



## **INCIDENCE, PREVALENCE AND DIMENSION OF BULLYING AMONG PASTORS IN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bullying is a serious and widely spread issue that affects individuals across different professions and sectors, including religious organizations. Through a thorough review of existing literature, the complex dynamic of bullying in this context is examined. This study investigated the incidence, prevalence, and dimension of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches as well as the effects of bullying on victim pastors and coping strategies. The study adopted the Organizational Culture Theory, Humiliation Theory, Dominance Theory and Social Cognitive theory in explaining how bullying takes place in Pentecostal churches. An exploratory design was used and two leading Pentecostal churches with the requisite administrative structure were selected using the purposive sampling method. Data was collected using an in-depth interview guide (IDI) and Key Informant Interview (KII) which covered the stated objectives of this research.

The results demonstrated that bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches is not uncommon with significant incidence and prevalence rates. Forms of bullying such as exclusion, abuse and



insults, spreading of false rumors, belittling remarks and others were identified. Also, factors such as hierarchical structures, religious sensitivity, victim silence cultures amongst others were considered predisposing factors. Bullying was shown to cause emotional and psychological distress to victims' pastors. Coping strategies were also discussed.

It was resolved that developing clear organizational policies, promoting healthy communication and conflict resolution strategies, training leaders and fostering a culture of mutual respect are essential to address bullying. Limitations of this research and suggestions for future research were highlighted.

**Keywords:** incidence, prevalence, dimension, bullying

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying in any social setting is not a contemporary problem; it has always been a part of human existence in some form. The first significant journal article which addressed bullying in a general sense among the youth was written by Burk in 1897. After this article, it took a while before the issue was looked into again. The question of bullying, though, was once again raised in Scandinavia in the 1970s by Pikas (1975) and Olweus (1978). Since then, studies on bullying have developed with diverse approaches and the subject has been considered in different social contexts, ranging from school to workplace etc. Olweus (1993) said a person is being bullied when he or she is exposed repeatedly and overtime to negative actions on the part of one or more other students, while Farrington (1993) states that bullying is repeated oppression of a less powerful person, physical or psychological by a more powerful person. Smith and Sharp (1994) defines it as the systematic abuse of power and Rigby (2002) sees it as a desire to hurt another person, a harmful action, a power imbalance, a repeated behaviour, an unjust use of power. There is an evident enjoyment by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim. Despite the differences of view as regards bullying by different researchers, most or all of them agree that bullying is a subtype of aggression (Dodge, 1991; Olweus, 1993; Smith and Thompson, 1991). It is also widely accepted that bullying is not limited to physical actions and that it involves repetition and imbalance of power. However, since the end of the 1980s, the

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meaning of bullying has been expanded to include direct verbal taunting and social exclusion. Olweus (1999) includes indirect forms of bullying such as unkind gestures and facial expressions, while Smith and Rigby added gossiping and spreading rumors as other indirect forms of bullying. Despite the fact that bullying behaviours in relation to schools have received majority of attention over the years, it is also widely recognized that bullying in its generic sense can happen in many other settings in adult life such as work place, prisons, old people's homes and family homes.

Bullying in Pentecostal churches is not an unusual subject. This is because bullying transcends the environment or setting but it can take place anywhere in different forms as long as the key ingredients to lead to it are present. This is what we hope to unearth as we venture into this relatively novel area of research. One of the things we have realized about bullying from history is that most victims are usually reluctant to speak out. This reluctance to speak out is exacerbated in church settings as a result of the usual silent but loud need for the church to keep such indiscretions discrete. More so when it is among pastors. Naturally, bullying amongst pastors can also be perceived as a form of adult bullying in the work place. This is because pastors often see the church as their work place and where they earn their livelihood. Some journal articles might recognize some form of bullying between the church leadership and the congregation, but very little is known about the interaction between pastors. This interaction may be the cause of bullying behaviour between some pastors and their members. Research in this area is to help us understand if and how bullying manifests at the very highest level of church leadership. This could break grounds for future research.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

In about the twenty-five years, history of bullying, there seems to be a consensus among researchers seeing bullying as a significant problem with far-reaching negative consequences for individuals and communities. Bullying is a combination of verbal abuse and behaviors that are humiliating, threatening, or intimidating. Namie (2007) explained that the consequences are serious, including harm (health, social, or economic) to individuals and interference with



productive work. Bullying does not only affect the target but also bystanders. Bullying can be a problem in any organization or community, including Pentecostal churches. Bullying can occur in any context where there is a power dynamic and individuals misuse their authority or influence. Bullying arises out of power dynamics in a relationship, typically with repeated interactions that consolidate the power differential and shape one's sense of belonging (Smith et al, 1998; Pepler et al, 2010). Pastors in positions of authority may misuse their power, leading to a toxic environment. This can involve exerting control over others, manipulating or belittling subordinates or creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Also, Pentecostal churches often have strong doctrinal beliefs and practices. In some cases, these beliefs can be used to justify and reinforce bullying behavior. Pastors are said to ostracize or target individuals who do not conform to their specific expectations or interpretations. There is also the issue of personal conflict as Pastors, like any other individual, can have personal conflicts, insecurities, or unresolved issues with each other. These personal struggles may manifest in unhealthy ways, which may involve bullying as a means of exerting control or deflecting attention from their own shortcomings. In some cases, a lack of proper oversight or accountability mechanisms within a church can contribute to bullying behavior going unchecked. If there are no systems in place to address such issues, it will become easier for bullying pastors to continue their harmful actions. Bullying can cause significant psychological and emotional damage to the individuals being targeted. It can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation. (Bhuyan et al, 2017). The effects can be long-lasting, impacting a person's mental well-being and overall quality of life. In addition to the emotional impact, bullying can also have physical health consequences. The stress and anxiety caused by bullying can manifest in physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, sleep disturbances, and increased vulnerability to illnesses. Bullying also interferes with an individual's personal development and growth. It can hinder their ability to build healthy relationships, develop social skills, and reach their full potential. The constant fear and distress caused by bullying can affect performance and hinder career prospects within that environment. Bullying doesn't just affect the individuals directly involved; it also has a general impact on the community.



## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research was to investigate the incidence, prevalence and dimension of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches. The following are the objectives;

- i. To examine critically existing research on bullying in several environments and the church as well.
- ii. To gather data through In-depth interviews, as well as, Key informant interviews from pastors experiences to get a detailed view on incidence and prevalence of this behaviour in this religious context.
- iii. To identify various forms of bullying experienced by pastors in Pentecostal churches.
- iv. To analyze factors that can contribute to bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches.
- v. To examine the effects of bullying on the victim pastors and impact on the church.
- vi. To suggest possible recommendations and interventions to address and prevent bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches.
- vii. To create awareness within religious circles about the issue of bullying among pastors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is a unique but complex form of interpersonal aggression which takes many forms, serves different functions and is manifested in different patterns of relationships. Bullying is not simply a dyadic problem between a bully and a victim, but it is recognized as a group phenomenon occurring in a social context in which various factors serve to promote, maintain or suppress such behaviours (Olweus, 2001; Rodkin&Hodges, 2003; Salmivialli, 2001).

According to Olweus, a person is bullied when he/she is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions by one or more others excluding cases when two people of similar physical and psychological strength are fighting (Olweus, 1994). Olweus suggested that bullying can be direct

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(open attacks that are physical and verbal in nature) and indirect (such as exclusion). Since the 1990s researchers have kept working on Olweus definition to also include Identification of a power differential between bullies and victims (e.g. Vaillancourt et al, 2003).

Despite different suggestions from different researchers in their literature, most agree that bullying experiences not only include physical aggression but also verbal aggression, including verbal harassment, spreading rumors or social rejection and isolation.

Bullying in a school context has received attention over a number of years (e.g. Olweus, 1991; Roland&Munthe, 1989, Smith and Thompson, 1991). The literature available on this area is multinational, this is because school bullying is seemingly a global problem as millions of school children have been victims of bullying every year. In definitions of bullying in this setting, frequency of behaviour is stressed as well as unbalanced power situations (Olweus,1991; Bjorkorvist, 1994), Intent also is mentioned (Besag, 1989). Different types of bullying are also discussed with physical and verbal (direct) bullying more prevalent in school settings but also indirect bullying (e.g. social exclusion), non-overt aggression being present as well in this setting.

Concerning literature on school bullying, a significant start was made in the Scandinavian countries, with the land mark publication of Olweus' (1978) book on aggression in the schools, termed Bullies and Whipping boys. Work continued in Norway and Sweden and in the 1980s there was a pioneer example of a national intervention campaign against bullying. This and related works were described by Olweus. Olweus (1993). The success of this Norwegian work undoubtedly influenced and inspired the subsequent research and intervention activities in other European countries. Some of these studies have shown that bullying experiences have a number of behavioural, emotional and physical adjustment problems. A study by Leyera et al (2015) revealed that molestation of school children by their own peers has damaged not only their academic performance but also grossly affected their health with long term effects.

In Nigeria, even though cases of bullying had been reported in many schools, this deviant act is not always given any desirable attention. Furthermore, there are very few available statistical

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facts to show the actual number of students that are bullied or are victims in many Nigerian schools. This lack of statistical facts and absence of well documented evidence have made it difficult for us to appreciate the prevalence of bullying behaviour in Nigeria (Aluede & Fajoju, in press; Umoh, 2000). Despite the absence of well documented evidence of the prevalent rate of bullying in Nigeria, Egbochukwu's (2007) study on some Nigerian students in Benin City revealed that almost four in every five participants (78%) reported being bullied and 85% of the children admitted to bullying others at least once.

Bullying once thought to be a behaviour endemic to childhood (prevalent majorly in school settings) has made its way into the global workforce. (Brodsky, 1977). Research shows that more than 15% of employees are affected by workplace bullying worldwide. (Nielsen et al, 2010). Although bullying has been reported to be higher in social, health, public administrator and education sectors (i.e. public sectors). (Zaph et al, 2020). Work place bullying is defined as the prolonged exposure to repeated negative behaviours in the workplace and it occurs where the individual feels unable to defend themselves against these behaviours (Einarsen, 2000).

In Nigeria, the limited understandings of the concept and the lack of appropriate measures of dealing with work place bullying remains a challenge (Adewumi, Sheehan, & Lewis 2006). In their pioneer study on gender and workplace bullying in Nigeria, Fajana et al. (2011) looked at differences in bullying experienced as personal bullying, which are behaviours targeted at individuals. This finding therefore suggests that some behaviours are targeted at individuals as a result of the characteristics of the victim. Studies such as Lutgen- Sandvik, Tracy, and Alberts (2007) offered various explanations such as personality types, demographic characteristics such as gender (Adewumi & Danesi 2017) and powerlessness as some of the factors that can put an individual at a risk of being bullied, which is a typical characteristic of many organizations in Nigerians, following the outcomes of a study by Adewumi & Danesi, 2020).

It is recognized that bullying in its generic sense can happen in many other settings in adult life such as prisons, old people's homes, churches and family home (Special issue of Journal of



Community and Applied Social psychology, 1997). This leads us to the focus in this study which is bullying in church (Pentecostal settings).

