders' or participants in this study) and repetition, and this can prevent certain targets of workplace cyberbullying from identifying their experiences as such, and seeking help and resources. This finding might be particularly relevant within the nursing profession, where a culture of silence and problems of underreporting prevail (Hutchinson et al., 2010; McKenna et al., 2003).

Accordingly, it becomes necessary for future research to use a more flexible and context-inclusive definition (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini & Menesini, 2009) including single impactful incidents, and accounting for target perception. Further, as participants have highlighted, due to the mobility and boundary-less access afforded by ICTDs, these cyberbullying behaviours can often infringe upon targets' personal lives and extend outside of the physical workplace. Thus, I propose the following definition as a starting point for future research in this area:

> "*Workplace Cyberbullying involves unwanted or aggressive behaviour(s) perpetrated through electronic media, that may harm, threaten, or demoralise the recipient(s) of these behaviour(s), and can occur beyond work time*"

Although this definition does not include an element of repetition – to allow for one-off incidents that have significant potential for harm – it is suggested that features such as duration, frequency, and number of sources (perpetrators) can provide valuable, supplementary contextual information.

5.8 Conclusion

In addressing this study's research objective, the findings illustrate that nurses conceptualise workplace cyberbullying as a distinct phenomenon from traditional bullying, due to a number of

cyber-specific features noted in theme 1 – similar to experts' in study one. Paradoxically, these very features add to the complexity in conceptualising cyberbullying, and therefore call for more flexible approach in definition that is more inclusive of the full spectrum of cyberbullying behaviours. This notion is further supported by the theme outlining the *role of context*, and enabling the development of a meaningful definition of workplace cyberbullying for future research in this area. These effects can be further compounded by *underlying systemic factors* at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels; demonstrating that this issue is indeed understood as a system-wide problem, somewhat contrary to mainstream thinking that often looks at bullying – and particularly cyberbullying – as an individual-based or interpersonal issue. Additionally, the theme *importance of reporting* illustrates the multi-faceted and escalating nature of workplace cyberbullying. Taken together, these findings uniquely lend support for the utility of Leymann's (1996) work-environment hypothesis in the cyberbullying literature. This is especially warranted, given the vulnerability of certain groups, such as new entrants into the workforce in nursing. It becomes apparent then that New Zealand nurses have a broad and dynamic understanding of workplace cyberbullying, possibly largely informed by the social media policies entrenched in their training.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY THREE – EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING

6.1 Introduction

Following on from the exploration of nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying in study two (Chapter 5), chapter six discusses the third study, which is designed to address research objective three:

> *RO3: Explore targets' understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, within the nursing profession*

This chapter begins by summarising the research gap that the present study seeks to fill, as well as outlining the study aims (section 6.2). The methodology employed is outlined next, in section 6.3. The four main themes extracted from the data are then discussed (section 6.4), followed by an overall discussion around the implications of the findings (section 6.5), and conclusion (section 6.6).

6.2 Study Aims and Justification

Although much has been written on nurse experiences of traditional workplace bullying; both in the New Zealand context (Blackwood et al., 2017; McKenna et al., 2003) and internationally (Gaffney et al., 2012; Quine, 2001), the issue of workplace cyberbullying has remained overlooked. Yet, as demonstrated in findings across studies one and two, there is evidence to suggest that this is phenomenon is somewhat distinct from traditional bullying, with the potential for amplified harm (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). Due to the social nature of workplace cyberbullying, qualitative investigations remain imperative (Gaffney et al., 2012) to informing our understanding, as well as strategies for intervention.

While a handful of qualitative studies have conducted in-depth explorations of workplace cyberbullying within other occupational settings such as the IT industry (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), call-centres (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014), and the tertiary education sector (Minor et al., 2013), evidence from study one and the literature (Gaffney et al., 2012; Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Rayner & Cooper, 2006) underscores the highly context-bound nature of workplace bullying and cyberbullying. Indeed, this is reflective of the subtle realist perspective (Hammersley, 1992). Thus, while prior studies on workplace cyberbullying can be useful for informing and comparing findings, context specificity minimises transferability of findings. Consequently, the present study seeks to address a critical gap in our knowledge by exploring target understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying in nursing. Specific aims were to identify and categorise the types of behaviours experienced, along with investigating targets' understandings of and responses to the incident(s). Beyond the theoretical contributions of providing insight into this rather under-researched topic, several practical contributions around the effective prevention and intervention of workplace cyberbullying in nursing are presented.

6.3 Method

6.3.1 Overview of research design

Similar to the two previous studies, a qualitative approach was chosen to reflect the exploratory nature of this research study, as well as to gain comprehensive insight (Gaffney et al., 2012) into the experience of workplace cyberbullying. Due to the highly sensitive nature of the topic, there were ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity to contend with (Smithson, 2008). For this reason, individual, semi-structured interviews were utilised. Although focus group methods are an alternate method that have been used previously within the field of workplace aggression (Rodwell, Demir, & Flower, 2013) and cyberbullying (Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Kota et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010), as well as nursing research (Clendon & Walker, 2012), this design was deemed less suitable for present purposes. Practically, the recruitment method and issues with access and sample size – mentioned in section 6.3.3 – precluded enough

participants from being arranged into a focus group. More importantly, I was concerned about issues of power dynamics operating within focus groups (Smithson, 2000) as a means of silencing or further intimidation.

6.3.2 Ethical considerations

Unlike with the previous two studies, since this study was aimed at examining targets' experiences of cyberbullying, full ethics approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) was sought. In preparation for the interviews, I consulted with two independent academic staff around issues of recognising and dealing with participant harm, as well as conducting the research with cultural and professional sensitivity. The interview guide was also peer-reviewed by my supervisors and select additional academics within the field of workplace bullying, and the study design was further reviewed following input received from a conference (10th International Conference on Workplace Bullying and Harassment, 2016).

Due to the potentially distressing nature of the topic, I identified a number of support avenues for targets, including a free twenty-four-hour counselling line (Lifeline Aotearoa), the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, as well as two registered counsellors (one located in Auckland, and the other who provided web-sessions) who agreed for their contact information to be included in the study. Following MUHEC recommendations, this information was listed in the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix G) provided to all interested respondents, along with a statement of full ethical approval (Appendix H). I also reflected on the principle of informed consent, and how I would identify targets who were vulnerable or whose ability to provide informed consent was compromised. Although, arguably targets of any type of bullying are likely to be vulnerable and have felt distressed as a result of their experiences, I took special care to ensure that participants' rights (especially around terminating the interview and withdrawing their data) were explicitly clear prior to and during the interview. I also specified that interviews would not be conducted or continued if I felt the ability to give informed consent was compromised in any way, or if participants were displaying (or perceived to display)

considerable distress during the interviews. I was reasonably confident that I would be able to identify this, given my previous experience as an 'anxiety helpline' volunteer.

While these situations did not specifically arise during the interviews, one participant welled up with tears during the (Skype) interview as she detailed her experience. When asked, she said she was fine to continue, and that "it's good to get it off my chest".

Thus, I was able to ascertain that the emotional reactions were more likely cathartic, than harmful. Another noteworthy incident is of a respondent who contacted me via text, indicating that she had seen one of my recruitment flyers and she was seeking help as she was being bullied at her workplace and did not know what to do. Thus, there was either a misperception wherein she had incorrectly believed I was offering counselling or support-type services, or she was simply looking for help through any channels. Regardless, I could gauge that she was particularly distressed and vulnerable, and expressed my regret that although I was not qualified to offer psychological or legal advice, I provided her with all of the additional help avenues listed above. I mention these two occurrences, not only because they reflect participant distress, but also researcher distress. Despite engaging in a number of self-care strategies during the research process, and debriefing with my supervisors – which I found particularly helpful – these two incidents have continued to stay with me to this day, and have served to drive my motivation during periods of inertia.

6.3.3 Recruitment strategy

I contacted the NZNO, Nursing Council, and Nursing Review journal with the aims of the study along with a flyer designed to recruit self-identifying targets of workplace cyberbullying, who were currently working or training as a nurse in New Zealand (see Appendix I). The definition of workplace cyberbullying developed from the previous study (Chapter 5, section 5.7) was included as a reference for participants. Institutional approval was sought from previous contacts, and flyers were disseminated as per study two.

Unfortunately, initial response rates were even lower than the previous study two (Chapter 5). Once again, DHBs were contacted but recruitment through this strategy was unsuccessful. In consultation with an academic who was familiar with the nursing setting, I was referred to a board member of the College of Nurses Aotearoa, who assisted me in getting in touch with key individual contacts at a few DHBs across the country that allowed me to disseminate my recruitment flyers electronically. Having contact with an institutional gatekeeper provided me with wider access than previously. However, despite this, the final sample (*N*=8) was relatively small. This was attributable to a number of reasons listed below.

First, similar problems of access (raised in section 5.3.2.1) pertained to recruitment here, in terms of nurses being inundated with external research requests in the face of excessively high workloads (VanGeest & Johnson, 2011). Second, since initial recruitment efforts to bypass organisational access were less successful and institutional access had to be sought to expand recruitment, it is possible that those individuals who had experienced workplace cyberbullying were deterred from responding or participation, due to hesitancy or concerns around the organisation finding out or being involved. Third, and relatedly, low reporting rates of workplace bullying are particularly common within the nursing profession (Cleary et al., 2010; Griffith & Tengnah, 2012; McKenna et al., 2003) and this may be further compounded by issues of stigma around self-labelling (Agervold, 2007; Magley et al., 1999) or fear of repercussions (Blizard, 2015). In fact, shortly after one of the organisations had approved my request for putting up a recruitment flyer, a representative contacted me to inform me that the flyer had been vandalised by a member of the cleaning staff and they were taking it down. Interestingly, the flyer had contained the message "[name redacted] *biggest cyber bully*". Thus, it is possible that organisational involvement in recruitment was potentially limiting participation. Finally, studies indicate much lower rates of workplace bullying based on self-labelling, definition-based approaches (Nielsen et al., 2010; Way et al., 2013). This, coupled with unfamiliarity (Blizard, 2015) or a lack of clarity around the term (Crosslin & Golman,

2014; Faucher et al., 2014; Kamali, 2014) among adults, may reflect a reduced number of individuals who label their experience as such.

6.3.4 Participants

As noted earlier, a relatively small sample of eight targets (three males, five females) who self-identified as having experienced workplace cyberbullying were interviewed. While prior qualitative inquiries into cyberbullying among tertiary students (Rivituso, 2014) and faculty members (Blizard, 2015) have interviewed considerably fewer participants (n=4), the current sample size was largely constrained by difficulties with recruitment beyond the researcher's control. Nonetheless, this study is indicative of a range of nursing roles and cyberbullying behaviours. All participants had been working in nursing for at least six months (as per the participation criteria) and the sample was slightly older with most participants being over thirty years of age. With the exception of one participant who was an academic leader of the nursing programme in a tertiary institute; all participants were direct care nurses in a variety of settings including hospitals, emergency department, mental health services, and public health. Participants were geographically spread across the country.

6.3.5 Procedure

Although conducting a pilot study would have been ideal, this idea was abandoned in anticipation of a potentially low response rate as transpired in the previous study. Interviews began by explaining the general aims, study information, and participants' rights, along with gaining participant consent (see Appendix B for the consent form layout). This was followed by an initial open-ended question: "tell me about your experience of workplace cyberbullying". This largely unstructured opening allowed participants to recount their experiences idiosyncratically, starting at a point that they felt was most relevant. Probes for clarity were asked throughout, and once participants concluded their initial narrative, follow up questions informed by the interview guide (around features of the cyberbullying, information around the

perpetrator, and responses) were asked, if participant accounts did not already provide this information. Questions were also asked about whether the participant considered the issue resolved – and since most did not, they were asked what their ideal 'best-case' outcome would be.

Interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour, and were predominantly conducted via Skype or phone calls – except the first interview, which was conducted in-person. Similar to previous studies, this was scheduled according to participants' convenience. All participants consented to the interviews being recorded, and none chose to have their recordings emailed back. At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were provided with an opportunity for further questions or comments, and thanked for their contribution. A $20 supermarket voucher was offered as a token of gratitude for their time and sharing their experience. These were mailed out to participants who had provided a postal address.

6.3.6 Approach to data analysis

The term 'case' is used to refer to each participant's cyberbullying experience, with each participant representing a different case. Despite the relatively small sample size, the eight cases collected in this study represented a rich source of information and captured a diverse range of behaviours experienced as workplace cyberbullying. Accordingly, the Framework Method – developed by Ritchie and Spencer (2002) provided a suitable method of data analysis that allowed me to explore the depth and detail of each case, while simultaneously being able to extract themes across the data, in the absence of making claims around saturation.

6.3.6.1 Introducing the framework method

The framework method is useful for "defining concepts; mapping the range, nature, and dynamics of phenomena; creating typologies; finding associations, seeking explanations; and developing new ideas, theories or strategies" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 309). Although it is a means of analysing and extracting themes in itself, its hallmark is the matrix output generated;

with rows (cases) and columns (codes) summarising data extracts across individual interviews (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). An example of this is included as Table 4 below, which summarises participant experiences in this study, later integrated as part of theme 1.

Table 4. Table illustrating Framework Analysis matrix

Participant	Pattern of behaviour				
	Behaviours experienced	**Traditional bullying**	**Other targets**	**Duration**	**Repetition or escalation**
P001	Undermining and exceeding boundaries (role and position); ignoring target and being curt; denial of problem; deleting on Facebook	Yes	Others had similar complaints [Q202-207; including another charge nurse [Q249-255]	1 year before stopped	"I've tried talking to her … but then it kept happening… just these little comments, you know, here, there, and everywhere" [Q39-43]
P002	False allegations and defamation (sexual and professional); impersonation of another student; posting information identifying target	No	Perpetrator impersonated another student's identity in posting on org's intranet forum; identified Target and "a number of other people" in defamation [Q9-12; 19-20;25-26; 33; 106-108; 130-131]	started 5 years ago, no clear resolution	Repetition and being escalated to another level which involved the Nursing Council [Q27-30] and involving sexual defamation/false allegations [Q55-59; 96-99]
P003	Performance-management type behaviours - excessive performance appraisals	Yes [Q66-72]	Other nurses bullied by same person [Q22-24]; "in probably two-thirds of nurses" [Q83] and a clerical worker [Q93-95]	18 months before stopped	"It was probably insidious in the sense that it progressed over the 18 months…" [Q114-116]

Note: for brevity, five sub-categories and three cases illustrated; quotes are indicated by

line numbers in transcript

This matrix structure permits in-depth analysis both across and within cases, so that individual context is retained (Gale et al., 2013); a key limitation of thematic analysis. In addition, it provides a systematic means of analysing data while retaining a transparent 'audit trail' (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Further, being heavily grounded in participants' original accounts (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009) enhances credibility of findings (Smith & Firth, 2011). Moreover, this method of data analysis is flexible as it is not wedded to any particular epistemology, and has been previously applied across multiple disciplines including applied social policy (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002), health research (Gale et al., 2013), and nursing (Ward, Furber, Tierney, & Swallow, 2013).

An article by the original developers of the Framework Method; Ritchie and Spencer (2002) provided the general guideline of the process, and more detailed instruction provided by Gale et al. (2013) was followed for this study. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and initial thoughts and queries were noted on transcripts. After familiarisation with the data, the first four transcripts were 'indexed' (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002) (a term referring to coding) using a mixture of open coding techniques such as in vivo, process, and initial coding (Saldaña, 2009), with NVivo software. As recommended by the authors (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002) for convenience, these codes were also numerically referenced in an Excel spreadsheet functioning as the index (codebook). In vivo coding was purposefully used to capture participants' language in describing their understandings of their cyberbullying experiences (Saldaña, 2009), rather than relying on academic terminology, and is recommended in order to "stay true" to the data (Smith & Firth, 2011); a fundamental principle of framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Unlike with the previous two studies, a more fine-grained approach to coding was utilised, since the study aimed to capture the essence of participants' experiences of cyberbullying. Saldaña (2009) contrasts coding methods of 'lumping' versus 'splitting': the former involving codes that capture holistic meaning, whereas the latter relying on more detailed scrutiny of data. For this study, splitting was employed in order to gain a more nuanced

understanding of the data, resulting in a list of eighty-one codes; numerically referenced (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002).

At this point, related codes were collated to form initial categories or themes (Smith & Firth, 2011) and an initial analytic framework was developed. Subsequent transcripts were then indexed using this framework. The emergence of new codes and categories continuously informed the ongoing development of the analytic framework, and once all transcripts had been coded a final index had been created (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). This index was then applied in second cycle coding, to ensure that all relevant data extracts had been coded systematically and thoroughly, and to ensure that new codes and categories had been applied consistently across all transcripts.

The next stage involved 'charting' the data across different index categories, by 'lifting' the data from its original context and placing this under sub-headings of themes (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002) in the matrix. Accordingly, each cell includes a summary of the relevant data, as well as illustrative quotes (Gale et al., 2013). For consistency, cases were placed in the same order for each chart. The indexing (coding) and charting process, along with various analytic memos created throughout the process, jointly informed the development of a thematic framework, during the final mapping and interpretation stage (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Since concepts and associations drawn from this framework are reflective of participants, "any strategy or recommendations made by the researcher echo the true attitudes, beliefs, and values of the participants" (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009, p. 76).

6.4 Findings: Themes

Upon applying the Framework Method of analysis to these eight distinct cases of workplace cyberbullying of New Zealand nurses, four major themes were derived from the data. The four top-level themes resulting from data analysis were: (1) targets' experiences and perceptions of workplace cyberbullying as a *pattern of behaviour*; (2) the *impact* of these behaviours for the

target and others involved; (3) target understanding and '*sensemaking*' of their experience; and

(4) the unique challenges manifested in *external workplace cyberbullying*. These themes are

presented in detail below, followed by a discussion of their theoretical and practical

implications. Finally, theoretical frameworks are evaluated. A summary of themes is included in

Table 5.

Table 5. Thematic findings from Study 3

Theme	Sub-theme	Concepts explored
Pattern of behaviour	Co-occurrence of traditional bullying-type behaviours	Overlap between two forms of bullying for most participants, but certain types of behaviours perpetrated specifically via in-person or cyber forms; digital evidence often used against targets
	Other targets involved	Indicative of cyberbullying as a broader workplace issue; pattern of behaviour for perpetrator(s); organisational culture supporting this
Impact of behaviours	Personal impact	Cyberbullying – and impact – on a continuum; certain forms more distressing and harmful, related to stripping target of their power
	Work-related impact	Affecting job performance, role, and professional networks and reputation
	Wider impact	For organisational reputation and provision of services; cyberbullying potentially involving target's family members or friends
Sensemaking and response	Noticing 'something odd'	Related to trigger events
	Reflecting	Looking back versus looking ahead
	Identifying enabling factors	Perpetrator's disposition or culture; ineffective management practices; institutional bullying; organisational culture and industry-related features
	Creating an identity	Identity likely related to power (within the hierarchy and/or gender)
	Evaluating barriers and helpful resources	*Barriers:* lack of an appropriate individual to report to or intervene; perceptions around self-management of cyberbullying. *Helpful resources:* support; digital evidence; education around workplace bullying
	Initiating a response	Often multiple attempts to seek help or intervention; informed largely by perceptions around power, but sometimes unresolved
External workplace cyberbullying	New vulnerability for nurses	Previously categorised as workplace violence or patient aggression, but potential for external cyberbullying to be repeated and create a power differential, harming targets and organisation; inadequacy of policy
	Uncertainty about future	No clear resolution; organisation intervention lacking or unsuccessful

6.4.1 Theme 1: Pattern of behaviour

This top-level theme reflects two distinct but interrelated sub-themes encapsulating the nature of participants' experiences of workplace cyberbullying as occurring within a broader pattern of bullying behaviour. Specifically, six participants had also experienced ongoing traditional bullying-type behaviours, as reflected in subtheme 1a (section 6.4.1.1). Moreover, across all eight cases, the perpetrators had not only targeted other individuals within the organisation(s) involved, but generally had a history of engaging in hostile or abusive behaviours. This is explored in subtheme 1b (section 6.4.1.2). Relatedly, the concepts of repetition and intent become pertinent to these discussions.

At this point, a comment should be made on terminology. Targets' experiences of bullying behaviours perpetrated electronically are henceforth referred to as "workplace cyberbullying" based on the fact that these targets have self-identified and self-labelled their experience as such, in volunteering to participate in the present study. Further, the co-occurrence of any traditional (face-to-face) aggressive, abusive, or inappropriate behaviours by the same perpetrator(s) is referred to as "traditional bullying-type behaviours", unless participants explicitly refer to these behaviours as "bullying". This is because many of these behaviours in isolation do not constitute workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011), and it was beyond the scope of the present research to determine whether targets' experiences of these behaviours would be categorised as traditional workplace bullying (as per academic definitions); again, unless targets themselves have made this connection. For these reasons, it became difficult to not only isolate the experience of workplace cyberbullying for these nurses, but further to delineate the effects of the cyberbullying alone. Thus, the discussions around themes 2 and 3 focus on targets' inclusive experience of workplace bullying, emphasising the unique nature of cyberbullying where relevant. The implications of this – in terms of labelling experience, measurement, and seeking help – are outlined in the general discussion section.

6.4.1.1 Theme 1a. Co-occurrence of traditional bullying-type behaviours

Six of the eight participants had experienced traditional bullying-type behaviours, alongside their experience of workplace cyberbullying, and the behaviours tended to be a mixture of work-related and person-related bullying behaviours. For targets who were experiencing person-related bullying behaviours, these tended to co-occur both via cyber and traditional mechanisms. Participants described being shouted at, undermined in front of other staff and within professional networks, and receiving aggressive or rude emails and voicemails. However, a few participants noted that some of these behaviours – particularly in the case of emails – were carried out indirectly:

> *"And then I found out that there was even more emails about me not being able to do the manager's job and not doing it properly, and questions about people I'd employed to the education department for the hospital, about 'oh [target]'s taken on this person, but I don't think that she should have because yada yada yada..' and then reading back through the email trail I found that email."* (P001)

> *"just basically receiving sort of offensive emails, sort of accusations and you know, no clarification or discussion... and receiving them either directly given to me, or finding it out through other people."* (P005)

Yet, certain behaviours such as exclusion predominantly occurred 'offline' through traditional methods. For instance, perpetrators would consistently either ignore or fail to acknowledge the targets' presence in the workplace, and behave in a curt and abrupt manner when forced to interact. An exception to this is one participant (P001) who was both ignored in the workplace by the perpetrator and later deleted as a Facebook friend. Additionally, withholding behaviours were commonly used, and one participant recalled being excluded from being put in charge or given additional responsibilities, and even being denied her request for study-related leave (P006). Thus, in general, the withholding and exclusionary type behaviours were mainly being

carried out through in-person mechanisms and involved both person-related and work-related bullying behaviours.

Interestingly, while work-related bullying behaviours also occurred via both face-to-face and cyber mechanisms, participants recalled being informed of impending disciplinary meetings mainly via electronic methods. For instance, one participant (P004) recounted two distinct examples:

> *"I was on another ward... so she* [target's manager] *sent me an email about it saying your notes are not good enough, you don't do this, you don't do that, you don't do the other. And then she texted me saying 'I've set up a meeting for such and such, the next day. You need to come in and talk'. And then there was an email explaining it, but I only got that the next day because I'd been sent to another ward."*

> *"the manager sent me a text saying 'what's your address? There's an important letter that needs to be sent to you'. So I knew what it was, and this is all an example of her not wanting to face me directly, but letting me know it was noted. So again, this is sort of telling me that I've got a written warning, but doing it by text."*

When probed about why this communication had occurred via text, the participant theorised that he was "*quite good at standing up for* [himself]*... so I suppose that probably I am a bit uncomfortable for managers to talk to, on their own*". However, the participant also mentioned it was possible that the manager felt "*ashamed about what she's doing*" (P004). Although the motives behind electronically communicating performance-related issues cannot be determined with any certainty, it becomes evident that ICTDs enable the ease with which these behaviours can be carried out. Interestingly, participants (nurses) in study two (Chapter 5) tended to perceive such behaviours as being "inappropriate" and that work-related issues around performance needed to be communicated through appropriate face-to-face channels (section 5.6.3.2).

Relatedly, it also became clear that the electronic performance record system was often being misused to create or build a file against targets based on their errors and wrong doings. In these cases, traditional bullying behaviours were mainly occurring via subtle and indirect mechanisms under the guise of being performance related. As one participant recounted:

> *"it was a sort of wider thing with the appraisal... it sort of was being put on an electronic file, because of what I was doing and what I wasn't doing, and how I wasn't doing it right, and you know, I was never gonna please her..."* (P003)

> *"they've concocted untrue stories about me and made me go to a disciplinary, and now I've got a disciplinary against me"* (P004)

Thus, somewhat ironically, the 'digital evidence' often lauded as a benefit for targets of cyberbullying can also be misused by perpetrators to further disadvantage targets by questioning their competency. In fact, Hutchinson et al. (2006a) assert that by exploiting their position in organisational hierarchies of power, individuals can "hide their abusive behaviour and activities within legitimate organisational routines and processes" (p.122). Much has been written about management colluding – intentionally or unintentionally – with perpetrators (Jackson et al., 2002; Leymann, 1990); serving to further harm targets (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003) through secondary victimisation (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). Furthermore, Salin (2003a) notes how workplace bullying can be used as a tool to get rid of certain employees.

All in all, it appears that the majority of participants were experiencing bullying-type behaviours through a mixture of traditional and digital forms. While the cyberbullying behaviours ranged from defamation, undermining, exceeding boundaries, and aggressive or abusive behaviours, traditional bullying-type behaviours were much usually more underhanded and involved isolation, exclusion, and withholding; both socially and professionally. Examining this pattern of bullying behaviour more critically, it becomes apparent that engaging in specific

types of behaviours might be more advantageous for perpetrators either electronically or in-person.

For instance, engaging in undermining and defamation via electronic methods may provide the perpetrator with a substantial advantage for several reasons. One, although the emails mentioned by targets were inappropriate, they are less aggressive and intense than outright abuse or slander, and thus may not violate any guidelines on bullying or use of workplace communications. Two, since these emails tended to be work-related referring to the target in a professional capacity or involving an announcement about a disciplinary meeting, this may present a less conspicuous means of subverting the target while still adhering to workplace guidelines around acceptable behaviour. Three, undermining-type emails were almost never directly addressed or sent to the targets, and targets often found out about these accusations through reading back on an email chain. To some extent, a substantial amount of damage to the target's name, reputation, and social networks would have already occurred before the target found out and had a chance to remedy it. Four, perpetrators often relied on the concrete nature of digital evidence and communications to build a portfolio of the target's "issues", and participants often believed these were concocted against them. Thus, for cases of workplace cyberbullying, most perpetrators engaged in behaviours that were not out rightly hostile or aggressive, yet were able to have an impact on the target's standing. This impact is explored further in theme 2.

In conjunction with this, most targets also recounted being isolated and excluded from their work group and broader professional networks through traditional bullying-type behaviours. Again, these types of behaviours would make it difficult for perpetrators to be held accountable, while continuing to isolate the target and enable perceptions of being helpless and powerless. This finding also highlights the complexities involved in being able to identify such behaviours as bullying, and distinguishing this from general incivility or performance management. For instance, many of these behaviours – when examined in isolation – may not necessarily

conform to traditional definitions of bullying, but it is the cumulative effects of these acts that comprise workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011; Hutchinson et al., 2006a) and targets have to engage in some form of sensemaking to label their experience as such. This process is explored further in theme 3. Finally, the difficulty in trying to isolate and label the two forms of bullying in the workplace also become apparent here.

6.4.1.2 Theme 1b. Other targets involved

Aside from the co-occurrence of both traditional and cyberbullying behaviours, across all cases participants noted the presence of other targets within the workplace or organisation(s) involved. Whether or not these other targets' experiences classified as "bullying" is once again beyond the scope of this research. Of note, is the fact that this pattern was evident for cyberbullying from sources within and external to the organisation. Once again, this suggests that targets' experiences of workplace cyberbullying were embedded in a broader pattern of bullying-type behaviours within – and beyond – the workplace.

Most often other targets included participants' co-workers (nurses) who were in a similar role and position. For cases of external workplace cyberbullying (n=3) it appears the perpetrators tended to target any individual they had contact with in a professional capacity, which was often more than one person and on more than one occasion. For instance, one participant faced a series of escalating online public defamation behaviours, by an outside source (student) but noted that another colleague had also been targeted by this same individual (P002). Another recounted dealing with abuse from a client's mother – both in-person and via calls and phone messages – in her role as mental health services case-manager, and that her co-worker who took over the same case also experienced similar behaviours from the same individual (P008). In the third case, a public health nurse had experienced two instances of public defamation on Facebook by a student's mother, however, the Principal of the school involved also noted that the perpetrator had a history of being abusive and had already been banned from the school. Although such behaviours can be reduced to the perpetrator's disposition; it is evident that

targets in these cases were experiencing the workplace cyberbullying due to the nature of the role they were in. In fact, Hutchinson et al. (2010) have previously demonstrated a direct link between organisational factors and the occurrence of traditional workplace bullying, suggesting that within nursing individual-level factors may be less relevant. Thus, broader factors in the work system should not be discounted in cases of external workplace cyberbullying either. This notion is explored further in theme 4.

With regard to cases of internal workplace cyberbullying, the perpetrator(s) was the same individual(s) targeting multiple employees in the workplace, and tended to be someone higher in the organisational hierarchy, usually in a position of power or authority. In fact, it was mentioned by one participant that in his organisation, bullying was occurring "*in probably two-thirds of nurses*" (P003); although this was not restricted to just the nurses, since clerical staff were also noted as being bullied by the same individual. Yet another participant alluded to medical dominance, often noted in the nursing literature (Jackson et al., 2002; Youn Ju et al., 2014):

> "*it* [bullying] *is still going on. Even the doctors still try to rule out what nurses say and have their say first and.. there's still a bit of that happening. Maybe there's less of it now, than what there used to be.*" (P006)

That participants were aware of other targets highlights the fact that workplace cyberbullying and bullying were rife within certain organisations, but also speaks to the "norm" of such behaviour within the profession and broader healthcare sector (Hutchinson et al., 2010), as well as the organisation's reluctance or inability to effectively prevent and manage the issue. For instance, the same participant above, continues: "*they have policies that they don't... they're not true to them, if you know what I mean. They're just there verbally, but the bullying's still happening*" (P006). Another noted that the perpetrator – who was also his manager – was "*in cahoots with her manager*" (P003), while a third participant (P004) identified several senior

management staff being complicit in the bullying and cyberbullying he was experiencing, echoing the notion of the organisation as a bully.

The multiplicity of bullying sources and targets are indicative of factors in the organisation that facilitate and contribute to the maintenance of these bullying behaviours. Thus, this finding provides some support for the fact that workplace cyberbullying – like traditional bullying – should be examined as a problem within the broader work system itself, rather than an interpersonal issue. Aside from the direct impacts workplace cyberbullying can have on targets and the organisation – explored in theme 2 below – it is also worth acknowledging that witnesses of such bullying can also experience similar negative outcomes (Hoel & Cooper, 2000) and perceptions of a poor work environment (Einarsen et al., 1994; Skogstad et al., 2011). Further, the use of ICTDs can drastically expand the breadth of audience, further expanding the potential impact for targets and witnesses alike. This was particularly true when several individuals within the workgroup had been copied into email chains (P001, P005) or in the defamation of targets on social media platforms and blogs (P001, P002, P007).

A culture tolerant of bullying can also force witnesses to choose whether or not to engage in similar behaviours to function and get ahead – as is the "norm" – or to turn a blind eye in order to avoid having a target on their back. In fact, although participant P003 was aware of bullying going on in the organisation, he only became a target once he decided to intervene on behalf of three other nurses who were being bullied and approached him for help.

> "*Well at this stage she* [perpetrator] *wasn't bullying me. So I went to her, as sort of, you know I was older than her as well, and sort of explained that you know, bullying was actually occurring, and she was a bully. Well of course, from that point on, you know, the focus came on me.*" (P003)

In fact, reflecting on his experience, the participant notes that in the future he would support targets but not necessarily speak on their behalf. Thus, in such work environments, it becomes

apparent that there is a real disincentive for witnesses of workplace bullying and cyberbullying to intervene, which can further perpetuate a bullying culture.

6.4.2 Theme 2: Impact of behaviours

This second theme encapsulated the varying impact that the workplace bullying (cyber and traditional) had on the target – both personal and work-related – and often had potential ripple effects for family members, co-workers, and provision of services in the wider community. Since most targets experienced a combination of cyberbullying and traditional bullying behaviours, it becomes impossible to isolate the effects of each form of bullying. Hence, this section refers to the impact on targets' whole experience of bullying, delineating cyber-specific impacts where appropriate.

6.4.2.1 Theme 2a. Personal impact

Participants described a variety of ways in which they were impacted personally by the bullying behaviours, reflecting the understanding of bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) and cyberbullying (Langos, 2014) as a continuum. As expected, those who experienced cyberbullying behaviours on the lower end of the severity continuum – such as general incivility behaviours and accusatory remarks – tended to describe feelings of irritation and annoyance around the undermining and disrespectful nature of these behaviours. For instance, one participant expressed annoyance at having to constantly explain and defend herself against inaccurate accusations being sent via e-mail, along with the frustration of being continuously undermined in her leadership role as a charge nurse manager (P001). In addition, another participant describes how receiving rude and offensive emails can intrude into targets' home life:

> *"I had that email for about three days as it was over a holiday weekend, so I wasn't able to talk to my manager 'cause she's off duty and so am I. And so it was very frustrating because I couldn't express and get that off my chest, because you're*

> *carrying that on board with you. So needless to say, you bring your work home, and*
>
> *those sort of issues, which isn't really helping, you know."* (P005)

Here, the blurring of work-home boundaries can be an additional stressor, on top of experiencing the bullying. This obfuscating of boundaries has previously been noted as a key concern with workplace cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), since this cyber-specific feature can drain coping resources (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). This is one way in which cyberbullying can potentially be more harmful for targets.

Similarly, not all targets in the study were equally as affected by the bullying. For instance, one participant (P008) who had experienced verbal abuse from an external source noted that while it was difficult to be on the receiving end of abuse, such behaviour was quite common within mental health services.

> *"So I try not to let it bother me. Now and again I will think about it, it's not very nice.*
>
> *But I'm not.. I didn't sort of lose my sleep over it."* (P008)

Likewise, the participant who had experienced defamation on Facebook (P007) noted that although she was "*churned for five minutes or so*", her experience was relatively mild. Interestingly, in both these cases, targets had attributed the behaviours as being directed to their role rather than themselves, personally. The same participant continued: "*it was personal to my job, and what I did, but not me personally*" (P007). Indeed, Salin (2003b) notes that women in gender traditional jobs are more likely to attribute negative behaviours as being related to their work role, than toward them as individuals. While it is possible that such attributions may be 'protective' for targets of abusive behaviour, given the history of the nursing profession, these attributions could also potentially continue to propagate tolerance and acceptance of such behaviours – particularly from members of the public – as part of the job.

However, certain types of bullying behaviours appeared to impact targets more profoundly. Those who experienced social exclusionary behaviours reported feeling isolated at work, and one participant noted the accompanying "*sadness of having people not talk back to you*" (P006)

and having their welfare disregarded. In fact, in the workplace bullying literature, isolation is a particularly powerful form of bullying as it recruits others within the workplace – beyond just the perpetrator – creating a sense of collusion (Jackson et al., 2010). In experiencing isolation, targets are also likely to perceive less access to help or resources, and feel increasingly vulnerable to attacks of bullying (Fahie & Devine, 2014). In fact, one participant mentioned feeling increasingly paranoid as the bullying progressed:

> "*I'm very aware that when you read things like emails, or you read written things, that you interpret it in the frame of mind that you're in. So I was obviously getting very paranoid towards the end, and reading everything as a slight.*" (P001)

Experiencing bullying behaviours in addition to feeling isolated can have a profound impact on the target's inclination to continue to deal or resist the bullying, as well as their desire to stay or leave the organisation. In fact, one participant who felt that senior management were bullying him (P004), acknowledges that "*I've given up now; it has worked… I've given up, and I'm just trying to escape*". The repetitive and enduring nature of the bullying also impacted targets' ability to cope with the bullying. Another participant remarked that over time, they had internalised the bullying and were constantly thinking about it to the point where it was "*destroying*" him (P003). Similarly, the combination of experiencing relentless bullying from two separate perpetrators, along with the perception that the bullying would never stop, was particularly damaging for one participant (P006) in terms of setting off a depression, to the point where she was having thoughts about ending her life. Targets' diminished ability to cope over the course of experiencing workplace bullying is well-established in the literature (Zapf & Gross, 2001). However, once again the cyberbullying was occurring during both work hours and infringing on the target's home life. Here, the target not only felt afraid to come to work because "*particularly two of them… two of them at the same time, it was like you didn't know which room to get into to get away*", but she also recalled being afraid to turn on her computer at home because of the abusive emails she would receive. In this way, cyberbullying "*becomes

your whole life… you live and breathe it right past working hours, right into your personal life"
(P006), and could prove even more detrimental than traditional bullying.