In recent years bullying has also become an issue in churches and other religious organizations. Some refer to this type of bullying as spiritual bullying and suggest it can take a variety of forms such as psychological manipulation, exclusion and the use of spiritual authority to control others. This can be particularly damaging because it can undermine an individual's faith and sense of self-worth. In some cases, it can also lead to physical abuse or harassment. A study by Ward (2011) found that spiritual bullying is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety and even PTSD.

Bullying is a serious problem that affects a wide range of individuals in different settings as discussed in this review. This study focuses on bullying in Pentecostal churches with qualitative methodology which will give us an In-depth idea of the incidence, prevalence and dimension of bullying in this setting.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of this research, an exploratory research design was used. This research design method enabled us to gather an understanding of the complex issue of bullying and to identify potential remedies as well as give a basis for further research. In using this research design, we will be able to identify key themes and patterns in the data, which will help in our data analysis to identify specific bullying behaviours, the reason they occur and the factors that contribute to or exacerbate the problem.

In conducting the in-depth interview, we physically visited different branches of two major churches in the Pentecostal setting in Nigeria for the purpose of this research. In some cases, we made use of personal/ work offices of the pastors, house environment etc. All of these meeting points were determined by the participants, which was to ensure privacy and enable the participants to feel at ease to share their experiences. We made use of these churches because they possess the requisite administrative structure to help us discover the incidence, prevalence



and dimensions of bullying. Also, with the large number and influence these churches possess, they are perfect models of the Pentecostal setting in Nigeria. The study participants are pastors in administrative positions such as: Branch Pastors, Area Pastors, Zonal pastors and Provincial Pastors. These participants were selected purposively based on the positions of authority they hold or once held, as they have had experiences of leading other pastors and being led by superiors. This means there exist “a power differential” which is a characteristic of systems susceptible to bullying. Our participants also included retired pastors for whom a Key Informant Interview was conducted. We sought them because they have worked in these ministries and have had access at one point or the other to the information we seek and who can serve as key informants.

As earlier noted, we used the purposive sampling technique in this research. This technique provides us with a targeted and representative sample in a sense because of the use of two leading Pentecostal churches, who are models of Pentecostal churches in general. Therefore, these selected participants are well-suited to provide insights into the issue of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches. In total, we worked with twenty-five pastors and two retirees from both churches. Thirteen pastors and one retiree from the first church, twelve pastors and one retiree from the other. These interviews lasted about 30mins-1hour on average. This exercise of data collection took a period of about a month.

The instruments used for this research include: In-depth interview guide, Key Informant Interview guide, a recorder, a pen and a notebook. Open ended questions were asked from the In-depth interview guide & Key informant guide and answers from respondents were documented (written and recorded) with the participant's permission.

In relation to ethical consideration, an informed consent was signed by participants after they were properly informed about the research. I obtained an ethical approval letter from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ibadan for this project, which was presented to the pastors before interviewing them. I also informed them that their participation in the research was

completely voluntary and they could opt out at any time. They were also made to understand that all the information supplied would be held in the strictest confidentiality.

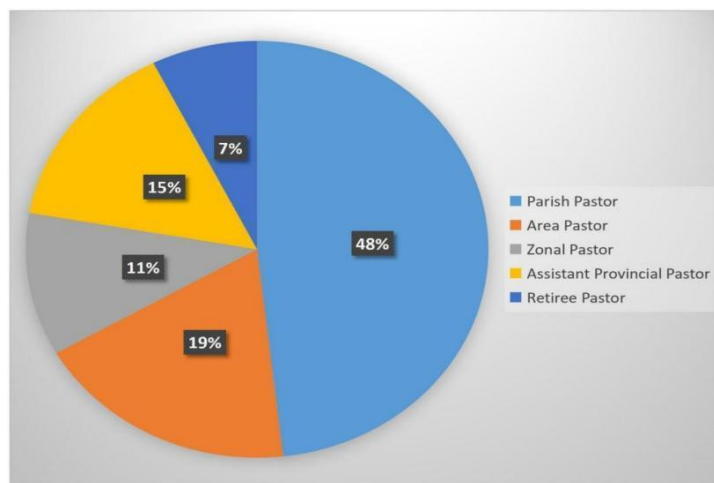
## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data was analyzed by organized question (recording respondent answers under questions itemized) and thematic analysis. The results were later presented thematically through cloud analysis, diagrams, ethnographic summaries, and the Vivo-narrative reporting technique.

### Categories of respondents

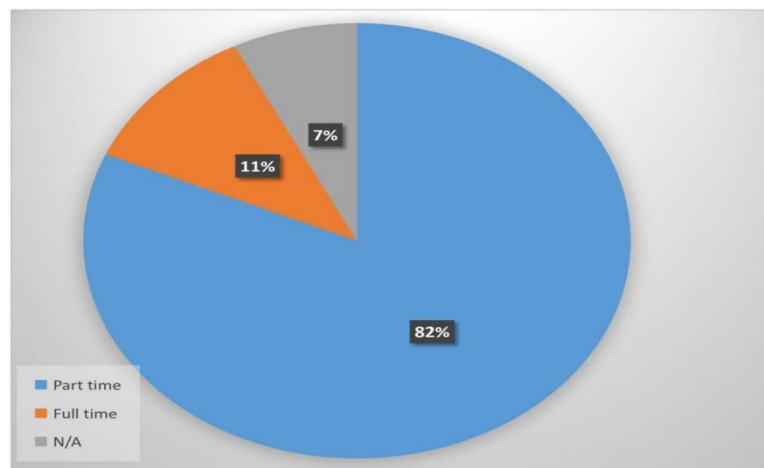
The respondents were categorized based on their status in church leadership and tenure

**Status:** With regard to the distribution of the respondents by status, Fig 1.0 below, is a hierarchy chart that shows that participants who held the status of parish pastor had the most representation in this study, followed by Area pastors, Assistant Provincial pastors, Zonal pastors. However, the least represented in the study are retirees.