A final aspect of workplace cyberbullying that was seen as having a particularly distressing impact was when false allegations took on a sexual nature, and when it spread into the public domain. Specifically, one participant (P002) recalled how her identity and personal contact details had been posted on a public forum falsely advertised as a sex worker. The participant became particularly upset when she received contact from a member of the public who had seen this information and was soliciting her. Moreover, she was worried about how her children and their wider social circle would react if or when this information came to light. Thus, the primary concern was the public nature of the postings (behaviour) and the potentially wide audience: "*you can feel quite powerless, I think, to have that happen to you*" (P002). This case represents an interesting overlap between workplace bullying and gender harassment. Citron (2009) argues that such behaviour uses women's gender and sexuality against them in ways that interfere with their "agency, livelihood, identity, dignity, and well-being" (p.384). Indeed, aside from potentially harming her career, dignity, and well-being, posting the target's personal contact details on cyberspace creates a very real threat to safety. Unfortunately, cyberbullying and abuse from students toward faculty members (as was the case here) is not uncommon (Blizard, 2015; Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017; Minor et al., 2013), and perhaps more interestingly, the perpetrator believed to be involved in this case is a disgruntled female student.

Overall, it appears that harm occurs when power is taken away from the target, in some form. This can be in the form of defamation or undermining behaviours occurring indirectly without a chance for the target to discuss or defend themselves; interfering with the target's home life boundaries; isolating the target; deteriorating their coping resources; and posting private information on a public platform (anonymously). While some of these behaviours can occur via traditional forms (in-person), with cyberbullying many of these instances can occur beyond the target's knowledge, accessible by a much wider audience, with potentially no accountability for

the perpetrator. Furthermore, workplace cyberbullying certainly does appear to impinge more extensively on targets' work-life boundaries, by preventing them from escaping (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013) or recouping their resources (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Thus, it is likely that the aforementioned features are the key distinguishing aspects wherein workplace cyberbullying becomes harmful for targets.

6.4.2.2 Theme 2b. Work-related impact

In addition to the personal impact on targets' coping and home life, nearly all targets acknowledged that experiencing workplace cyberbullying also resulted in work-related impacts; either in terms of their performance on the job, their role in a professional capacity, or their professional image. In fact, targets perceived that undermining and defamation behaviours damaged their social and professional networks, as was the case for two participants. This was done mainly through undermining the target's professional capabilities or providing inaccurate or contradictory information (as in the case of P001), or directly destroying their credibility and reputation by concocting false rumours and allegations on a public platform and by directly contacting the Nursing Council of New Zealand with false complaints (as in the case of P002). To a large extent, these behaviours were carried out outside of the target's knowledge, and the targets only found out through their own suspicion or being directly contacted by members of the Nursing Council.

> "*when I got phoned from members of the Nursing Council to tell me that they've received these emails… I mean I was grateful, in some ways, that they rang me, but it was also really distressing to think that that sort of information was* [out] *there and you know, that was my name, and my reputation*" (P002)

In such instances, targets were often put in a position of justifying or defending themselves and their reputations, which could potentially have jeopardised their career.

> "*The people who didn't know me would take it face-value, and I got a few calls that said 'why have you done that?!' Why have I done what? I haven't done anything… 'oh*

well this girl [perpetrator] *said that you've, you know, done this…' … So I felt it was a little bit damaging with some of the networks that I was trying to have."* (P001)

Moreover, targets being bullied through performance management systems can be made to look incompetent, or framed as a trouble-maker, as noted in theme 1a. In this way, the structure of work systems and work design can be utilised as a mechanism against the target to make them look incompetent at work (Hutchinson et al., 2006a), which can then have indirect effects their actual job performance. In fact, one participant articulated that the bullying was "*impinging on my work, because you know, if I'm looking over my shoulder it's very hard to look forward*" (P003). Another participant also recalled being scared of being ridiculed by her manager on her performance (P006). Moreover, when work-related bullying is used to frame the target as a troublemaker or a scapegoat – via disciplinary meetings and fabricated complaints, for example (P004) – this can also preclude the target from seeking help within the organisation, and potentially hamper their career progress even outside the organisation. Thus, such behaviours affect performance on the job by creating a work environment that isolates targets from their social and professional connections, and prevents them from seeking help or reporting the behaviours through internal structures and procedures (Hutchinson et al., 2006a; Hutchinson et al., 2010).

6.4.2.3 Theme 2c. Wider impact

Beyond the impacts on the target, workplace cyberbullying in particular can also have repercussions for the organisations involved. In the case of the public cyberbullying of the academic nurse leader (P002), the target as well as the institution were named publically and defamed, which could potentially damage the organisation's reputation. Aside from possible curtailing the enrolment of students, such publicity could also deter future job applicants from wanting to work in such an organisation. Additionally, since this case was never resolved successfully, targets' and existing staff members' perceptions of organisational support or competency might also be negatively influenced. As noted earlier, perceptions of a poor work

environment are comparable between targets and witnesses of workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994; Skogstad et al., 2011); and this could also extend to the inefficient management of bullying incidents.

Moreover, in the case of the defamatory Facebook postings (P007), the participant noted that although she was not specifically identified, the school (where she had conducted the health assessments) was named. Given that this occurred in a small town community, the target could have been – and was – easily identified by a few individuals who had seen the posts. Furthermore, in this case, there were at least two organisations' reputations and images being jeopardised – the school (which was depicted as being complacent in allowing the 'inappropriate' assessment) and the public health service (who employed the nurse). In fact, this participant's main concern was that the "*public rant*" could potentially impact not only "*the future of health assessments for students*" (P007), but also her role in the school and community as a public health nurse, and the provision of services. Indeed, the participant noted that the incidents had been viewed by students in other schools within the community, and it had already compromised her ability to follow up with one of these students.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning, that for at least two of these cases of workplace cyberbullying, there was some degree of impact on family members of the targets involved. For instance, one participant who experienced public cyberbullying through various blog posts and public forum expressed anxiety about if and when her children (or their peers) might come across the false sexual accusations and defamation about their mother (P002). Yet another participant (P007) recounted that her daughter – who had tried to diplomatically defend her mother on a Facebook posting – was accused of spying on the perpetrator. This highlights the very real possibility of other individuals close to the target being impacted in some way, particularly for public cases of workplace cyberbullying. While these are all single, relatively minor incidents – excluding the concerns of participant P002 – given the ease of retaliation online (Faucher et al., 2014; Francisco et al., 2015), it is not difficult to envision how such

incidents might escalate rapidly and proceed to involve a growing number of individuals being targeted, while increasing role-blurring.

6.4.3 Theme 3: Sensemaking and response

This theme directly maps on to one of the research aims of this study by illustrating the process through which targets understood and made sense of their experience of workplace bullying (cyber and traditional), as well as how this understanding shapes responses. Six aspects or sub-themes captured this process, including: (a) the target noticing unusual or odd behaviours, generally precipitated by a trigger event; (b) reflecting on the experience both in retrospect, as well as considering the future; (c) identifying factors in the work environment as well as perceived intentions behind the behaviours; (d) creating an identity for themselves in the process; (e) evaluating the barriers and helpful resources available to them; and (f) initiating a (formal) response to the behaviours, contingent on the previous stages. It should be noted that these stages are not necessarily sequential, and may overlap and intersect with one another.

6.4.3.1 Theme 3a. Noticing 'something odd'

In discussing their experiences, targets mentioned having some initial sense of the behaviours – or events surrounding the behaviours – as being "odd". This was noticed more so with regard to work-related behaviours than person-related ones. For instance, one participant (P001) who had been experiencing constant undermining and exclusionary behaviours, noticed the job-related undermining behaviours – when a newcomer had been given contradictory and incorrect information about the target – before the social exclusion. Similarly, another participant (P004) noticed that being sent out to a different ward two days in a row was a bit "suspicious". In his absence, he received texts and emails notifying him of a performance meeting. It should be noted that these initial behaviours were relatively mild or innocuous, and often started out as incivility-type behaviours; possibly not worth reporting or taking action against. However, this is typical of workplace bullying in general, as highlighted by research that models this process

as an ongoing, escalating series of negative or unwanted behaviour (Einarsen, 1999). Therefore, by the time targets had sufficient time and resources to process the situation, contextualise the behaviours, and validate their experience, the initial behaviours had escalated considerably.

Additionally, in recounting their experience, majority of targets spontaneously referred to a specific incident that triggered the bullying behaviours; although these were often recognised in hindsight. In fact, with the exception of one participant (P005) – all participants were able to trace the origins of the bullying behaviours back to a specific triggering event. Triggers were almost always interpersonal in nature, particularly for cases of internal workplace cyberbullying, and generally involved conflicts or disagreements. The exception was participant P004 who had vocally opposed "some *very dodgy, unsafe practices*" introduced by management, and believed in doing so, he had made himself "*a thorn in their side*". Nonetheless, these triggers represented a meaningful starting point for targets' experiences – akin to the noticing and bracketing stage of sensemaking as described by Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005). Noticing oddities and identifying a trigger event is a crucial step for targets, particularly in shaping subsequent perceptions, and determining potential courses of action and response (Escartín et al., 2011).

However, it warrants mentioning that targets did not indiscriminately apply the label of workplace cyberbullying (or bullying) across any and all negative or aggressive behaviours. For example, one of the participants who worked in mental health services noted that behavioural problems and abuse was quite common in this line of work, and accordingly:

> "*we sort of make allowances for them* [clients] *– even though it's not very nice – if the person's not well. But I don't believe this person* [perpetrator] *is unwell, you know*"
> (P008)

Another participant distinguished between staff generally disagreeing or disliking her, given that she was in a charge nurse manager herself, versus experiencing bullying behaviours from someone who was previously a good friend:

> "*obviously being a manager, some of the staff not liking what I did... couple of people accused me of bullying them when I was performance-managing them. So I can deal with that. But because she'd been a really good friend, you know, it just... I couldn't understand how it happened. And that was my biggest issue, really.*" (P001)

Interestingly, this links back to the finding from study two (Chapter 5, section 5.6.2), where nurses emphasised the role of context in determining whether or not behaviours were considered cyberbullying. Nonetheless, this suggests that to a large extent nurses in this study had a clear expectation of what behaviour was normal or expected, based on the setting or role they were in; once again highlighting the contextual nature of workplace cyberbullying and bullying.

Taken together, these findings suggested that most targets had an initial sense of acknowledging the unexpectedness and inappropriateness bullying-type behaviours. This is further aided by placing these behaviours within the context of a 'trigger' event. It should be noted that although these trigger events were generally interpersonal in nature, this does not mean that the workplace cyberbullying itself is an interpersonal issue. As noted in the literature review, and as will be discussed in themes 3c (section 6.4.3.3) and 3e (section 6.4.3.5), a variety of factors within the organisational and industry level serve to facilitate, tolerate, and reward such behaviours. Further, it is possible that interpersonal trigger events – as compared to underlying systemic changes in the status quo (Salin, 2003a) – were simply more easily accessible to targets. In fact, Weick et al. (2005) notes that sensemaking is primarily guided by plausibility than accuracy.

6.4.3.2 Theme 3b. Reflecting

Participants' framing of experiences indicated that they were continuously engaging in introspection and reflection to make sense of their experience. This was an ongoing process, beginning when targets noticed 'something odd' and continued through to the interview, and likely beyond. Although (Weick et al., 2005) outlines that sensemaking is primarily

retrospective, the current finding involved targets shifting between two complementary perspectives of 'looking back' and 'looking ahead'.

Looking back

Retrospective reflection or 'looking back' allowed targets to confirm and validate the label of their experience as being workplace cyberbullying. For instance, one participant had kept copies of bullying emails to reassure herself – years later – that she "*was not making stuff up*" (P001). Another participant engaged in reflections and discussions with her team members, to get through it, noting:

> "*initially, of course, you know, I was shocked – I thought whoa what have I done?! I sort of started asking did I miss something? Did I say something wrong? So asking yourself some questions – could I have done things differently? When I reflected on that, I said no, no. And you just have to tell yourself that it's not you, you know, it's the other person.*" (P008)

These targets were therefore trying to make sense of their experience, particularly given that some of them felt paranoid toward the end. These feelings of paranoia, self-doubt, and distrust are common among targets of cyberbullying (Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012) and traditional bullying (Fahie, 2014). Thus, it is apparent that reflections in hindsight not only allow targets to make sense of their cyberbullying experience, but this may be a means of validating their experience and externalising blame (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011). In fact, Lewis (2006) notes that target definitions of workplace bullying are often created in hindsight. Unfortunately, as the research suggests, this stage may occur quite late in the bullying process – once the bullying has escalated drastically, resulting in substantial power differentials – and this can prevent targets from taking action to report or remedy the situation (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Vie et al., 2011).

Looking ahead

This subtheme is intrinsically linked with retrospective reflection. Indeed, more than half of the sample also engaged in future-oriented reflection, with particular reference to how they might respond differently, "in hindsight". Thus, future or alternate responses to their situation were largely informed by "looking back" at the bullying as a learning experience. Targets discussed how if they could go back, they would either confront the perpetrator directly or report the behaviours sooner. In fact, one participant elaborated how nowadays:

> "*I have become tired of being treated like that. I'm quick to answer to back. Instead of sitting there, I'm quick to get up and say 'oh no, I don't agree with that' and speak for myself, rather than feeling vulnerable and saying nothing because I'm afraid I won't get spoken to again the next day*." (P006)

Another participant – whose cyberbullying experience began once he intervened on behalf of other targets – mentioned how he might have adopted a more supportive witness role, rather than "*take the floor*" for them (P003). Despite this, targets were also able to perceive some positives about their experience in terms of having learnt something from it (P003) and the fact their experience will not have gone wasted by being able to help someone else in the future (P006). This is consistent with findings from other studies exploring the impact of workplace cyberbullying among faculty members of tertiary institutes (Blizard, 2015). Thus, it can be seen that these two processes of 'looking back' and 'looking ahead' are complementary, in that targets reflected on their experiences in hindsight to determine more successful or effective ways of responding in the future.

6.4.3.3 Theme 3c. Identifying enabling and influencing factors

In identifying a trigger for the behaviours, and through engaging in reflection, it became apparent that targets were seeking explanations for their experiences. These were related to the perpetrators' disposition and perceived motives, as well as broader features within their workplace and profession that facilitated the bullying, as discussed below.

Perpetrator-related factors

Interestingly, many targets attributed the cyberbullying behaviours to the perpetrator's personality or cultural difference. For instance, one participant mentions that the perpetrator was a "*black and white person... who looks at things very clear cut*" (P001). Accordingly, the target understood that the perpetrator would find it easy to speak out against any behaviour or actions that she disliked or did not approve of. Similarly, another target suggested that there was a "*behaviour issue attached to*" the bullying (P005). Two of the targets of external workplace cyberbullying also attributed the behaviours to the perpetrator's nature stating: "*there's something about her ... she's rather well known in the local community*" (P007) and "*some people out there are abusive*" (P008). Similarly, individual-level factors were attributed as antecedents to inappropriate and bullying-type behaviours on the part of the perpetrator.

Two respondents (P001; P005) also questioned whether cultural or national differences were underlying the norms around what was acceptable versus unacceptable bullying. In fact, cultural factors have been noted to determine acceptable behaviours, as well as reactions to bullying (Blackwood et al., 2017). Further, workforce diversity may be linked to increased aggression (Salin, 2003a). This is particularly pertinent given the increasing diversity of the nursing workforce in New Zealand. Finally, generational differences – particularly with reference to the manager's treatment of female staff – were also raised, with participant P006 noting:

> "*I sometimes wonder too, if it's an age-related thing, because I mean men back... you know, this guy would be maybe sixty-nine, and I think they got away with things like that more in their day, you know?*"

It is possible that attributing the bullying to perpetrator-related factors allows targets to externalise the bullying and potentially empower targets (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2011). Indeed, it has been noted that targets are less likely to experience negative psychological impacts when they externalise, rather than internalise, the blame for bullying (Farley et al.,

2015). However, it should be noted that targets relied on a number of different explanations as causing their workplace bullying, with perpetrator-factors being but one of these. Further, targets did not always directly resort to perpetrator-related explanations, and as will be discussed in theme 3d, some participants had to reflect on their own identity and role in the bullying, in order to be able to externalise causes.

Work-related features

Many participants were able to identify features in the work environment, organisation, and even industry that facilitated or enabled such bullying. This ranged from the organisation being passive about workplace cyberbullying (i.e.; ineffective management practices) to the organisations having an active role in the workplace cyberbullying process (i.e.; the organisation as a bully). Arguably, the organisation's role in facilitating workplace cyberbullying, along with their inability to intervene successfully, creates further harm for targets through secondary victimisation (Citron, 2009; Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). This was particularly evident in cases where the bullying had not yet been resolved.

Organisations that were seen as passively complicit generally appeared to have a limited capacity or involvement in the intervention of workplace cyberbullying. This was chiefly apparent in the cases of external workplace cyberbullying where the perpetrator was anonymous, or beyond the scope of the organisation's control. In this case, inadequate policies and practices allowed the workplace cyberbullying to continue – and escalate – with no accountability for the perpetrator. Other features included a lengthy management process or moving the issue to the "*back burner*" (P007). Moreover, one participant recounted her dissatisfaction with HR suggesting monetary compensation to the perpetrator in an effort to end the cyberbullying behaviours.

> "*I did talk to our HR manager and yeah he basically wanted to settle with her. He sort of felt like this all was stemming from a grievance that she had, and that if we just sort of perhaps gave her a bit of money as a settlement to say 'oh we're sorry', that it would*

[stop]. *That, I found, was really unsatisfactory, you know. I'm the victim here and it was her that was going to get the payout for it"* (P002)

Thus, a passive or ineffective organisational response not only enabled the cyberbullying behaviours to continue indefinitely, but also served to create perceptions of injustice and further harm for the targets involved. Indeed, such enabling factors also act as barriers to the effective resolution and intervention of these incidents, as outlined in theme 3e.

On the other hand, a few targets identified the organisation as being actively involved in the workplace cyberbullying. One target mentions how the perpetrator was "*in cahoots*" with her manager, and that on escalating a complaint:

"I got a letter from the chief nurse basically telling me that it was all my fault… this person was in authority and I had to, you know, do everything." (P003)

Similarly, another participant identified at least four managers who were complicit in his bullying. Here, the organisation was essentially scapegoating the target for being a whistle-blower and opposing – what he believed – were unsafe practices. Interestingly, the participant was a union representative himself, and noted that in conversations with other nurses who have tried to go against senior management, "*the senior managers pull them into their offices, and give them a dressing down. And they've given up; they've started to do what the manager says*" (P004).

Beyond the organisation itself, broader features related to culture and the industry were also raised by two participants. For instance, two participants raised the idea that there is a bullying culture prevalent within management in New Zealand. Yet another participant remarked on the "mateship" of small towns and closed communities where nepotistic connections allow individuals to get away with bullying. Finally, features relating to health care organisations and the design of work itself, were raised by one participant.

"I spent twenty-four years in ED and the pressure was building there so I got out of there. I'd seen everything apart from major explosion, and the job was they wanted me

to treat numbers rather than people… the workload increased twenty percent, and the number of workers did not increase at all… There's just more and more work being put on the nurses in New Zealand, and the problem is, it's getting to the tipping point where people can't cope and then you are blamed because of system problems." (P003)

Thus the pluralism of health care organisations' missions, cultures, and hierarchies (Ramanujam & Rousseau, 2006), coupled with increasing demands on public health care and a reduction in funding (Rosenberg & Keene, 2016), create an environment rife for workplace bullying and cyberbullying. Unfortunately, nurses, being "doubly oppressed" in the organisational hierarchy (Hutchinson et al., 2006a), are more likely to experience the burden of these problems in the work system. Thus, institutional bullying is commonly experienced within this profession, to the extent where bullying becomes permissible and even rewarded (Hutchinson et al., 2010).

6.4.3.4 Theme 3d. Creating an identity

Target perceptions of their identity also featured prominently in their narratives, and targets used a number of phrases to describe their role in the workplace bullying process. Unfortunately, a common tendency was for targets to self-blame. Engaging in retrospective reflection, most targets discussed how they "allowed" themselves to be bullied, and framed their role as being actively complacent in the process. These same targets also blamed themselves for allowing the bullying to endure for a prolonged period of time and to escalate to the extent that it did. Similar findings have been noted by Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott (2011).

Interestingly, three targets in particular viewed the workplace cyberbullying as helping behaviours that backfired to their detriment. Here, the self-blame was more evident, as participants perceived that they had initiated the triggering event or put themselves in the line of fire. A clear example of this is the participant who decided to intervene on behalf of three other nurses (P003), as noted earlier. Further, one participant recounted that she had previously informed the perpetrator (her then-close friend) to put everything down in writing or an email, so there was a record. Regrettably, this participant subsequently faced considerable email

bullying and undermining. She notes: "*I kind of felt like I'd made the monster myself... so I took responsibility*" (P001). Contrary to targets who allowed themselves to be bullied, the targets in this group tended to self-blame to the point where they were almost taking responsibility for the initiation of the workplace bullying.

However, target identities were not static and a few individuals were able to reclaim their agency. For instance, participant P001 remarked that she was a "*strong character*", while another target mentioned how, although he had allowed himself to be bullied, the perpetrator did not have control over him (P003). It should be noted that these were targets for whom the workplace cyberbullying had been resolved. Nonetheless, in a sense, this represents the complexity of target identities, wherein they may not necessarily see themselves as being completely helpless or powerless, but perhaps yielding their power to the perpetrator by allowing the cyberbullying behaviours to persist. These individuals also reclaimed their agency in the resolution of the bullying, and through introspection and reflection, were able to maintain (or rebuild) their identities as a "strong" individual with some degree of power or capability to enable as well as end the cyberbullying.

An alternate identity of "*victim*" was adopted by one target in particular who was experiencing ongoing workplace cyberbullying that had escalated to gender harassment by an anonymous source. In this case, the target, the organisation, and others involved – lawyers and the police – did not seem to be able to do anything to put a stop to the behaviours or hold the perpetrator accountable. Understandably, the target felt helpless and "*quite powerless*" (P002). In this case, the target did not view themselves as allowing the bullying, or blame themselves, because they perceived the events to be beyond their control or agency. Unsurprisingly, this would inspire feelings of helplessness, lack of control, and powerlessness. While similar ideas around a lack of control were echoed by the other two targets of external workplace cyberbullying, they appeared less distressed by the behaviours – perhaps because felt supported by their organisations, and were able to identify the perpetrator.

As Salin (2003b) and Escartín et al. (2011) have argued, appraisals of workplace bullying may be largely influenced by social power and position within the hierarchy; particularly with relevance to gender. Unfortunately, the ability to draw this conclusion is curtailed by the sample size in this study. However, the general pattern here was that individuals who perceived that they were strong characters, and allowed themselves to be bullied, were mainly male nurses and one female nurse in a managerial position. Thus, it can be tentatively concluded that to a large extent, the type and source of cyberbullying determines perceptions of the degree of power and agency that targets have, and this subsequently shapes target's perceptions of their identity. In fact, Weick et al. (2005) notes that identity construction is a key element of sensemaking. More importantly, these identities and appraisals are likely to influence the range of options that they perceive are available to them, as well as their coping response (Escartín et al., 2011; Vie et al., 2011).

6.4.3.5 Theme 3e. Evaluating barriers and helpful resources

Another key aspect of the targets' understanding process, was the identification of barriers to reporting and intervention, as well as the evaluation of helpful resources. Some of these barriers were also enabling factors mentioned in theme 3c, present at various levels of the work system, as well as various stages of the cyberbullying process. Similarly, targets were able to evaluate the utility of resources in coping with the bullying and in help-seeking.

Barriers

Aside from the range of enabling factors that potentially gave rise to the cyberbullying, two additional barriers to reporting and intervention were identified: the perceived lack of a suitable pathway to intervention, and perceptions around self-coping. In particular, three targets noted that the main barrier preventing them from reporting the cyberbullying was the perceived lack of a suitable individual to report to. For instance, one participant noted that an intervention did not happen until she went to the next boss above her manager (perpetrator):

> *"cause how was I ever going to get it to stop? 'Cause I don't think he* [perpetrator] *would have listened to... I mean who would I get? Who would you get? Like, health and safety officer? They're not going to stand up to him. I don't know... I don't know... Yeah, I just... I'm not sure what the answer is there..."* (P006)

The same target continued: "*I let it go for years, because I was afraid if I complained I'd lose my job, and I wouldn't be able to help my kids... my children, and I wouldn't be able to pay my mortgage. I was terrified that someone would get me and I'd lose my job*." Likewise, two other targets were not only experiencing vertical bullying from their manager(s), but believed this was supported by senior management as well. The power differentials operating, fear of retribution, as well as scepticism about the outcome would obviously be a significant barrier to reporting (Griffith & Tengnah, 2012; Matt, 2012; Wright & Khatri, 2015). Indeed, one participant noted that the first time he reported the bullying he was blamed for it by his manager's boss, and he had to wait until a change in management occurred before he could report the bullying again:

> "*it was about two months after her* [perpetrator's] *boss had moved along, and I went to the new boss, you know, my boss's boss who was new, and she said 'why have you allowed it to go on for so long?' and I said, 'well I had no confidence that my previous boss's boss would, you know, be sympathetic to my cause'*" (P003)

Thus, in cases of vertical workplace cyberbullying, power differentials can be a major deterrent for target reporting, even when targets had proof (digital evidence and collegial verification). This finding goes some way toward demonstrating that digital evidence or footprints left by cyberbullying do not necessarily transcend barriers to reporting.

Even when targets did report the cyberbullying, there were still barriers preventing the effective resolution. Once again, this was mainly due to the lack of an appropriate individual who was in a position of authority to intervene and end the bullying. For instance, three participants noted that once they had reported the bullying, mediation or reconciliatory meetings were utilised. While this strategy is quite commonly used by organisations (Escartín, 2016) scholars are often critical about their efficacy, particularly since such an approach is often built on the assumption

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that workplace bullying is an interpersonal problem between individuals of equal power or standing (Saam, 2010). Hence, in ignoring pre-existing power differentials, such attempts can increase vulnerability of targets while further reinforcing power imbalances (Hutchinson et al., 2010). Further, the confidentiality required in these meetings prevents management from identifying broader patterns of bullying within the work system (Saam, 2010). Indeed, two of the participants noted that the mediation did not resolve anything since the perpetrators went on the defensive, or would not engage. In fact, in one of these cases, the word 'bullying' was not mentioned even once in the outcome report (P003). Only one participant – who was experiencing horizontal cyberbullying from two sources – noted that his self-initiated mediation attempt was successful in resolving one case of bullying, and his co-worker (perpetrator) appeared apologetic. It should also be noted that this was the shortest duration of bullying in this study (six weeks), whereas the other two cases – not resolved through mediation – lasted one year to a year-and-a-half. Interestingly, in these cases the bullying stopped only when the perpetrator exited the organisation sometime later.

In cases where reporting the incident to someone more senior was not an option (two of the vertical cyberbullying cases mentioned earlier), targets also pursued help from external sources such as the union (NZNO). However, in this study, participants did not believe that this was a particularly helpful avenue. Participant P003 found it particularly discouraging that the union representative had suggested he concede on several points at the mediation meeting, and believed that representative was "*trying to take the easy way out for herself*". Similarly, although the other participant perceived that he was being bullied for being a union delegate who was vocally opposing unsafe practices, he perceived that his union organiser was "*not that good*" (P004). It is possible that participants have diverging beliefs about the union's role, and thus found the union action to be unsatisfactory. For instance, participant P004 saw himself as actively opposing dangerous practices, despite the organisation trying to silence him, and perhaps he believed that his union representative should have adopted a similar stance. To some extent this might also apply in the case of participant P003, who attempted to intervene on

behalf of other targets of bullying. Thus, it is conceivable that targets who are more vocal may desire their advocates to also utilise similar strategies in supporting them. Nonetheless, this finding is reflective of only two targets' experiences, and there has been some suggestion that public sector unionism, in comparison to the private sector, is more conducive to tackling workplace bullying (Hoel & Beale, 2006).

The three cases of external workplace cyberbullying also merit a brief discussion. Despite all participants perceiving their organisation to be generally supportive, none of these incidents were successfully resolved, and workplace cyberbullying was perceived as a relatively unknown and novel challenge for organisations to deal with. In one case, the organisation itself chose to pursue external sources of help by seeking legal advice and reporting the incidents to the Police. However, neither source was able to halt the behaviours or take any action for redressal:

> "*because the police weren't really that interested and the lawyers felt there wasn't really any way that they could prove what she was doing, and you know, is it illegal what she's doing?*" (P002)

It should be mentioned that these cyberbullying behaviours originated more than five years ago, predating the introduction of the HDC Act (2015). However, the participant notes that even after the most recent incident (in early 2016) there was little that could be done because the perpetrator was:

> "*very clever and not revealed herself specifically in the emails to know that it's her, you know, to be able to categorically say that it's her. So I think that's the reason that it's been.. that they couldn't do anything more about it*." (P002)

This is not an uncommon occurrence given the novelty of the issue. In fact, this finding is identical to the response noted by one of the experts in study one, whose organisation was being targeted by anonymous cyberbullying. Our laws are slow to keep up with the rapid changes in technology (Borstorff & Graham, 2006; Everett et al., 2004), and often those in a position to deal with these issues are often incapable or unwilling to do so (Citron, 2009; Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). Not only is this a major impediment to the intervention; but the lack of

visible (and effective) efforts by law enforcement and others to halt these types of behaviours can serve as a major deterrent to other targets of cyberbullying in reporting future incidents.

The other barrier to reporting was targets' self-perceptions around being able to manage or deal with the issue on their own. This was evident in two cases. Participant P001 recounted that although there was a "*separate bullying and harassment team... I didn't go down that route because I thought I could deal with it, being older, more experienced.*" It should be noted that this participant was not opposed to reporting the behaviours itself, as on the advice of her manager she filed a report with HR, which led to an unsuccessful mediation meeting. Instead, is possible that a senior or more experienced nurse may be less likely to utilise specific bullying and harassment channels in place. Interestingly, previous research has also noted the tendency for targets of cyberbullying feeling like they should have to manage the issue on their own (Spears, Taddeo, Daly, Stretton, & Karklins, 2015). It would have been interesting to know whether these channels use a similar mediation strategy (as HR) in their approach to interventions. In a similar vein, although the public health nurse who experienced external cyberbullying (P007) had been recommended by the principal of the school involved on more than one occasion to report her experience to NetSafe, she chose not to because she believed it was a relatively mild case and that the bullying was depersonalised. Thus, for relatively impersonal or minor cases of cyberbullying, targets may choose not to report the bullying to a formal agency such as NetSafe. However, the agency notes that they provide help for any incident; "big or small". Therefore, given the potential for rapid escalation with these behaviours (Baruch, 2005; Law et al., 2012), this may be something workplaces choose to emphasise to their employees. It is interesting to note, the suggestion to report to NetSafe came from the principal of the school involved, and not the targets' manager(s) or organisation, and perhaps this reflects the education sector's increased awareness of the resources available in dealing with cyberbullying, given that majority of the education and prevention efforts have been directed toward the school setting (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b).

Helpful resources

Aside from the barriers to reporting and intervention, targets jointly appraised the sources of support and help available to them. Across cases, three key factors were generally mentioned by participants as being helpful resources through their experience of workplace cyberbullying. These were: social support, the use of digital evidence, and education around bullying.

Social support seemed to the most frequently mentioned helpful resource by (*n*=6) participants. Support was derived from work colleagues, family and friends outside the organisation, as well as other targets who was experiencing the same behaviours. Participants considered this latter form of support especially valuable in terms of having someone there to listen and who would empathise, but a supportive team and work environment were also conducive to validating target experiences. A few participants also mentioned they had sought out and used a social support person when reporting the behaviour, who was able to verify everything they had said. One participant also mentioned religion as a source of strength in terms of not only daily coping, but also in helping him heal and forgive the perpetrator. Thus, social connections – both inside and external to the workplace – can play a major role in allowing targets to share their experiences, provide support during the stressful periods, and even help in healing. This is not a surprising finding, given that research has outlined the key role of social relationships in coping with workplace bullying (Vessey, DeMarco, Gaffney, & Budin, 2009). However, Wright and Khatri (2015) asserts that a focus on coping through sharing experiences with friends, family, and co-workers perpetuates underreporting of workplace bullying. While beyond the scope of this study, this could be another avenue for future research.

Although most participants had concrete evidence of the bulling-type behaviours – such as email trails and social media posts – this was specifically mentioned as helpful by three participants. However, only one participant was able to utilise this proof in reporting the behaviours and resolving the bullying:

"I find in relation to anybody that's doing this sort of thing, is quite foolish, because there's a paper-trail back, there's evidence immediately. It's a pretty clear decision in relation to you know, resolving it... by escalating it, in relation to treating it. So they're very much accountable immediately by their own hands, you know, more so than verbal commune" (P005)

It should be noted that the bullying was from a horizontal source within the organisation. In fact, in the other case of the participant who had experienced anonymous cyberbullying on public platforms (P002), the fact that this information was permanent only served as a severe source of distress. Nonetheless, two other targets emphasised that the advantage of having a tangible record of cyberbullying resided in the fact that targets were able to reflect on these communications retrospectively, and reassure themselves that they were not being paranoid or the bullying was not their fault. Thus, while digital evidence is often extolled as making the reporting and management of workplace cyberbullying easier – particularly by practitioners in study one – only one of eight cases in this study was able to successfully utilise this feature in the resolution of their bullying. This is not to discount the utility of the feature, as targets may also find this evidence beneficial during sensemaking.

Finally, an interesting resource mentioned by two participants was researching their experience of workplace bullying beyond workplace policies and documents. This was either instigated through work-related training, or through their own efforts to understand and comprehend their experience. While this was not rated as the most valuable or helpful resource, it certainly appeared to assist in terms of illuminating the issue and once again, allowed targets to externalise the cyberbullying while providing a label for their experience. This is a unique finding, and not much prior research has explored the usefulness of reading bullying- or harassment-related material as a coping strategy. This also highlights the key role of education (Blizard, 2015; Kamali, 2014; Walker, 2014) for the prevention – and perhaps early intervention – workplace cyberbullying.

6.4.3.6 Theme 3f. Initiating a response

Target responses were contingent on the evaluation of barriers and helpful resources, as well as other aspects in the 'understanding' process such as their identities and reflecting on their experiences. This was not a linear process, and often participants made several attempts to initiate actions toward the intervention and resolution of their bullying. In examining these responses, two patterns became apparent.

First, targets who experienced horizontal workplace cyberbullying ($n=3$) were more likely to confront the perpetrator directly, and try to resolve the issue on their own, than those experiencing vertical or external cyberbullying. Unfortunately, for two participants this approach was not successful as they were met with a denial from the perpetrator, and the behaviours (ignoring and exclusion, as well as undermining) continued. This finding is reflective of the findings from study two (Chapter 5) where nurses generally favoured low-level intervention responses; although this does not always result in a successful resolution. In fact, for one target the bullying only stopped when the perpetrator left the organisation sometime later, and in the other case the bullying stopped when the perpetrator believed he would gain some benefit out of befriending the target. Yet, as noted earlier, one participant was successful in resolving one of the occurrences of workplace cyberbullying from a co-worker by utilising digital evidence in the form of emails (P005). The perpetrator in this case was likely more receptive to such a discussion, and it is possible that the behaviours here – accusatory and aggressive emails – were incivility behaviours that had escalated.