**Figure 1.0: Status category of respondent**

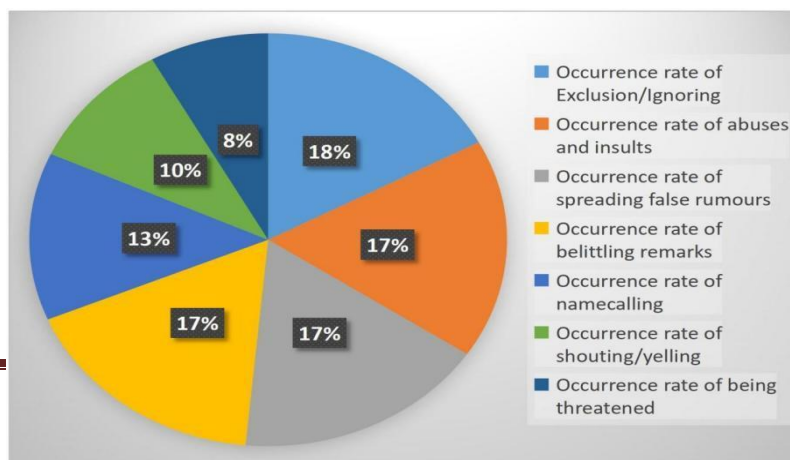
**Tenure:** Figure 2.0 below, is a hierarchy chart showing the tenure of the participants, while revealing that a significant sample of the study population are part-time pastors who have encountered several forms of bullying. More so, full-time pastors were also represented in the study, giving the study a robust approach in both categorizing the tenure of these pastors to better understand the context of bullying within religious setting.



**Figure 2.0: Tenure category of respondents**

### **Incidence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches**

The qualitative study investigating the incidence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches revealed noteworthy findings regarding the experiences of bullying within church leadership. The study highlighted various forms of bullying behaviors encountered by pastors, irrespective of their roles as part-time or full-time pastors. The following descriptions expand on the identified bullying behaviors.



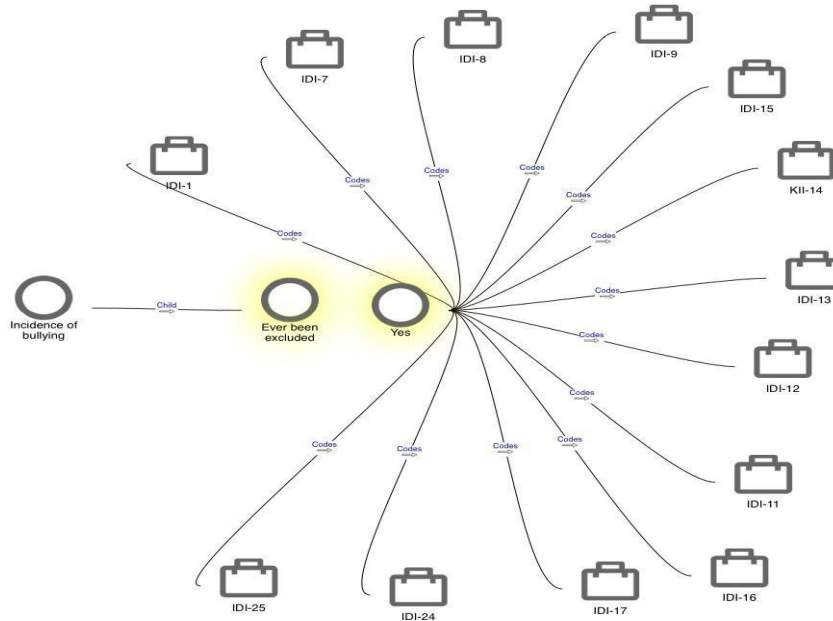
### **Figure 3.0: Occurrence distribution**

1. **Name-calling:** Pastors recounted instances where they were subjected to derogatory or offensive language aimed at belittling their character or undermining their capabilities. These verbal attacks were intended to insult and demean pastors, causing emotional distress and diminishing their sense of self-worth within the church leadership.
  2. **Abuse/Insults:** Pastors shared experiences of enduring verbal abuse and insults within the church leadership. They described instances where they were targeted with hurtful remarks and offensive language, which adversely affected their emotional well-being and had a detrimental impact on their pastoral role and identity.
  3. **Shouting or yelling:** Pastors recounted situations where they faced aggressive behavior such as shouting or yelling within the church leadership. The raised voices and intimidating tones created a hostile environment that made pastors feel disrespected and intimidated. Such behavior undermined their sense of safety and diminished their ability to contribute effectively.
  4. **Belittling or condescending remarks:** Pastors mentioned instances of encountering belittling or condescending remarks within the church leadership. They described experiences where their contributions, ideas, or opinions were dismissed or ridiculed. These remarks conveyed a lack of respect and devalued the pastors' knowledge and expertise.
  5. **Spreading false rumors:** Pastors shared experiences of being targeted by the deliberate spread of false rumors within the church leadership. They described instances where untrue information about them was intentionally circulated with the aim of tarnishing their reputation and undermining their credibility. These false rumors created a climate of mistrust and damaged their relationships with fellow leaders.
  6. **Being ignored:** Pastors discussed feeling ignored within the church leadership, where their opinions, ideas, and contributions were consistently disregarded or overlooked. This exclusionary behavior made them feel undervalued and marginalized, hindering their ability to actively participate in decision-making processes and leaving them with a diminished sense of belonging.
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7. Being excluded: Pastors recounted experiences of exclusion from important activities, meetings, or events within the church leadership. They described instances where they were deliberately left out or not invited, resulting in feelings of isolation and alienation. Being excluded limited their opportunities to connect and collaborate with other leaders, impacting their overall engagement and sense of worth.