On the other hand, participants who had experienced workplace cyberbullying from their manager ($n=3$) generally required intervention from someone in a more senior position. Interestingly, two of these cases were successfully resolved through intervention, wherein the perpetrators were demoted or exited the organisation. However, in both these cases, participants explicitly noted the presence of other targets in the workplace. This may have been a key reason behind the resolution. In the third case, while the participant noted there were other targets in

the organisation, this was a classic case of institutional bullying. For this reason, the bullying was never resolved and the target himself had arranged a move to a different unit, since he did not believe the situation would change. It became evident the participant wanted to escape and to be able to safely "*get out from under those managers' clutches*" (P004).

As noted earlier, across the three cases of workplace cyberbullying from external sources, targets once again consulted with their managers. Here, reporting was not so much an issue as intervention. Unfortunately, given the novelty of this issue there was a general lack of awareness on how to manage incidents of workplace cyberbullying. For instance, aside from reporting the Facebook post – the perpetrator made a second posting anyway – the target perceived there was little the school or healthcare organisation could do (P007). Likewise, the participant receiving abusive calls and voicemails was taken off the case, but continued to be contacted since the perpetrator had access to her private phone number, due to previously complaining that she could not get a hold of the participant on her work phone number, during an emergency. In this case, the target noted that despite her team leader telling her to ignore her voicemail messages, "*but I mean, when you have messages, you listen to it right?*" (P008). Intervention was particularly difficult when the bullying and harassment was being perpetrated anonymously (P002). Here, outside counsel such as legal advice and the Police were not particularly effective either; highlighting a crucial gap in the management and intervention of these forms of workplace cyberbullying. Although targets of external workplace cyberbullying experienced no clear resolution, as mentioned earlier, reporting and discussing the issue with their manager and work group was seen as a helpful resource, nonetheless, and targets generally perceived their manager and the organisation as being supportive.

Taken together, this theme of understanding suggests that most targets have an initial sense of acknowledging unexpectedness and inappropriate behaviour, particularly when placed in the context of a trigger. Through retrospective and future-oriented reflection, targets may also attempt to identify causes or factors – related to the perpetrator and the wider work system –

underlying their bullying. This reflection process also allows targets to develop their identity or role in the bullying process, and this largely guides appraisal and response. Hindsight may also function to validate targets' experiences – although this may be further supported by discussions with peers, family members, and other targets. Unfortunately, by this time, the cyberbullying behaviours might have escalated to the point where there has been considerable impact on the target's personal life and work, as well as other individuals involved. Indeed, many of the factors that facilitate or enable workplace cyberbullying and bullying may also act as barriers to the reporting and effective intervention of these incidents. Thus, it is crucial that efforts toward prevention, intervention, and management of workplace cyberbullying are multi-pronged and target different levels of the work system (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011; Hodgins et al., 2014; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011).

6.4.4 Theme 4: External workplace cyberbullying

Workplace bullying and cyberbullying from external sources – particularly within nursing – is a relatively unexplored concept (see Lewis, Sheehan, & Davies, 2008). In fact, within healthcare organisations, aggression or abuse from patients, clients, and their relatives, is often labelled under the broader category of patient aggression (Jackson et al., 2002) or consumer-related violence (Bowie, 2002), since traditional bullying generally involves systematic and repeated exposure to aggressive behaviours, rather than isolated incidents (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2010). However, workplace cyberbullying brings in new dynamics. Where previously violent, disruptive, and aggressive clients or outsiders could be physically removed or banned from the work premises, the constant accessibility provided by ICTDs mean that targets can be reached continuously, and beyond the work premises or hours. External sources also generally lie beyond the scope of current organisational efforts to intervene and manage this type of cyberbullying behaviour, preventing its effective resolution. These two sub-themes are explored in detail below.

6.4.4.1 Theme 4a. A new vulnerability for nurses

The research on traditional workplace bullying predominantly focuses on sources internal to the organisation, and attempts to distinguish incidents of vertical bullying or abusive supervision from those horizontal or lateral bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2010). As mentioned above, few studies focus on sources external to the organisation (Vessey et al., 2009) primarily because bullying is defined as a repeated behaviour (Einarsen et al., 2010). Yet, nurses remain one of the occupational groups most at risk of experiencing violence from patients and members of the public (Bentley, Catley, Forsyth, & Tappin, 2014). While traditional approaches such as trespass notices, restraining orders, and other physical safety systems may have some utility in preventing in-person abuse, the increased ease and accessibility afforded by ICTDs transcends these spatio-temporal boundaries, enabling the harassment and bullying of nurses (and other healthcare workers), in complex ways.

Research by D'Cruz and Noronha (2014) has shed some light on customer cyberbullying among call centre workers in India. While interactions with customers within this setting tended to be one-offs, it was argued that the cumulative effect of being subjected to ongoing abuse could be conceptualised as repetition (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014). Although such a view is not inconsistent with the definition developed in study two (section 5.7), it should be noted that the findings in this study suggested that for all three cases of external workplace cyberbullying, the behaviour was repeated more than once; in one case spanning over a period of five years. Moreover, unlike with call centre employees, the perpetrators in this study were much more knowledgeable about the target's personal details and had substantially more contact with them. While not detracting from the severity or significance of the cyberbullying experiences of call-centre workers, it has been argued that abuse from a member of the public is experienced differently in one-off transactions than when there is an ongoing relationship (Hansen et al., 2006). With the latter, there is potential for perpetrators to inflict a wider scope of harm on targets' careers, reputation, and potentially safety – as evident with participant P002.

This form of external workplace cyberbullying has two important implications. Firstly, it highlights the vulnerability of the nursing profession – but also other customer- or client-facing jobs – in terms of not only being exposed to a heightened risk of traditional bullying, but also to experiencing repeated workplace cyberbullying from the same individual. This is the first study, to my knowledge, that has suggested such a risk for nurses. However, unlike with traditional bullying or patient aggression, the cyberbullying may continue beyond the work hours or premises. Since this is a fairly new capability of workplace cyberbullying, understandably many organisations remain unfamiliar with how to best manage and intervene. Unfortunately, ad hoc approaches such as attempting to placate the perpetrator financially or referring the target to external counsel are generally unsuccessful. Indeed, ineffective management strategies can contribute to the secondary victimisation of targets (Citron, 2009; Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). Thus, the vulnerability of nurses to external workplace cyberbullying, combined with the organisation's lack of preparedness on how to deal with such cases, can have a detrimental impact on targets and the organisation, while providing no disincentive for the perpetrators to stop.

Beyond this increased risk, the findings also shed light on the complexities of healthcare roles – particularly in settings such as mental health services – wherein nurses have to be judicious about making behavioural accommodations and providing care for patients, all while zero-tolerance policies operate in the background. Further, one participant (P008) recounts how a client's mother continues – to this day – to ring her on her private work number under the pretence of seeking help for her unwell son, and this always results in the target receiving a tirade of abuse. Yet, she notes:

> "So now and again, when things are not right, she'll [perpetrator] *ring me, sort of*
>
> *putting on a nice front, saying that she needs help. I say, 'of course, you know, what's*
>
> *happening?' because I knew her, and I knew her son. It's my... I mean, I like helping*
>
> *people, that's how I am, you know. So I'd say 'how can I help?' and usually starts off*

very nice and then two minutes later it's back again, you know, 'this, that, rah rah rah'

yeah... 'don't want your help anyway' turn around and yeah... it's not very nice."

This also highlights an interesting conundrum, since it may be difficult for the participant to ignore the client's family member when they could potentially be calling to seek help for the patient, and ignoring these calls could have a detrimental effect on the patient – who had done nothing wrong.

6.4.4.2 Theme 4b. Uncertainty about the future

Cases of external cyberbullying also appeared to instil a sense of uncertainty about future incidents, in targets. Primarily, targets tended to believe that these incidents could continue in the future, as well as lacking a clear resolution to their experience. For instance, one participant (P007) expressed that "*you sort of wonder what might come next*", while another (P008) echoed that she "*wouldn't be surprised*" if the behaviour continued. Thus, this uncertainty about the future can add to targets' anxiety and act as a stressor, beyond the cyberbullying behaviours itself. Similar concerns about future incidents have been highlighted among adult targets of cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Ford, 2013; Rivituso, 2014).

Compounding this, was the fact in cases of external workplace cyberbullying, the organisations involved were either unsure of how to proceed, or despite their efforts, did not appear to handle the situation effectively. One participant recounted how this was an "*unknown thing*" (P002) for the organisation to deal with, and so they did not really offer any solution beyond seeking legal advice or contacting the Police. Neither of these avenues turned out to be particularly effective at halting the behaviours or providing any means of redressal or accountability. Indeed, the participant described her best case outcome:

"*I guess if I knew in some way, that she* [alleged perpetrator] *was able to be held responsible, I guess that would be the best outcome, in that therefore, you know, I could expect it not to keep happening*."

For another case, although target perceived their immediate manager to be rather supportive, again, no direct organisational intervention was applied beyond escalating the concern up the chain of command (with no feedback to the target). In this case, the target suggests that the case has been "*shuffled a bit to the back*" (P007) and perceived that management might have taken more action or responded quicker if the incident had been more serious. Interestingly, the school involved appeared to provide a bit more support in terms of offering the target resources on 'social media attacks' and suggesting that the target report the incidents to NetSafe. Similarly, although the third target of workplace cyberbullying found the team debriefing and reassuring helpful, no clear organisational intervention was put in effect beyond offering support and debriefing (P008).

Arguably, workplace cyberbullying is a relatively recent and emerging phenomenon, and continued cyberbullying from external sources is an even more novel issue organisations have to contend with. Nonetheless, beyond the direct impact of the cyberbullying on the targets, the added uncertainty about the future might further amplify the harm experienced. In these cases, organisational intervention – beyond providing support – is crucial. This highlights the importance of further research in this area.

6.5 General Discussion

This study aimed to explore nurses' experience of workplace cyberbullying, along with how they understand and respond to it. In general, workplace cyberbullying occurred from internal sources within the organisation (both horizontal and vertical), however there was evidence of cyberbullying from sources external to the workplace. Four key themes were identified across eight cases of workplace cyberbullying. These reflected the impact on targets; their understanding or sensemaking processes; the fact that cyberbullying is usually embedded within a broader pattern of behaviour; as well as the unique challenges with external cyberbullying in the nursing profession. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed below.

The first theme identified that three-quarters of the sample experienced a combination of both cyberbullying and traditional bullying behaviours. Interestingly, with five of these participants, the bullying was perpetrated from sources within the organisation (both horizontal and vertical). This finding provides further support for the notion that workplace bullying and cyberbullying may be experienced concurrently (Coyne et al., 2016; Gardner et al., 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b), while also highlighting the increased risk of harm for individuals who experience multiple victimisation (Raskauskas, 2010). For instance, research on children have emphasised the importance of examining polyvictimisation (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007; Mishna, 2012), since the effects may be cumulative rather than additive. Relatedly, this overlap also presents a real challenge for researchers and organisations. For instance, as Raskauskas (2010) questions: does most of the bullying need to occur via ICTDs to be labelled as cyberbullying? What happens when traditional bullying morphs into cyberbullying, or harassment? Furthermore, Stoll and Block Jr (2015) highlight the fact that gender, race, and sexuality can interact in dynamic ways for cyberbullying; hence the risk and experience of cyber victimisation may be largely dependent on intersectionality across different demographic groups (Mishna, 2012). Such issues also pose legal conundrums, because – as mentioned earlier – in New Zealand while harassment is covered by the Human Rights Act (1993) and Employment Relations Act (2000), and the HDC Act (2015) governs cyberbullying, traditional workplace bullying remains largely covered under the blanket requirement for employers to minimise hazards at work (Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015). These findings therefore open up further lines of inquiry for future research.

The second theme outlined the impact of participants' bullying experiences in totality and provides further support for the notion that cyberbullying behaviours lie on a continuum of harm, with publicity (Pieschl et al., 2015; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015) and anonymity (Ford, 2013) being most distressing for targets, as well as when the bullying impacted on participants' daily lives (Staude-Müller et al., 2012). This theme also highlighted the potentially broader

scope of harm as a result of workplace cyberbullying from external sources. Here, such incidents had the potential to impact organisational reputation and interfere with the delivery of services in a much broader way than traditional bullying. Since these cases were never successfully resolved through organisational intervention, this finding also underscores the fact that cyberbullying may be more problematic "across organisational boundaries" than within (Gardner et al., 2016, p. 9).

The third theme identified a number of aspects involved in targets' understanding and responding; some of these processes similar to Weick et al.'s (2005) sensemaking framework. However, two unique findings emerged in this theme. First, it highlighted the fact that nurses may engage – either voluntarily or through formal education – with the research on workplace bullying, which can inform the understanding and labelling of their experience. This information-gathering process is something not previously identified by studies on nursing, and highlights the important role of creating awareness and education around workplace bullying and cyberbullying, particularly, so that targets can self-label and consequently gain access to help and much-needed resources. Second, although prior research has underscored the utility of digital evidence in reporting cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), only one case in this study was able to successfully use such evidence in successfully resolving one of his cyberbullying experiences. In fact, the utility of digital evidence was realised more during the sensemaking and validation of targets' experiences. For external workplace cyberbullying, even when participants had captured digital proof and reported these incidents, these issues were still unable to be halted or resolved. Such failures to intervene not only result in secondary victimisation (Halder & Karuppannan, 2009), but also emphasise the inadequacy of current management strategies. Therefore, it is recommended that policy – at the organisational and national level – needs to be supplemented with effective training and education for intervention agencies (Citron, 2009).

Finally, previous research on workplace bullying within nursing focuses solely on vertical and horizontal bullying within the organisation, with abuse from external sources being categorised as workplace violence or patient aggression (Jackson et al., 2002). However, the present research highlights the fact that (repeated) cyberbullying can occur from external sources, and more importantly, nurses who experience such behaviour are likely to label it as 'cyberbullying'. Here, cyberbullying can provide constant access to targets, beyond the confines of workplace violence and harassment policies. This novel finding provides further support for the notion that cyberbullying is a unique form of workplace bullying; while also illustrating the importance of allowing targets to subjectively label their experiences. A failure to do so could not only preclude such targets from receiving help or access to support, but potentially have implications for targets' sensemaking, identity, appraisal, and coping techniques. It also highlights the precarious position of nurses, given that no effective means of redressal or intervention currently exists for certain types of external workplace cyberbullying within the broader professional ethical values of patient care (Matt, 2012). Thus, the bullying can remain unresolved, with targets experiencing a constant sense of uncertainty about future incidents.

In distinguishing workplace cyberbullying as a unique phenomenon, intervention strategies need to be tailored accordingly. Indeed, Stoll and Block Jr (2015) note that approaches to traditional bullying interventions hinge on conventional power imbalances as well as the fact that the perpetrator and target are often known to each other, and the bullying is confined to the work hours or location. On the contrary, this is not the case with workplace cyberbullying – and particularly external workplace cyberbullying, as evidenced in this study. Further, it has been argued that these interventions need to take into account differences in demographics and their interactive effects (Cooper et al., 2004; Stoll & Block Jr, 2015); organisational status and gender, being particularly pertinent to the nursing context. Thus, while the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) is extremely valuable in conceptualising the various structures and processes in the work system that facilitate and reward the use of bullying behaviours, it is posited that a multi-pronged approach to the prevention and intervention of workplace

cyberbullying is required; one that takes into account wider factors such as the industry context, links to community, and national-level policy.

In line with this, the socio-ecological model – based off work by Bronfenbrenner (1977) – is proposed as a general framework for guiding future efforts in this area, wherein: "the changing relation between person and environment is conceived in systems terms" (p.513) involving nested micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-system levels. While this model has previously been utilised in traditional workplace bullying (De Wet, 2010; Johnson, 2011) and cyberbullying among adolescents (Cross et al., 2015; Machackova & Görzig, 2015), its application to workplace cyberbullying is novel. Developing a model of intervention itself remains beyond the scope of this research, however, factors enabling and facilitating workplace cyberbullying – identified across themes in this study, at various levels of this system – are presented in Figure 4 below. Although this list of factors is not comprehensive, such a model can provide a useful scaffold in building and developing our understanding of workplace cyberbullying.
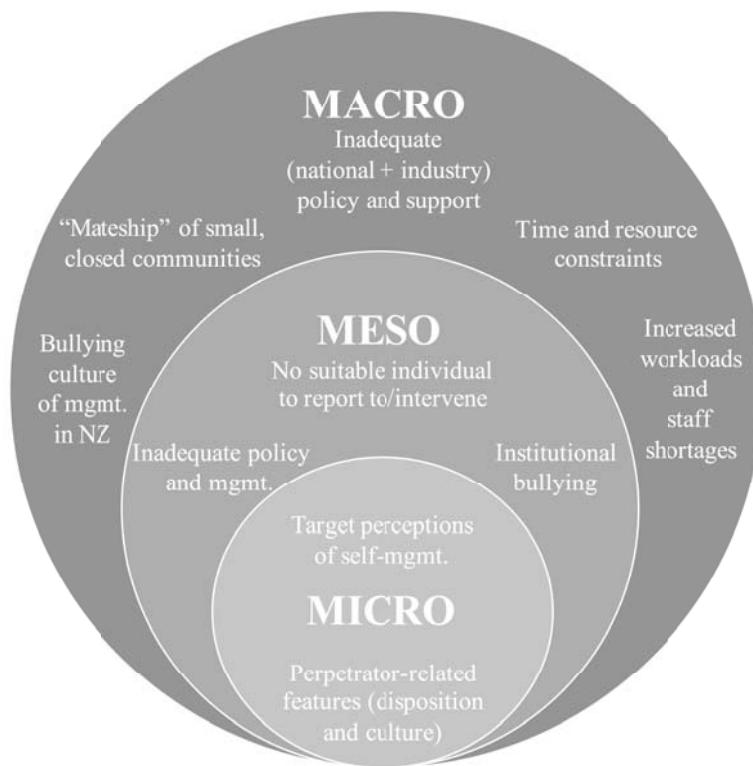
Figure 4. An ecological systems model of workplace cyberbullying in nursing, based on

Bronfenbrenner (1977)

6.6 Conclusion

This study was the first to explore experiences of workplace cyberbullying within the nursing

profession, in accordance with research objective three. Aside from identifying a wide range of

behaviours – that might be excluded from traditional definitions – most participants'

cyberbullying experiences were embedded within a broader pattern of bullying behaviour.

Accordingly, this presents challenges around conceptualisation – questioning the feasibility of a

universal definition of cyberbullying – as well as the complexities involved in delineating the

two forms of bullying. Furthermore, targets often identified an array of factors that hindered

reporting and successful intervention; some of these beyond the scope of current organisational

policy and practice. This highlights the utility of a socio ecological systems model of workplace

cyberbullying to guide future research, particularly around intervention.

CHAPTER 7: OVERALL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter synthesises the findings from across all three studies by examining different perspectives (Tibben, 2015) on workplace cyberbullying to render a more holistic depiction of the phenomenon (Sim & Sharp, 1998) as it is understood and experienced in New Zealand. Not only is this the first in-depth investigation of workplace cyberbullying within New Zealand, but it also represents the first foray within the nursing profession, in general. The central focus of this thesis was to explore the broad research question of how workplace cyberbullying is understood and experienced in New Zealand. Three studies were carried out corresponding to each of my research objectives:

RO1: Explore expert understandings around the conceptualisation, measurement, and management of workplace cyberbullying (Study 1)

RO2: Explore nurses' understandings of workplace cyberbullying, in order to identify salient features in their definitions (Study 2)

RO3: Explore targets' understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying, within the nursing profession (Study 3)

These are also outlined in Figure 5 below.
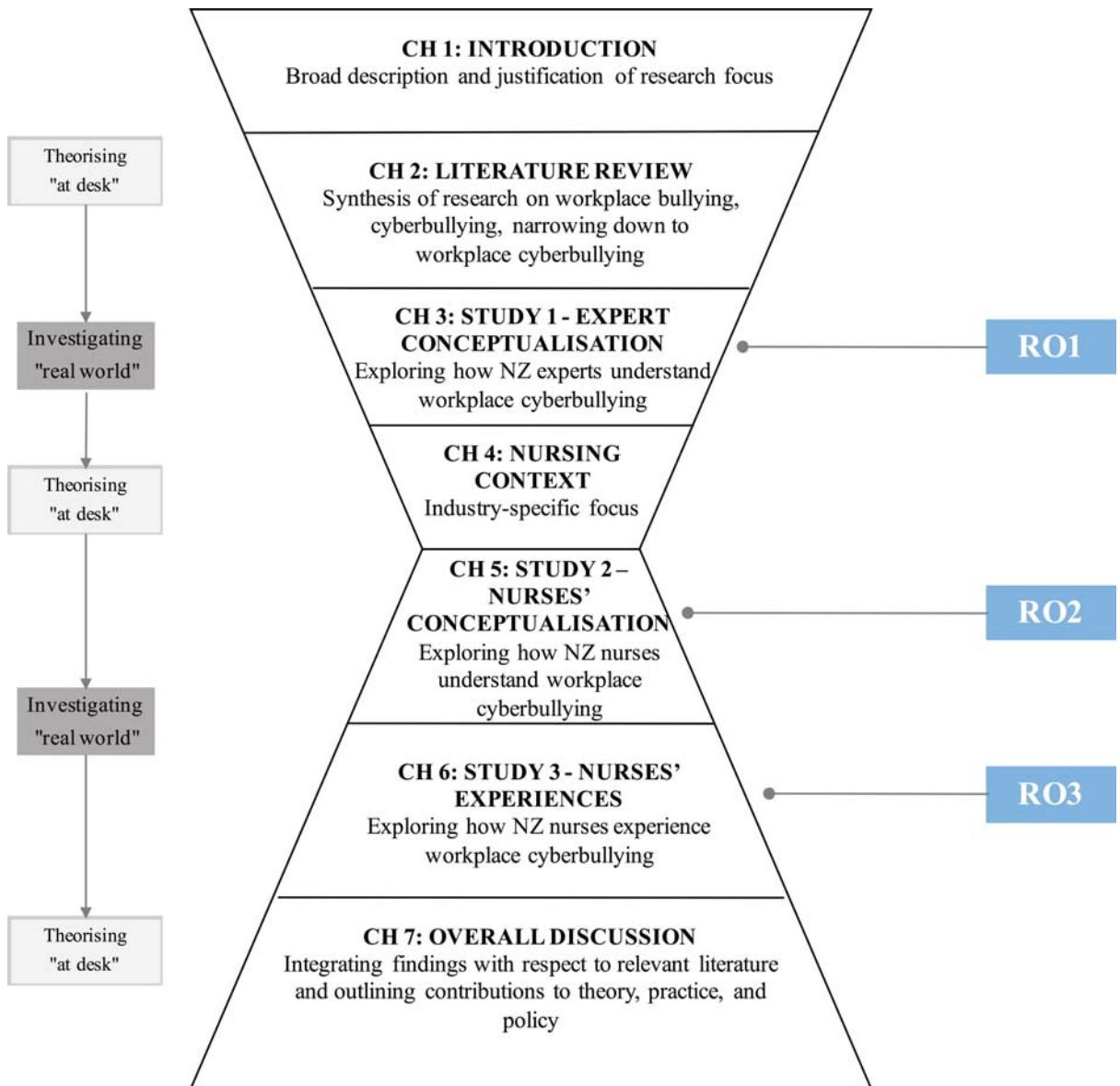
Figure 5. Thesis Progress, with research objectives indicated

This chapter begins with a brief overview of findings from across all three studies (section 7.1). Next, five broad motifs that link these findings are outlined in detail in section 7.2. I then discuss the theoretical contributions of my research, as well as implications for practice and policy (section 7.3). The limitations of my research and areas for future inquiry are then posited (section 7.4), before the conclusion (section 7.5).

7.1 Summary of Findings

Study one investigated subject matter experts' insights around workplace cyberbullying, its measurement, and management. Experts generally agreed that this phenomenon was somewhat different to traditional bullying, and the idea that workplace cyberbullying may be particularly context-bound, and manifest differently across industries, professions, and work groups was uncovered. This view supported the narrower focus adopted in study two, where conceptualisation was explored among nurses in practice and training. Once again, themes revolved around the distinctness from traditional bullying and the role of context, and participants noted the importance of features within the broader work environment in facilitating workplace cyberbullying. In addition to these themes, a purpose-specific definition was developed for future research within this setting. Finally, study three utilised this definition in the recruitment of nurses who believed they had experienced workplace cyberbullying. Themes were extracted around targets' sensemaking, the impact of these behaviours, as well as the broader pattern of bullying behaviour evident in most cases. An additional theme outlined the challenges associated with workplace cyberbullying perpetrated by sources external to the organisation, highlighting a vulnerability for the profession, as well as increasing uncertainty about the future for targets.

7.2 Discussion of Findings Across Studies

In reviewing the findings across studies, five recurrent motifs or 'themes' were identified. The first two – *understanding cyberbullying* and *experiencing cyberbullying* – relate directly to the overarching research question, while the other three themes of *digital footprint and reporting, the nursing context,* and *policy,* have a more practical focus. The findings are summarised in Table 6 below. As evident in this table, differing features became relevant, based on the perspective prioritised in each study

Table 6. Common Themes Across Studies

Themes	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Cyberbullying (CB) as a construct: understandings and experiences	Distinct from traditional bullying (TB); objectivity favoured in measurement and management	Distinct and potentially more harmful than TB; target perceptions favoured in definition	Co-occurs with TB, but some features (anonymity, publicity) more harmful; wide range of behaviours experienced as CB
Digital footprint	Benefit of digital evidence in reporting (targets) and management (organisation)	Importance of reporting noted; digital evidence seen as beneficial but also potentially harmful	Digital evidence used in reporting by only one target; barriers to reporting and intervention still present
Policy	Importance of having a policy and clear expectations of behaviour	Importance of adhering to policy and procedures in place	CB (especially external) often exceeded existing policy remits at organisational, industry, and national level
Nursing context	One participant mentioned utility of guidelines and policy in management; as well as importance of maintain professional image	Concerns around maintaining a professional image; social media policy raised frequently; shared expectations of appropriate behaviour	Concerns around professional reputation; social media policy not mentioned (irrelevant to CB); shared expectations of appropriate behaviour

7.2.1 Understanding cyberbullying

In exploring understandings of workplace cyberbullying, it became apparent that academics, practitioners, as well as (non-target and target) nurses in New Zealand shared a perception of cyberbullying being a distinct phenomenon from traditional bullying. This was particularly evident in study one and two where certain features – anonymity, the permanence and rapid dissemination of digital content, as well as the expanded reach – were identified as being specific to cyberbullying. Additionally, these features were also noted – across both study one and study two – to potentially augment harm for targets of cyberbullying, more so than for other forms of bullying.

Not only does this finding provide the basis of my argument that cyberbullying is a distinct form of bullying, but it also maps directly onto ideas raised within the cyberbullying literature review, providing further empirical support for scholars who have frequently argued the same (Casas et al., 2013; Dooley et al., 2009; Pieschl et al., 2013). Consequently, this raises concerns about the rationale and utility of applying definitional criteria of traditional bullying in the research of cyberbullying (for instance, see Farley et al., 2016). In fact, this finding calls for a revision of definitions and measurement instruments currently being used to investigate the phenomenon. Accordingly, the new definition developed in study two and utilised in study three may prove more fruitful in future investigations, although this may be highly context-bound.

This is not to say that both forms of bullying are unrelated. In fact, similar to understandings of traditional workplace bullying, cyberbullying was often conceptualised as a system-wide issue; evident in experts' (study one) recommendations for managing workplace cyberbullying by attending to features within the work environment – and particularly organisational culture – that support such behaviour. Likewise, nurses (in study two) frequently mentioned the role of various factors within the work environment that gave rise to or facilitated the occurrence of negative behaviours; such as ineffective leadership and work design. To some extent, these same features were also noted as barriers to reporting and intervention, by targets' in study

three. Indeed, there has been a substantial body of research supporting Leymann's (1996) work environment hypothesis (Bentley et al., 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Einarsen et al., 1994; Skogstad et al., 2011), and Salin (2003a) has further categorised their functions as enabling, motivating, and precipitating factors.

Further parallels to traditional bullying are highlighted in the subjectivity inherent in perceptions of cyberbullying, noted by experts in study one with reference to the difficulty in measuring and managing both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Similarly, participants in study two also frequently prioritised target perceptions of harm or impact, over features such as intent and repetition. Interestingly, whereas repetition is a central characteristic of traditional workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994), this feature is frequently ignored or deemphasised within lay understandings (Kota et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010) and academic definitions (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Kelly, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b) of cyberbullying, due to the aforementioned cyber-specific criteria. All in all, this finding provides further support for the use of a purpose-specific definition of workplace cyberbullying, as was used in study three.

Moreover, the subjectivity of experiencing cyberbullying is further evident in targets' sensemaking processes in study three. First, targets that had experienced a range of ill-treatment behaviours had perceived and labelled their experience as cyberbullying. In the absence of a clear understanding of the phenomenon – as well its distinction from other forms of cyber abuse – this may be a more accessible label for targets, in terms of making sense of their experience and taking steps to alleviate their bullying. Alternatively, not all targets who experienced workplace cyberbullying were equally distressed, further underscoring the subjectivity around perceptions of harm from bullying. However, the severity of the incident (Pieschl et al., 2015; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015), along with the target's social standing and perceptions of power (Salin, 2003b) may also largely influence distress, appraisals, and coping. In contrasting this with academic and practitioner recommendations for the measurement of cyberbullying (study one), it becomes evident that some of these targets' experiences might not be classified as

'cyberbullying'. Yet, as the research suggests (Vie et al., 2011) targets may experience ill effects regardless of whether they self-label. This highlights the utility of using a more flexible and broad encompassing definition (as developed in study two, section 5.7), so that targets who are distressed or sustain harm have access to help and support, regardless.

Relatedly, a frequent concern within the literature is around the fact that academic and lay understandings of cyberbullying may differ (Corcoran et al., 2015; Walker, 2014); and in fact this formed the rationale for undertaking study two. However, within this research at least – academic and *non-target* participants' understandings seemed to be broadly similar; in that both groups considered cyberbullying as a distinct phenomenon. A key point of difference, however, was the prioritisation of subjective target perceptions by non-target nurses (study two), whereas there was still some objectivity favoured in the behavioural scales and bulleted-checklist options presented by experts in study one. Once again, this might reflect different priorities (Rayner & Cooper, 2006) and perhaps even interests (Lewis, 2006). In fact, (Nielsen et al., 2010) have noted that academic definitions of workplace bullying tend to adhere to more stringent criteria. Nonetheless, two implications follow. First, future qualitative research investigating workplace cyberbullying across different occupational groups needs to consider how that specific group conceptualises and understands the term. As noted in the literature review, this may vary across regions (Nocentini et al., 2010) and age groups (Faucher et al., 2014). Second, it highlights the fact that a universal definition of cyberbullying (Betts, 2016) may not just be elusive – but perhaps unnecessary or impossible, particularly as new categories and varieties of cyber abuse behaviours continue to emerge (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Indeed, from a subtle realist perspective there can be several non-competing yet valid descriptions of the same phenomenon (Hammersley, 1992), and attempting to create a unified definition could potentially exclude certain targets from gaining access to resources.

7.2.2 Experiencing cyberbullying

Although target experiences of workplace cyberbullying were only explored in study three, it is worth comparing and contrasting these experiences with perceptions from studies one and two. The first point of similarity, involves the impacts of workplace cyberbullying. As noted in the previous section, cyberbullying was not only distinguished from traditional bullying, but participants also outlined its potential for amplified harm. This is broadly consistent with findings from study three where a more prolonged impact of harm was experienced by some targets, but the cyberbullying also had the potential to negatively affect the service provider, as well as family members in two cases. Relatedly, with the three cases of external cyberbullying, targets were also left with a persistent sense of uncertainty about future incidents. In this way, targets may be troubled by a lingering threat, which in itself can be a major stressor (Ford, 2013). Combined, these findings provide support for the fact that the scope of harm is increased with workplace cyberbullying.

Additionally, most targets (study three) experienced both cyber and traditional forms of bullying, with many nurses identifying other targets within the organisation. This finding provides further empirical support for the overlap between the two forms of bullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Gardner et al., 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b), while also being the first to highlight workplace cyberbullying as a system wide issue; a notion that was alluded to in studies one and two. Taken together, these findings have important implications. First, this confirms that – at least within nursing in New Zealand – the exclusion of 'repetition' and 'intent to harm' may not be as problematic, given that the two forms of bullying often co-occur. Here, repetition and intentionality may be implicit in the pattern of behaviour, as well as the existence of other targets; further highlighting the relevance and utility of the definition used in study three. Second, and relatedly, this also raises some challenges with regard to measurement. Although a number of academics in study one advocated for the measurement of both forms of bullying to indicate any overlap, further difficulties may be posed around the labelling of experiences. For instance, what proportion of behaviours need to occur via each format in order

to classify being a victim of *both* traditional and cyberbullying? Indeed, general incivility-type (in-person) behaviours on their own might have been previously discounted or ignored, whereas in light of cyberbullying they may become more pertinent and provide the context for determining bullying. Alternatively, is temporal overlap important? Therefore, as noted by nurses in study two, the role of context may be quite instrumental in determining whether or not bullying has occurred.

7.2.3 Digital evidence and reporting

It is also prudent to compare recommended (study two) and actual (study three) responses to experiencing workplace cyberbullying. In study two, a key finding was the importance of low-level intervention, wherever possible. However, participants in this study also acknowledged the practicalities and challenges with directly confronting the perpetrator, and thus the importance of reporting was emphasised, particularly with reference to utilising digital evidence or proof of the cyberbullying where possible. In fact, the utility of digital evidence was frequently advocated in studies one and two, for both targets and management. Yet, despite the fact that many targets in study three had some form of digital evidence, only one was able to successfully utilise this in resolving their cyberbullying. This runs counter to the recommendations of subject matter experts, non-target nurses, as well as conventional wisdom findings in the literature (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Francisco et al., 2015).

However, there are several considerations worth noting here. First, a preoccupation with gathering evidence and reporting, may unintentionally trivialise the harm experienced by targets by fostering perceptions that cyberbullying is relatively easy to deal with. Underpinning this, is the belief that targets of cyberbullying have an increased responsibility to be more actively involved in resolving their own bullying (Wolak et al., 2006). As a consequence, the target's ability to defend themselves becomes overestimated, while simultaneously minimising the effect of very real power differentials. In fact, recall that in study two, a few participants categorised Mark (the target in scenario D) as not experiencing cyberbullying because he had

the ability to defend himself, according to the definition provided. Indeed, there appears to be a misperception that evidence will facilitate increased reporting. However, this view also tends to ignore the myriad barriers to reporting present in organisations such as healthcare, including: fear of retribution (Cleary et al., 2010; Griffith & Tengnah, 2012), concerns with being ostracised and labelled a 'whistle-blower' (Wright & Khatri, 2015), an inability to recognise or label bullying immediately (Lewis, 2006), as well as cynicism about intervention success (Cleary et al., 2010). Although digital evidence certainly can allow targets to regain some power and assist with reporting, it does not circumvent the very power differentials, organisational structures and processes that likely enabled cyberbullying in the first place. Furthermore, as noted by a few academics in study one, evidence of the behaviours does not necessarily translate to evidence of the harm experienced by targets, once again signalling the importance of context.