8. Being threatened: Pastors shared accounts of facing explicit or implicit threats within the church leadership. These threats created an atmosphere of fear, inducing anxiety and distress. The fear of potential harm or consequences undermined their well-being, impeded their ability to lead confidently, and hindered their overall effectiveness in fulfilling their pastoral duties.

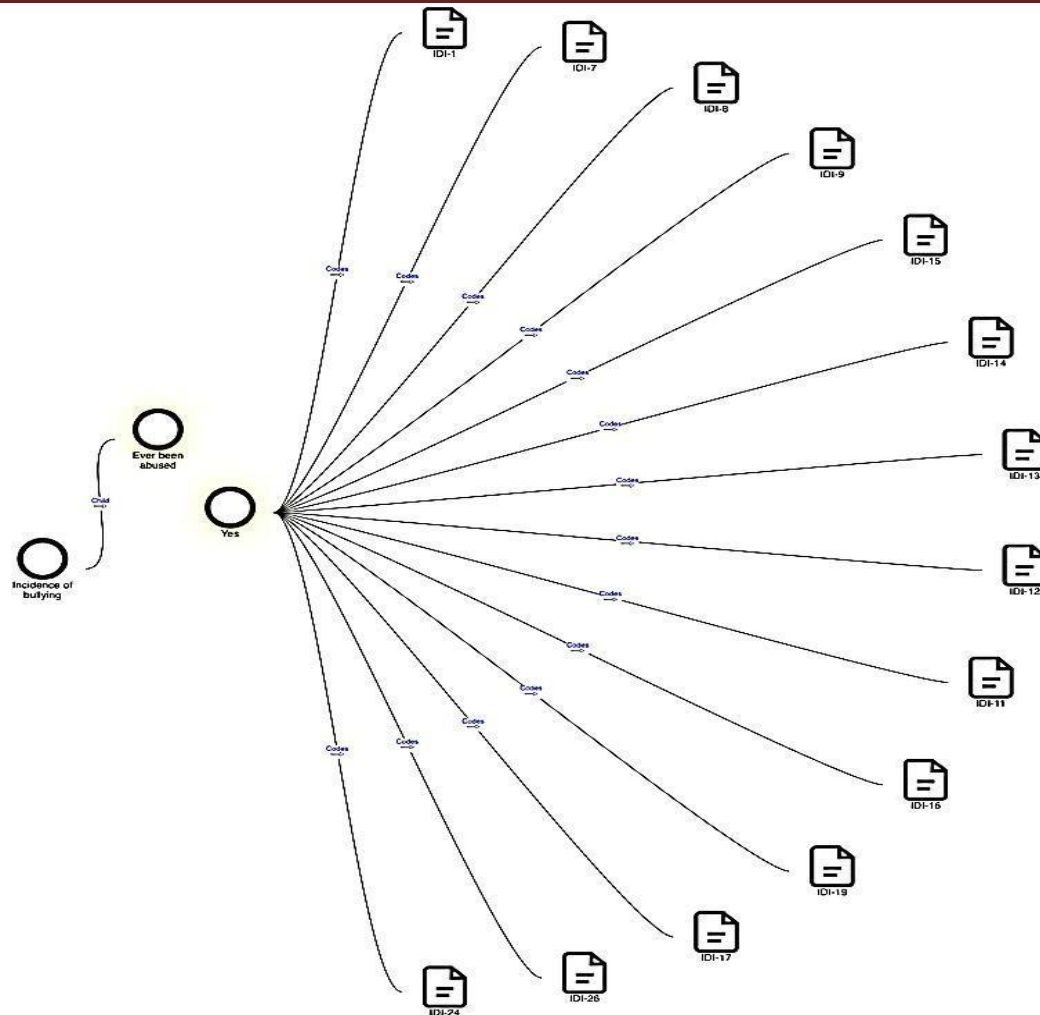
These findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of bullying behaviors experienced by pastors within Pentecostal church leadership.



**Figure 4.0: Comparison diagram showing distribution of responses on exclusion**



Based on the investigation into the incidence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches, the findings revealed interesting insights regarding bullying as a subconscious behavior among clergy. Figure 4 presents a comparison diagram illustrating the strength of respondents who agreed that they have experienced bullying within church leadership, specifically involving exclusion. The diagram showcases the distribution of responses from the interviewed pastors, indicating the varying degrees to which they acknowledged experiencing bullying behaviors related to exclusion. These findings shed light on the subconscious behavior of bullying within the clergy of Pentecostal churches, particularly in terms of exclusion. The data suggests that a notable number of pastors have encountered various forms of exclusion within church leadership, leading to potential negative impacts on their well-being, sense of belonging, and effectiveness as spiritual leaders.



**Figure 5.0: Comparison diagram on abuse and insults**

Building upon the in-depth interviews conducted with victimized pastors, **Figure 5.0** presents a comparison diagram that showcases the strength of respondents who agreed that they have experienced bullying within church leadership involving verbal insults and abuse. This diagram provides insights into the prevalence and impact of verbal mistreatment endured by pastors within their leadership roles. These findings shed light on the distressing experiences of victimized pastors who have endured verbal insults and abuse within their church leadership roles.