7.2.4 Policy

Related to this, the importance of organisations having a policy (study one) and for targets to adhere to the policy and procedures in place when reporting (study two) were frequently stressed. Yet, workplace cyberbullying often falls outside the remit of current organisational policies. In fact, several targets in study three noted that this was a fairly new phenomenon for the organisation, and that the organisation was unsure of how to handle it, particularly in the case of external cyberbullying. In these cases, the workplace cyberbullying remained unresolved. Moreover, at a national level, despite the introduction of the HDC Act (2015); two targets who experienced anonymous cyberbullying (study one and study three) noted that although they had reported the behaviours to the organisation, who had consulted with legal experts and the police, the fact that the behaviours were perpetrated anonymously and/or traceable to an IP address outside the jurisdiction of the police meant that effectively little action could be taken beyond requesting the platform hosts to take down the content. The inability for effective intervention from law enforcement is not uncommon (Citron, 2009; Halder & Jaishankar, 2011), particularly as policy developers often do not take into account the intricacies

– particularly with regard to gender (Escartín et al., 2011) – of cyberbullying and harassment (Halder & Karuppannan, 2009) or the hierarchies of power operating online (Shariff & Gouin, 2005). This raises questions about the utility of such a policy in the absence of training and education of intervention agencies. Deeming these "knee-jerk reactions", Lumsden and Morgan (2012) contend that policy and regulation "must be informed by academic insights into the social, political, cultural (and particularly classed, gendered and racialized) nature(s) of electronically-mediated social interactions" (p.14). While not discounting the utility of digital evidence across the board – certainly it is remains an advantage of cyberbullying – deficiencies in the organisation and broader system can unfortunately lead to secondary victimisation for the target (Citron, 2009).

7.2.5 The nursing context

Since the focus of my research was predominantly on nursing, certain motifs related to the professional context became apparent across studies two and three. For one, a concern around professional image was frequently raised by participants across both studies. Specifically, several participants in study two alluded to targets of workplace cyberbullying potentially experiencing harm to their professional reputation, with the possibility of hampering future career prospects. While this concern is not solely relevant to nursing, similar themes were also raised by targets in study three who were concerned about their professional (and personal) reputation being affected, and that such incidents could jeopardise the reputation of other nurses in the same role, as well as the organisation involved. Public perceptions of nurses may also support this notion further, and could be misused as in the case of a nurse (in study three) who had false complaints laid against her to the Nursing Council; a body that strives to maintain professional standards. The anecdotal lawn incident noted in chapter five further echoes this sentiment. Moreover, one of the experts in study one was heavily involved in the nursing profession and commented that since the legislation around nurses' social media use was very much embedded within the registration process, to some extent it was easier for her – from a management perspective of disciplining or dismissal – since she had legislation on her side:

> *"that's the benefit of having the social media guidelines or the code of conduct, because they're quite clear that these apply twenty-four hours a day, if you're registered with the Nursing Council. Because it's about the reputation of the profession. So even if you are off-duty, and you're not at work, but you're drunk and someone posts the photograph online, it's still a problem for you as a registered nurse"* (P015).

Once again, this reflects the "employee as brand" mindset (Berkelaar, 2014) typical of the nursing profession – as well as public sector organisations – and might explain the turnover culture that views nurses as replaceable (North et al., 2013).

Intriguingly, while this social media policy was raised by one of the experts in study one and several participants in study two, this policy was not mentioned by any targets in study three. In fact, for the most part, social media was used to cyberbully nurses from sources external to the organisation – although this unique vulnerability is not covered by the guidelines, or even referred to as bullying within the nursing literature. In the absence of policy or guidelines around the management of workplace cyberbullying; such cases often remain unresolved. Thus, it is likely that the social media guidelines are useful in preventing cases of workplace cyberbullying within the organisation, more so than from outside sources. It is also possible that those who experienced cyberbullying via social media were less likely to label it as such, or may have already left their workplace or the profession because of the strict guidelines in place.

Perhaps because of the social media policy, nurses across both studies tended to have a common understanding or shared expectations of what inappropriate versus appropriate behaviours looked like. For instance, a large majority of participants in study two noted that the behaviours in the performance management scenario were "inappropriate" – not because of their content, but because the wrong channel was being used to communicate these issues. Likewise, a few targets in study three deemed their experiences of receiving performance-related communications via text or email as inappropriate. Thus, it is possible that within nursing, proper use of channels and communication patterns are just as important as the content of

messages itself, in determining appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour. Indeed, Farley et al. (2015) emphasise the increased likelihood of misunderstandings occurring via ICTDs, and observe that the National Health Services in the UK have implemented policies that "encourage staff to think about whether electronic communication is appropriate for the matter they want to discuss… [and] to evaluate whether the tone of a correspondence could be misinterpreted by the recipient" (p.441). Based on the current findings from study three, the addition of such principles to existing policies in New Zealand could prove fruitful.

7.3 Contributions

In contextualising the study findings with the cyberbullying literature, this thesis provides three original contributions to theory, while also extending current knowledge in a number of ways. These are summarised in Table 7 below. Additionally, implications for practice and policy recommendations are also posited, based on the findings.

Table 7. Theoretical Contributions of my Research

	Theoretical contributions
Original contributions	First research studies to examine workplace cyberbullying within the nursing profession, significant since this group experiences high rates of traditional bullying. Findings reveal the very real risk and harm experienced as a result of workplace cyberbullying, particularly from sources external to the organisation
	First in-depth exploration of workplace cyberbullying within New Zealand, in parallel with *Gardner et al. (2016)*
	Uniquely examines cyberbullying from multiple viewpoints, in line with a subtle realist paradigm, emphasising salient features from each perspective
Extending previous research	Providing further evidence that workplace cyberbullying is conceptualised as a distinct phenomenon from traditional bullying (from different perspectives, including academics)
	Demonstrates that nurses may experience workplace cyberbullying from external sources (similar to *D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013*); but extends previous findings suggesting that the bullying can be repeated by the same perpetrator and create a power differential against target – highlights a new vulnerability for profession
	Work environment hypothesis (*Leymann, 1996*) alone insufficient to capture the barriers to reporting and intervention of (external) workplace cyberbullying in nursing
	Posits a more comprehensive framework based on *Bronfenbrenner's (1977)* socio-ecological model, for future research within this area. This model has not been utilised before in the workplace cyberbullying field.
	Provides further support for notion that cyberbullying has the potential to amplify distress and increase the scope of harm for targets
	Supports the finding that the two forms of bullying often co-occur within nursing
	Extends understandings about the barriers to reporting of workplace cyberbullying, as well as helpful resources, within nursing

7.3.1 Theoretical contributions

The limited research on workplace cyberbullying thus far has focused on the education sector (Blizard, 2015; Minor et al., 2013); the medical profession (Farley et al., 2015); as well as manufacturing (Privitera & Campbell, 2009b) and service sector employees (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013, 2014). Yet, despite nursing's consistently high risks of experiencing traditional bullying (Bentley et al., 2009; Spector et al., 2014), research endeavours exploring workplace cyberbullying within this profession remain notably absent. Thus, the principal original contribution of my thesis lies within the fact that this was the first empirical investigation (Phillips & Pugh, 2005) – to my knowledge – of workplace cyberbullying within nursing. Furthermore, in parallel with work by Gardner et al. (2016), my research represented one of the first explorations of workplace cyberbullying within the New Zealand context; signifying a second contribution to knowledge (Phillips & Pugh, 2005). In fact, this research is unique as it examined and compared workplace cyberbullying from multiple viewpoints across three studies: academics and practitioners who were experts within the field of workplace bullying and cyberbullying, along with nurses in New Zealand, including non-target and target perspectives.

There have been a number of findings alluding to the fact that cyberbullying is not just different, but has the potential to cause greater harm than other forms of bullying (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Further, research has also identified the fact that academic and lay understandings of the phenomenon often differ (Corcoran et al., 2015; Walker, 2014). Yet, researchers continue to rely on existing frameworks of bullying, with little regard as to how workplace cyberbullying may manifest differently from both traditional workplace bullying, as well as from cyberbullying experienced by children and adolescents. In response, the present research contrasted expert and lay understandings of workplace cyberbullying, and utilised this knowledge in developing a meaningful and relevant definition to guide research future research in this area. Thus, a third metric of originality for my research lies in affording insight into the little-understood phenomenon (Madsen, 1992) of workplace

cyberbullying from multiple perspectives – a possibility uniquely allowed for by a subtle realist perspective – as well in challenging existing assumptions (Madsen, 1992) of similarity between the two forms of bullying by providing evidence to the contrary. In this way, subtle realism has allowed the exploration of multiple understandings of workplace cyberbullying – emphasising various salient features for each group (nurses, academics, practitioners) – while still allowing me to make post-positivist claims about the unique nature of workplace cyberbullying. While such a stance does limit the transferability of the findings to other occupations beyond nursing, we can be reasonably confident about the validity of such claims, based on the plausibility and credibility of evidence gathered (Hammersley, 1992).

Beyond this, two more incremental contributions to theory are suggested. First, based on the definition proposed from study two's findings, the third study explored workplace cyberbullying of nurses from sources both internal and external to the organisation. Whereas this latter category would have been previously included under the broader category of workplace violence, certain cyber specific features make repetition of cyberbullying-type behaviours possible beyond spatial and temporal boundaries. Thus, although customer cyberbullying has previously been explored by D'Cruz and Noronha (2014), external (cyber)bullying by clients, patients, and the general public has not been recognised as a form of 'bullying' within nursing prior. Regardless of the veracity of terminologies and categorisations, it appears that targets of this type of behaviour categorise it as 'cyberbullying' nonetheless. Herein lies an incremental contribution to theory, as the inclusion of 'external' cyberbullying – a previously unexplored phenomenon – represents a new vulnerability for the nursing profession; one that is not covered by organisational or industry-level policy. Second, and relatedly, this revealed the limitation of the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) in fully explaining this type of external workplace cyberbullying, at least within nursing. As Whetten (1989, p. 493) notes, theoretical contributions have merit insofar as they challenge "the boundaries of a theory… under qualitatively different conditions". Therefore, another theoretical contribution of my research is posited in highlighting the shortfall of the work

environment hypothesis in explaining cases of external workplace cyberbullying in nursing. Indeed, Ang (2015) argues for a multi-system approach to cyberbullying prevention and intervention; one that considers the broader environmental and societal levels that work is embedded within. Alternatively, a more comprehensive model – the socioecological model Bronfenbrenner (1977) used previously in the traditional workplace bullying field (De Wet, 2010; Johnson, 2011) – has been postulated as a starting point for future research within this area, represented in Figure 6 below.
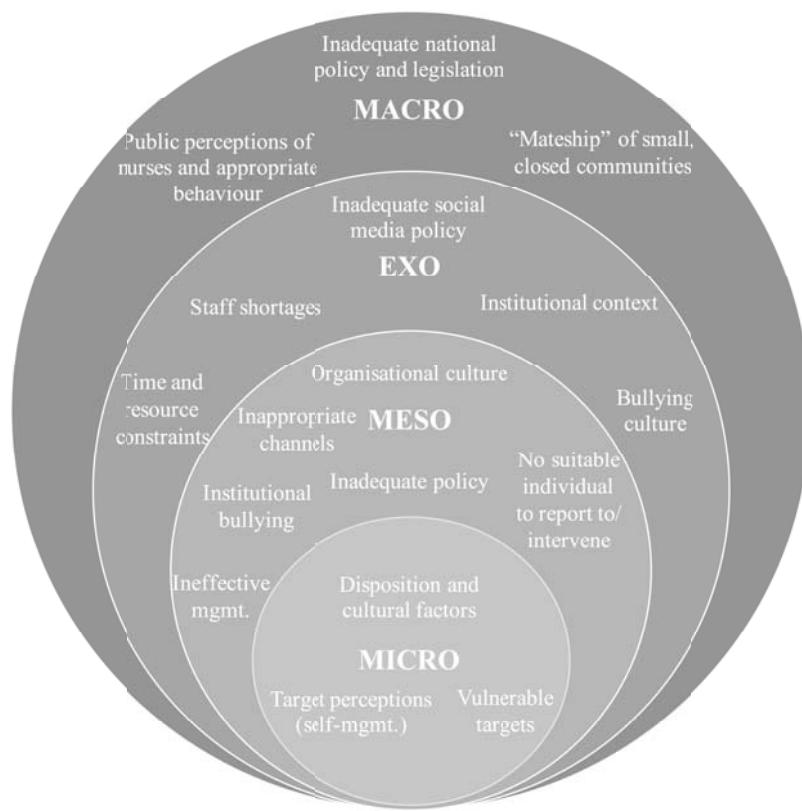
Figure 6. Proposed socio-ecological model of workplace cyberbullying in nursing, adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1977)

The factors in this model are an amalgamation of those identified in study two (Chapter five) and study three (Chapter 6), reflecting perceived and actual factors at the micro (individual), meso (organisational), exo (institutional), and macro (national) level underlying the occurrence of workplace cyberbullying, and potentially other forms of ill-treatment. While certain factors

(public perceptions of nurses or the historical and institutional contexts of nursing, for example) may be profession-specific, it is probable that many other factors apply across various occupations and industries. Thus, future research – within and outside the nursing profession – could build upon this model to further inform our understanding of the factors underlying workplace cyberbullying, with the aim of prevention and intervention.

The present research findings also provide further support for and extend existing knowledge around a number of prior claims about cyberbullying. First, it extends the notion that cyberbullying has the potential to amplify harm for targets (Anderson & Sturm, 2007) by demonstrating that workplace cyberbullying can increase the scope of harm for those involved, at least within nursing. Second, it presents further support for the claim that cyberbullying often co-occurs with traditional bullying within the workplace (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Gardner et al., 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b). Third, it extends current understandings around the barriers to reporting of workplace cyberbullying, as well as helpful resources for targets; some of which have previously not been explored within the literature. In fact, beyond extending theory, since this research is largely problem-driven (Corley & Gioia, 2011), this last finding also has practical implications for the management and intervention of workplace cyberbullying.

7.3.2 Practical implications

In exploring target experiences of workplace cyberbullying, two broad barriers to reporting were identified around the lack of an appropriate individual to report their experience to (or intervene) along with the perception of being able to self-manage their own cyberbullying. Unfortunately, individuals' ability to cope with bullying and cyberbullying becomes hampered over time (Giumetti & Hatfield, 2013; Zapf & Gross, 2001), often made worse by the fact that bullying often escalates and it is relatively easy to engage in retaliation with cyberbullying (Kelly, 2011; Law et al., 2012). Thus, from a practical standpoint, it appears that more education and awareness around workplace cyberbullying is needed (Blizard, 2015; Cain, 2011)

in nursing, along with having organisational initiatives that establish clear guidelines for appropriate behaviour (Al-Zahrani, 2015; McLinton et al., 2014). Ideally, these guidelines and policies would take into consideration the barriers to reporting commonly occurring within this profession.

In conjunction with this, a few targets (of internal workplace cyberbullying) noted that having digital evidence of the behaviours was helpful, along with having social support and engaging with the literature on bullying. However, contrary to the literature and expectations, for most targets who had evidence of the bullying behaviours, the full utility of this feature did not transpire, for a number of reasons. First, evidence does not necessarily capture the harm experienced, nor the subjectivity of target perceptions or wider social context. Thus, an emphasis on using digital evidence objectively can act to remove all subjectivity from the cyberbullying experience, to the target's detriment, and prevent them from being able to access help or resources. Second, while digital evidence can sometimes act to restore the power imbalance in favour of the target, it does not always 'neutralise' pre-existing power differentials. Digital evidence does not obliterate barriers to reporting and effective management either, and deep-rooted norms, values and traditions that act to silence targets may still be operating, particularly within a profession like nursing (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Nicotera & Mahon, 2013). Moreover, such an approach glosses over organisational structures and processes that enable the perpetrator(s) to continue to leverage their power and sometimes even to deny that the bullying was intentional (Rayner & Cooper, 2006). Third, even if targets are brave enough to step forward and report these incidents, often – particularly with external cyberbullying – this falls outside the remit of organisational and industry level policies. This is unsurprising given the relative recency of the workplace cyberbullying phenomenon, as well as the fact that traditionally, 'violence' from external sources (Farley et al., 2015) is dealt with by other policies that do not apply to cyber communication.

Nonetheless, together these findings make an original theoretical contributing by challenging existing assumptions (Madsen, 1992) about the utility and 'ease' of using digital evidence, especially so in the absence of a reporting system or procedure. For Human Resource Managers and other individuals involved in the management of workplace cyberbullying, the importance of incorporating workplace cyberbullying into existing policies around bullying and harassment become evident (West et al., 2014). This should be done in combination with education and communication around the risks of cyberbullying. Finally, in addition to emphasising targets' role and responsibility in collecting evidence against the perpetrator, simultaneous efforts to try and improve the organisational climate and create a reporting culture (Reason, 1998) are encouraged.

7.3.3 Policy recommendations

Following on from the finding that workplace cyberbullying from external sources often falls outside the scope of present organisational-, industry-, and national-level policy, the present research has substantial implications for policy. At the organisational level, as mentioned earlier, workplace cyberbullying – and perhaps other forms of cyber abuse such as cyber sexual harassment – needs to be incorporated not only into policy and reporting procedures, but also within the education and training of employees so that they are aware of the avenues for help. Similarly, policies around violence and patient behaviour should also be taken into consideration, although it is recognised that ethical values within healthcare (Gaffney et al., 2012) can further complicate this issue. At the industry level, it is suggested that the existing social media policy is amended to account for abuse and bullying from external sources, along with guidelines for its reporting and management. Finally, at the national level, it is evident that although the HDC Act (2015) is a useful starting point, there are some deficiencies with regard to how anonymous bullying is (not) dealt with.

Thus, lawmakers are urged to take these deficiencies into consideration in the amendments of such policy. It is insufficient and imprudent to create policy meant to tackle cyberbullying,

when effective measures for help are not concomitantly put in place, as this can lead to secondary victimisation (Citron, 2009) and further act to prevent targets from coming forward. Although NetSafe remains the approved agency for dealing with proceedings related to the HDC Act (2015), this agency has predominantly been geared toward targeting cyberbullying in children and adolescents. Further, education and training of other figureheads and intervention agencies are required (Citron, 2009), along with guidance for employers on how to deal with the issue of workplace cyberbullying. Adopting a broader ecological systems' perspective, the involvement of internet service providers and platform hosts is suggested in making reporting mechanisms easier and clearer (Ang, 2015).

In summary, a number of novel and incremental original contributions (Corley & Gioia, 2011) have been proposed as a result of this research. Beyond their scientific utility in adding to conceptual rigour or enhancing operationalisation (Corley & Gioia, 2011), the findings also have value in informing practice and policy by assisting organisations and practitioners with a problem currently facing the workforce. In fact, as Crosslin and Golman (2014) emphasise; prevention and intervention strategies are more likely to be successful when the social context is understood. Being largely problem driven, this research also serves to create a bridge between knowledge and practice, while further opening up avenues for future research.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

Although a number of theoretical and practical contributions have been posited, it is worth addressing some of the limitations that potentially impacted the quality of my findings, as well as the ability to address my research questions effectively. A chief concern with this research is the relatively small sample sizes – particularly in study three. This was largely beyond the control of the researcher, as outlined in section 6.3.3. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention that this might have potentially constrained the range of responses I could have captured in this study, and potentially affected the transferability of my findings. It is possible that a number of workplace cyberbullying incidents that were successfully resolved did not get

identified. On the other hand, it is also possible that more serious and prolonged incidents of workplace cyberbullying were also not identified. Ideally, future investigations into this area would replicate and extend this research by aiming to recruit larger samples to confirm findings.

Second, the specific focus on nursing – while not necessarily a limitation in itself – means that caution is required in relation to transferability of findings (Fusch & Ness, 2015) beyond this profession. It is possible that workplace cyberbullying is more prevalent in industries and professions that are more reliant on ICTDs (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), but different norms, organisational structures, and processes may influence the understanding and experiences here. Thus, further research investigating varying understandings and experiences of workplace cyberbullying is required across different industry groups and professions in New Zealand, in order to investigate the extent to which this phenomenon manifests differently. This may allow investigation of the utility of digital evidence, for instance, or the degree to which organisational policy – governed by industry norms and standards – aid in the reporting and management of workplace cyberbullying. Furthermore, such investigations would also shed light on whether more tailored approaches to intervention and management are required, as noted by Machackova and Görzig (2015).

Finally, in hindsight I believe that the failure to utilise a feminist framework for my research was a substantial missed opportunity, particularly given the preponderance of female nurses within the inherently male-dominated medical profession. Moreover, bullying itself is a gendered phenomenon (Salin, 2003b); a notion that I came to recognise as my thesis progressed. This emerged as a result of my own interest in feminist literature and media during the later stages of my PhD journey, and while I have included feminist perspectives where appropriate throughout the write up and analysis – particularly in the third study – I feel this does not do it justice, as I would have liked to incorporate this framework more extensively through my literature review and research design as well.

7.5 Conclusion

Workplace cyberbullying represents a very real threat to employee health and safety (Griffiths, 2002; Privitera & Campbell, 2009b), while posing substantial costs for organisations involved. Yet, the field of cyberbullying remains conceptually underdeveloped, with little attention devoted to this phenomenon in the workplace. Of the handful of studies that do investigate workplace cyberbullying, there is a preoccupation with determining prevalence while relying on traditional understandings of 'bullying', despite evidence to the contrary. Thus, in response to this, I developed my research question(s) of "how is workplace cyberbullying understood and experienced in New Zealand?", with a specific focus on the nursing profession – where high rates of traditional bullying prevail (Bentley et al., 2009).

My research indicates that while subject matter experts and nurses understand cyberbullying as a distinct phenomenon to traditional bullying, the two groups have slightly different conceptualisations of workplace cyberbullying. Using a definition that prioritised nursing perspectives, it emerged that workplace cyberbullying was often experienced alongside traditional forms of bullying, and potentially had a wider capacity of harm. More importantly, a new form of *external* cyberbullying – previously categorised under workplace violence – was identified, exceeding the scope of current policy and management practices.

Limitations notwithstanding, my research allowed me to contribute toward the theoretical progression of this field, by not only providing a viable solution to the conceptualisation problem, but also in distinguishing cyberbullying as a unique construct. In addition, practice and policy recommendations are also put forward, particularly around the utilisation of digital evidence. As Corley and Gioia (2011, p. 22) argue:

> "we should embrace the fact that we are a profession (academia) studying another profession (management), so our orientation toward theoretical contribution should include an explicit appreciation for applicability… We should instead be aspiring to address significant problem domains that either require or will soon require theorizing"

As evident, the problem of workplace cyberbullying is already at our doorstep; it is high time that we answer the call.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Study One Participant Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Conceptualisation of a Cyberbullying Measurement Tool

Participant Information Sheet

Study Description and Invitation

My name is Natalia D'Souza and I am a researcher with the Healthy Work Group at Massey University. As part of our large-scale empirical study of the prevalence of cyberbullying in New Zealand workplaces, we are interested in exploring expert and key stakeholder opinions of workplace cyberbullying and its measurement, with the aim of developing a cyberbullying measurement tool. This includes academics, consultant practitioners, Human Resource personnel, as well as potential users of the tool. We hope this measurement tool will contribute toward the assessment and development of healthy and safe work environments across New Zealand. We would therefore greatly appreciate your contribution toward this.

Study Procedure

The study involves a face-to-face or phone interview, and is expected to take approximately 25 minutes. Interviews will be conducted at a location and time convenient for you, and will be recorded with your consent.

Participant Rights

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you will be guaranteed confidentiality. No identifying information will be presented in the final report. You will also have the right to omit or refuse to respond to any question that is asked, and can terminate the interview at any point without explanation. A summary of findings will be made available, upon request.

For Further Information

Should you have any further questions about the study itself, or as a result of participating in this study, you may contact either the researcher or any member of the Healthy Work Group.
Researcher Contact
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Appendix B – Study One Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Conceptualisation of a Cyberbullying Measurement Tool

Consent Form – **Researcher Copy**

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ....   **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Appendix C – Nursing Scopes of Practice

Scopes of practice

Under the HPCA Act, every nurse has a scope of practice. The scopes of practice and qualifications are listed below. The three scopes of practice are:

1. Enrolled Nurse

Enrolled nurses practise under the direction and delegation of a registered nurse or nurse practitioner to deliver nursing care and health education across the life span to health consumers in community, residential or hospital settings. Enrolled nurses are accountable for their nursing actions and practise competently in accordance with legislation, to their level of knowledge and experience. They work in partnership with health consumers, families/whanau and multidisciplinary teams.

2. Registered Nurse

Registered nurses utilise nursing knowledge and complex nursing judgment to assess health needs and provide care, and to advise and support people to manage their health. They practise independently and in collaboration with other health professionals, perform general nursing functions, and delegate to and direct enrolled nurses, health care assistants and others. They provide comprehensive assessments to develop, implement, and evaluate an integrated plan of health care, and provide interventions that require substantial scientific and professional knowledge, skills and clinical decision making. This occurs in a range of settings in partnership with individuals, families, whānau and communities. The Council has amended the registered nurse scope of practice to indicate that some registered nurses can prescribe prescription medicines. It has also added education and training requirements for registered nurses prescribing in primary health and specialty teams as additional prescribed qualifications for registered nurses.

3. Nurse Practitioner

Nurse practitioners have advanced education, clinical training and the demonstrated competence and legal authority to practise beyond the level of a registered nurse. Nurse practitioners work autonomously and in collaborative teams with other health professionals to promote health, prevent disease, and improve access and population health outcomes for a specific patient group or community. Nurse practitioners manage episodes of care as the lead healthcare provider in partnership with health consumers and their families/whānau. Nurse practitioners combine advanced nursing knowledge and skills with diagnostic reasoning and therapeutic knowledge to provide patient-centred healthcare services including the diagnosis and management of health consumers with common and complex health conditions. They provide a wide range of assessment and treatment interventions, ordering and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests, prescribing medicines within their area of competence and admitting and discharging from hospital and other healthcare services/settings. As clinical leaders they work across healthcare settings and influence health service delivery and the wider profession.

This scope of practice, with its definition of what of nurse practitioners can do, was effective from 6 April 2017. In pursuit of flexibility, newly registered nurse practitioners will no longer be restricted to a specific area of practice. As advanced clinicians, they are trusted to practise within their areas of competence and experience.

Information retrieved from the Nursing Council of New Zealand website:
http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Scopes-of-practice/

Appendix D – Study Two List of Scenarios

Scenario A

Mel has recently started a job within the hospitality industry and is finding it difficult to get along with her manager Glen. Mel feels that everything she does displeases him, and she is starting to dread her weekend shifts. Not only does Glen constantly criticise her performance at work, but he has also been sending her mean text messages outside of work hours. These texts often include messages such as "you stuffed up again today" and "nobody at work likes you.. why don't you just quit?" Because of this, Mel feels like she cannot turn to anyone for support or help.

Scenario B

Sean has been working at an inbound call centre, handling customer queries and complaints, for almost two years. Recently, there has been a change in management, with an increased focus on handling customer complaints promptly and efficiently. Although he knows his job well, Sean often finds it difficult to limit the length of calls to the newly recommended 'six-minute' timeframe. This means that the call-waiting time for other customers in the queue gets increased. His new supervisor Frank often monitors Sean's calls and will message him things like "wrap it up NOW!!!" or "you're taking too long!" via the company's instant messaging system, in the midst of a call. Sean feels hurt that as a long-standing staff member his performance is still being monitored, and he feels like his new manager is picking on him as his call-handling time was never an issue before.

Scenario C

Although Kim never really got along with her co-worker Charlotte, she always remained polite and civil to her. However, after a recent disagreement between the two, in her extreme anger and frustration, Kim decided to anonymously post an embarrassing picture of Charlotte from a recent staff event onto social media, where many other staff could also view it. Even though she had taken down the picture the next day, Kim found out that a few other staff members had already shared the picture around. While Charlotte is distraught, Kim feels that it was just one time and since she has already taken the picture down there is no real damage done.

Scenario D

Mark works in a large banking firm that is incredibly performance-driven. Although he is only a newcomer, he is already out-performing several other staff members and receiving a bigger bonus than most. While his managers love him, his co-workers constantly attempt to harass him. Initially, it started with a few anonymous texts calling him a "suck up" and "kiss ass", but over the past few weeks, this has escalated into several threatening anonymous e-mails telling him to quit his job and that the sender(s) know where he lives. However, Mark is not worried. He feels that he is only being targeted because he is good at his job, and that this is a case of 'Tall Poppy Syndrome'. Being technologically savvy, Mark has also been able to trace the IP addresses of these e-mails, and knows that he can use this information to track down the senders, if he chooses to report their behaviour.

PAGING ALL NURSING STUDENTS!

Are you currently an undergrad or postgrad nursing student?

I am exploring people's perceptions of hypothetical workplace scenarios as part of my PhD research at Massey University. You will not be asked about your own experiences.

The study involves a face-to-face interview lasting up to 30 minutes, at a location convenient to you.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named below are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics) , telephone 06 35 6 9099, extn 86015 , e-mail :humanethics@massey.ac.nz

If you are interested in participating or have any further questions please contact

Natalia D'Souza
N.J.D'Souza@massey.ac.nz
0211757444

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Participant Information Sheet

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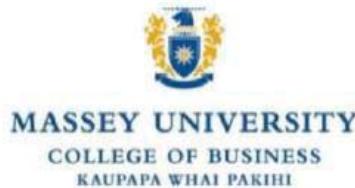
Exploring Nurses' Perceptions of Workplace Behaviours

Researcher Introduction

My name is Natalia D'Souza and I am a PhD student at Massey University's School of Management. As part of my thesis, I am interested in exploring nurses' perceptions of workplace behaviours, with the aim of creating healthy and safe work environments. I would therefore greatly appreciate your contribution toward this.

Study Description and Invitation

You are being requested to participate in a research study that explores New Zealand nurses' perceptions of certain workplace behaviours. There are currently several initiatives underway that are aiming to create healthy workplaces across New Zealand, and the focus of the present study is primarily on the nursing profession.

Participant Recruitment

For this study I am seeking participants who are:
a) Currently working in a nursing role within a District Health Board or the Primary Health Care sector,
b) Within the greater Auckland region,
c) And have worked in the nursing profession for at least six months as of 10th March 2015

Study Procedure

The study involves a one-off face-to-face interview, and is expected to take approximately 30 minutes. It will involve responding to four hypothetical scenarios. You will be given a copy of each scenario, followed by a series of open-ended prompt questions. No questions will be asked about your own personal experiences. Interviews will be conducted at a location convenient for you, and will be recorded with your consent.

Participant Rights

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you will be guaranteed complete anonymity and confidentiality. No one will be able to link any identifying details to the data presented in the final report. You will also have the right to omit or refuse to respond to any question that is asked, and can

terminate the interview at any point without explanation. A summary of findings will be made available, upon request. Data can also be withdrawn from the study up until the 31st of May 2015.

Ethics Committee Approval
"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been
reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named below are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact
Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics) , telephone 06 35 6 9099, extn 86015 ,
e-mail :humanethics@massey.ac.nz"

For Further Information
Should you have any further questions about the study itself, or as a result of participating in this study, you may contact either myself or my supervisor.

Researcher Contact
Natalia D'Souza
N.J.D'Souza@massey.ac.nz

Supervisor
Dr. Darryl Forsyth
D.Forsyth@massey.ac.nz

Appendix G – Study Three Participant Information Sheet

Exploring Nurses' Experiences of Workplace Cyberbullying

Participant Information Sheet

Research Invitation

My name is Natalia D'Souza and I am a doctoral researcher with the Healthy Work Group at Massey University's School of Management. As part of an ongoing research project, I am interested in exploring nurses' and nursing students' experiences of workplace cyberbullying in New Zealand, with the aim of contributing toward its management and intervention. I would therefore greatly appreciate your contribution toward this.

Participants

For this study I am seeking participants who are currently:

a) Working or training within the nursing profession in New Zealand,
b) <u>And</u> believe they have experienced workplace cyberbullying in their role,
c) <u>And</u> are willing to participate in an interview

Cyberbullying involves unwanted aggressive behaviours that may harm, threaten, demoralise or embarrass the person on the receiving end. This can occur through a range of electronic media including text and instant messages, e-mails, social media, blogs and public web forums.
Workplace Cyberbullying can occur outside of the workplace and after hours.

Participation

Participation will involve either a face-to-face or phone interview at a time and location convenient for you, and is expected to take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will involve questions about your experience of workplace cyberbullying. Due to the sensitive nature of the interview topic, a high preference will be given for individual interviews without the presence of others, unless participants feel strongly otherwise.

At any point during the interview should you feel distressed, upset, or uncomfortable, the interview will be stopped. All participants will be provided with contact details for a phone helpline, as well as an independent counsellor who specialises in dealing with workplace bullying. Furthermore, the contact details for the Human Rights Commission is also provided below. The commission provides information about and protects the rights of all individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Lifeline Aotearoa
24-hour telephone counselling
Within Auckland: (09) 5222 999
Outside Auckland: 0800 543 354

Claire Thompson
Counsellor and Mediator
Phone: (09) 212 9828
www.clairethompson.co.nz

Samantha Spafford
Registered Psychologist
Phone: (+64) 0210 260 4224
www.positivemindworks.co.nz

Human Rights Commission
Phone: 0800 496 877
Email: infoline@hrc.co.nz

Participant Rights

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to answer any question(s) you may feel uncomfortable with. Additionally, you will be able to stop the interview at any time and withdraw your data up to a week after the interview. You will also be provided with the choice of having your transcript being returned to you for editing. Your details and responses will remain confidential, and no identifying information will be made available about you or your participation. You are also provided with the choice of receiving a summary of research findings, and the researcher will be available to discuss this further in detail, if required. You will be compensated for your time with a $20 grocery voucher.

For Further Information

Should you have any further questions about the study itself, or as a result of participating in this study, you may contact either my supervisor or myself.

Researcher Contact
Natalia D'Souza
N.J.D'Souza@massey.ac.nz

Supervisor
Dr. Darryl Forsyth
D.Forsyth@massey.ac.nz

Appendix H – Study Three Full Ethics Approval

Date: 22 March 2016

Dear Natalia D'Souza

Re: Ethics Notification - **NOR 16/01** - **Exploring Experiences of Workplace Cyberbullying in Nursing and Medicine within New Zealand**

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: **Human Ethics Northern Committee** at their meeting held on **Tuesday, 22 March, 2016**.
On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING?

As part of my PhD research, I am looking to talk to **nurses** who believe they have experienced cyberbullying in their role, and are willing to participate in a one-off 30 minute interview (in-person or phone).

ANY INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE IS COMPLETELY **ANONYMOUS**

Cyberbullying involves unwanted behaviours that may harm, threaten, demoralise or embarrass the person on the receiving end. This can occur through a range of electronic media including text and instant messages, e-mails, social media, and public web forums.
Workplace Cyberbullying can occur outside of the workplace and after hours.

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If you would like to share your experience or have any questions, please contact:

Natalia D'Souza
N.J.D'Souza@massey.ac.nz
Ph: 0211757444

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 16/01. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix J – Statement of Contribution Forms

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of Candidate: Natalia D'Souza

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Dr Darryl Forsyth

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

D'Souza, N., Forsyth, D., Tappin, D., & Catley, B. (2017). Engaging industry specialists on the issue of workplace cyberbullying - A New Zealand study. Journal Of Health, Safety And Environment, 33(2), 105-124.

Findings from this study have also been presented in the following conference proceedings:
D'Souza, N., Forsyth, D., Tappin, D., & Catley, B. (2015, December). The Case for a Multi-Faceted Measurement Approach to Cyberbullying. Paper presented at the 29th Annual Conference of the Australian & New Zealand Academy of Management, Queenstown, New Zealand.
D'Souza, N., Catley, B., Tappin, D., & Forsyth, D. (2016, April). Made to Measure: A Conceptualisation Study in the Measurement of Cyberbullying. Paper presented at the 10th International Conference on Workplace Bullying and Harassment, Auckland, New Zealand.

In which Chapter is the Published Work: Chapter 3

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:

  and / or

- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

  The candidate contributed the vast majority of the above published works

Natalia D'Souza	21/09/2017
Candidate's Signature	Date
[signature]	21/09/2017
Principal Supervisor's signature	Date

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of Candidate: Natalia Judeline D'Souza

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Dr Darryl Forsyth

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Submitted as a manuscript to the Journal of Nursing Management. Under review (2nd revise and resubmit)

Also presented as a conference paper: D'Souza, N., Catley, B., Tappin, D., & Forsyth, D. (2016, April). Bullying is in the Eye of the Beholder: Exploring Nurses' Understandings of Workplace Cyberbullying. Paper presented at the 10th International Conference on Workplace Bullying and Harassment, Auckland, New Zealand

In which Chapter is the Published Work: Chapter 5

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:

  and / or

- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

  The candidate contributed the vast majority of the above published works

_____
Candidate's Signature

21/09/2017
_____
Date

_____
Principal Supervisor's signature

21/09/2017
_____
Date