One of the respondents narrated:

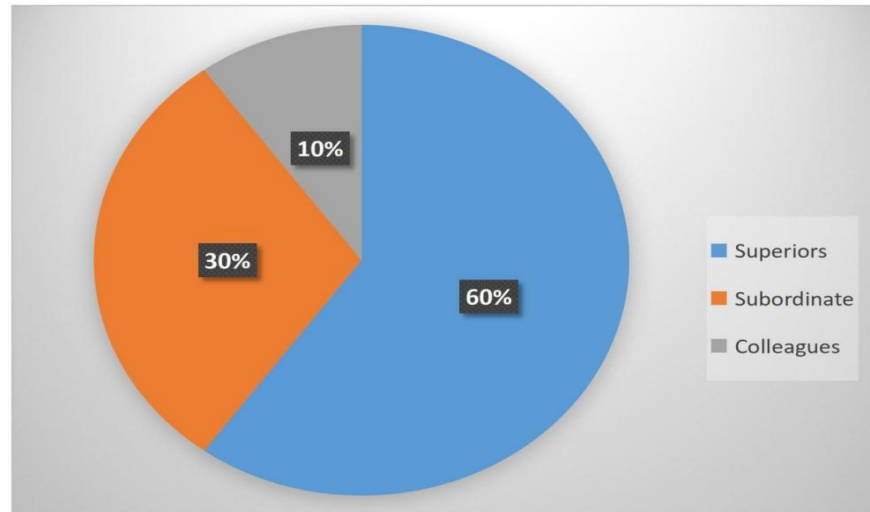
*“Yes. It happened in an area meeting where I raised a suggestion about finance, one of the pastors stood up to attack everything I said”.* ( **IDI- Female--Parish pastor-Full time- Church1- 2023**).

Another respondent added:

*“When I was a parish pastor, I was moved to another parish during a rotation and someone was moved to replace me where I was. The pastor and his team when they got to my former parish began insulting me and spreading false rumours as regards how I spent the money of the branch and all that but later I had to go there physically and point out where all the documents were which showed how money was spent during my time there. They eventually apologized”* ( **KII-Male-Retiree-Church 1- 2023**).

The data indicates that a considerable number of pastors have been subjected to various forms of verbal mistreatment, including name-calling, public humiliation, attacks on personal and professional capacities, and even threats. Further analysis and exploration of these findings could involve understanding the long-term consequences of such mistreatment on pastors' mental health, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.





**Figure 6: Hierarchical chart on people who exhibit bullying behaviour**

The qualitative study investigating the incidence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches provided insights into the experiences of bullying within church leadership. As seen in **Fig. 6** the findings revealed that bullying actions and behaviors can be exhibited by various individuals within the church leadership, including superior/ supervisors, colleagues and subordinates. While bullying was reported across these different positions, more respondents identified their superiors as the most frequent perpetrators of bullying within the church leadership.

During the study, one respondent shared the following experience:

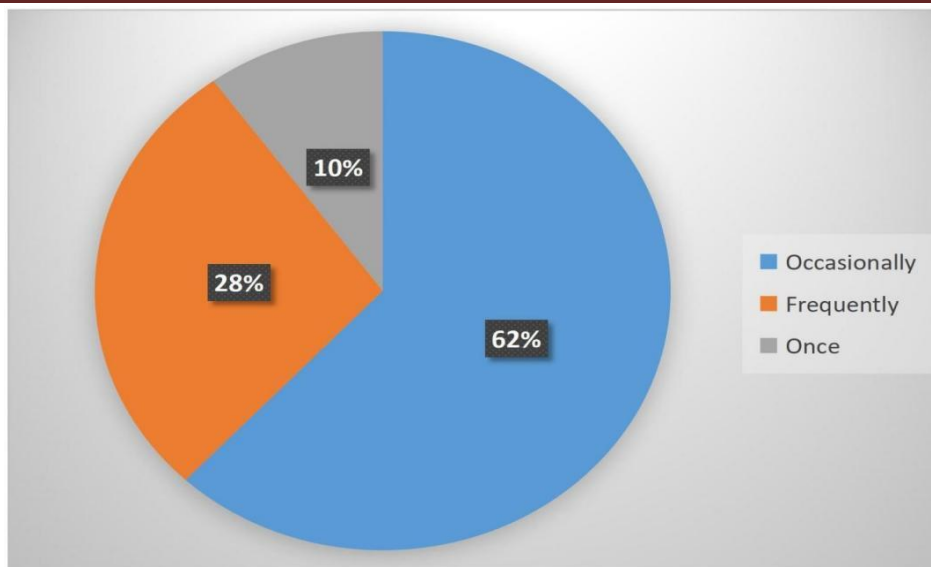
*“I have encountered bullying behaviors from both my superiors and subordinates within the church leadership. For instance, I have experienced bullying from superiors who hold positions higher than my role as a zonal pastor, such as assistant provincial and provincial pastors. They have used their authority to exert power over me, belittling my ideas and undermining my leadership. Additionally, I have also faced bullying from subordinates, including area pastors and branch pastors who are below my office. They have challenged my authority and intentionally excluded me from decision- making processes, causing me to feel marginalized within the church leadership” (IDI-Male-Zonal pastor-Part- time- Church 1-2023).*



This respondent's account reflects the complexity of bullying dynamics within church leadership. The findings suggest that individuals occupying higher positions, such as assistant provincial and provincial pastors, may misuse their authority to engage in bullying behaviors. They may employ tactics such as belittling, undermining, and exerting power over pastors in lower positions. Furthermore, the study highlighted the presence of bullying behaviors from subordinates, including area pastors and branch pastors. These individuals may challenge the authority of higher-ranking pastors and engage in exclusionary practices, intentionally limiting their participation in decision-making and hindering their sense of inclusion and influence within the church leadership. These findings underscore the significance of power dynamics within the church hierarchy and how they can contribute to bullying behaviors. The qualitative data illuminates the interpersonal dynamics between pastors of different ranks and the potential misuse or abuse of authority.

### **Prevalence of bullying among pastors of Pentecostal churches**

The qualitative study examining the prevalence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches provided insightful findings regarding the occurrence of bullying within the church leadership. The study revealed that bullying can take place across different ranks and offices of pastoral ministry and leadership. Here, we will further visualize the distribution of participant experience.



**Figure 7: Occurrence rate of bullying among pastors**

**Occasional Occurrence of Bullying:** The findings indicate that the occurrence of bullying among pastors within the church leadership is predominantly occasional. This suggests that instances of bullying are not constant or pervasive but rather happen intermittently. It is plausible to infer that factors such as specific situations, conflicts, or personal dynamics may trigger occasional episodes of bullying within the pastoral environment.

**Frequent Occurrence of Bullying:** While the majority of respondents reported occasional instances of bullying, some pastors mentioned experiencing bullying more frequently. This implies that a subset of pastors encounters bullying behaviors on a more regular basis. The reasons for the higher frequency of bullying incidents may include power imbalances, personal conflicts, or a toxic culture within specific church leadership settings.

**Limited Instances of Bullying from Other Pastors:** The study findings suggest that only a few pastors reported experiencing bullying from other pastors within the church leadership, and these instances were typically isolated to one occurrence. This implies that the majority of bullying



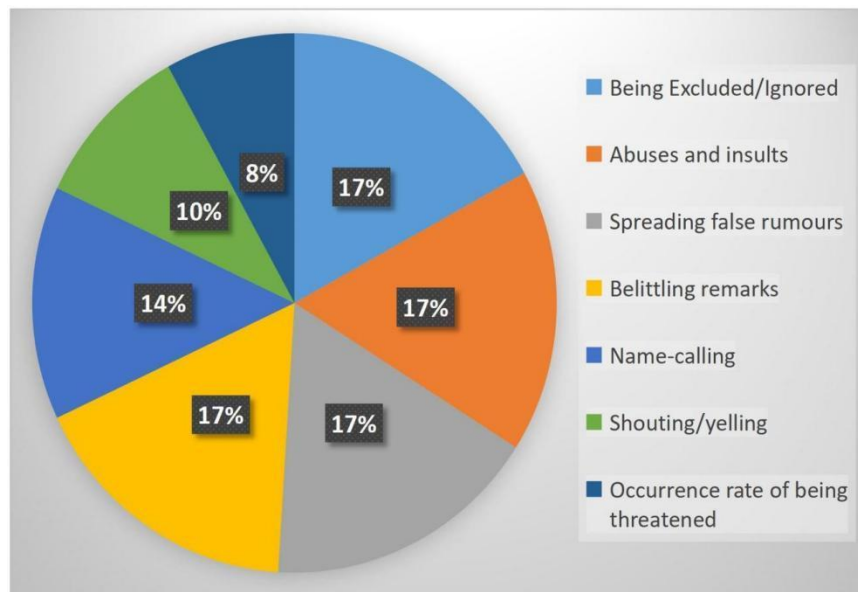
incidents are not perpetuated by fellow pastors but may involve individuals from different positions or hierarchical levels within the church leadership structure.

Various factors can contribute to the occasional or frequent occurrence of bullying, such as differences in personal traits, leadership styles, conflicts of interest, or struggles for power and influence. Additionally, the findings align with the understanding that bullying is often rooted in specific situations rather than being a continuous or systematic phenomenon.

### **Dimensions of bullying demonstrated among pastors in Pentecostal churches**

The findings highlighted several forms of bullying behavior, including name-calling, abuse/insults, shouting or yelling, belittling remarks, spreading false rumors, being ignored and excluded, and being threatened. The findings revealed that among the identified dimensions of bullying, being ignored and excluded emerged as a particularly prominent form. Pastors shared experiences of feeling disregarded and intentionally left out of important activities, meetings, or decision-making processes within the church leadership. This exclusionary behavior significantly impacted their sense of belonging, influence, and overall engagement within the leadership structure.

Additionally, spreading false rumors and belittling remarks were identified as significant forms of bullying within the church leadership. Pastors recounted instances where false information was deliberately circulated to damage their reputation and credibility, while others described experiences of being subjected to demeaning and derogatory comments that undermined their self-worth and leadership effectiveness. In contrast, dimensions such as name-calling and threats were mentioned less frequently by the study participants. While they still represented forms of bullying experienced by pastors, they had a comparatively lower prominence within the qualitative data. It is important to note that the qualitative nature of the study allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences of bullying among pastors. These dimensions

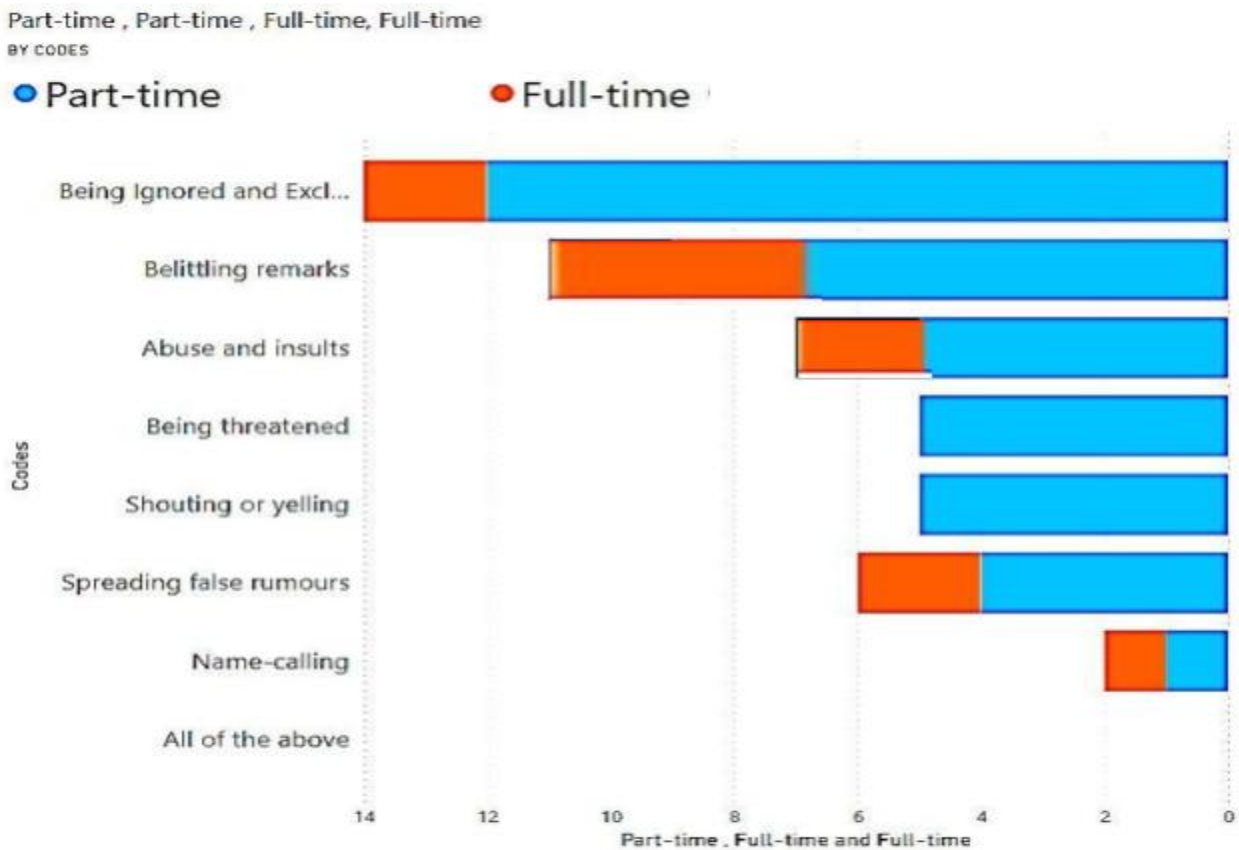


highlight the various ways in which bullying manifests within the church leadership, emphasizing the emotional and psychological impact on pastors' well-being and effectiveness in their pastoral roles.

**Figure 8: Dimensions of Bullying**

Interestingly, the study findings as seen in Fig 8 indicates that part-time pastors experienced a higher number of bullying forms compared to full-time pastors and retirees. This observation

suggests that part-time pastors may be more vulnerable to bullying behaviors within the church leadership context. There are several possible theoretical and practical explanations for this finding. Firstly, part-time pastors may face unique challenges due to their limited availability and engagement in pastoral duties. This could lead to a perception of vulnerability and a potential power imbalance within the leadership structure. Bullying behaviors such as name-calling, abuse/insults, and belittling remarks may be used as means to assert dominance or control over part-time pastors, who may be perceived as having less influence or authority compared to their full-time counterparts.



**Figure 9: Dimension and Tenure**

Secondly, the higher prevalence of bullying among part-time pastors could be attributed to their perceived status or position within the church. Part-time pastors may be seen as more expendable or replaceable, which could result in them being subjected to increased mistreatment

or marginalization within the leadership hierarchy. This could manifest through behaviors such as spreading false rumors, exclusion, or threats, aimed at undermining their credibility or limiting their involvement in decision-making processes. Additionally, the findings may also be influenced by the dynamics of workload and stress levels experienced by part-time pastors. They may face additional challenges in balancing their pastoral responsibilities with other professional or personal commitments. This increased workload and associated stress could potentially contribute to heightened tensions and conflicts within the church leadership, thereby increasing the likelihood of bullying behaviors targeting part-time pastors.

It is important to note that the above explanations are theoretical in nature and should be further explored through future research. The dynamics of bullying within church leadership can be complex and influenced by various factors, including power differentials, status, and individual personality traits. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address bullying among pastors, regardless of their employment status.

### **Effect of bullying on victims (Pastors) in Pentecostal churches.**

The qualitative study on the prevalence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches aimed to explore the effect of bullying on the victims, specifically the pastors themselves. The findings revealed that pastors who experienced bullying within the church leadership context had negative emotional reactions to these behaviors. Several respondents expressed feelings of sadness, unhappiness, and discomfort when being subjected to bullying.

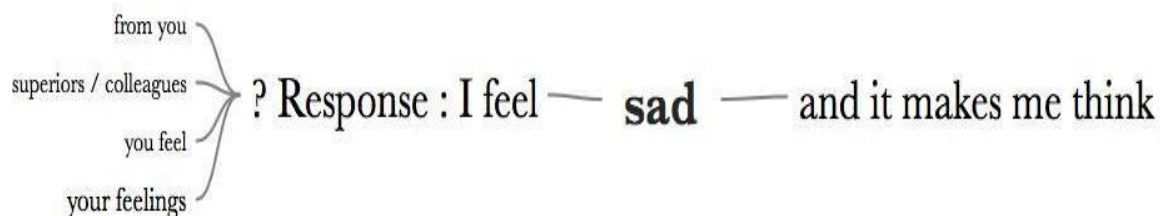


Figure 10: Word tree showing Emotional Phrase

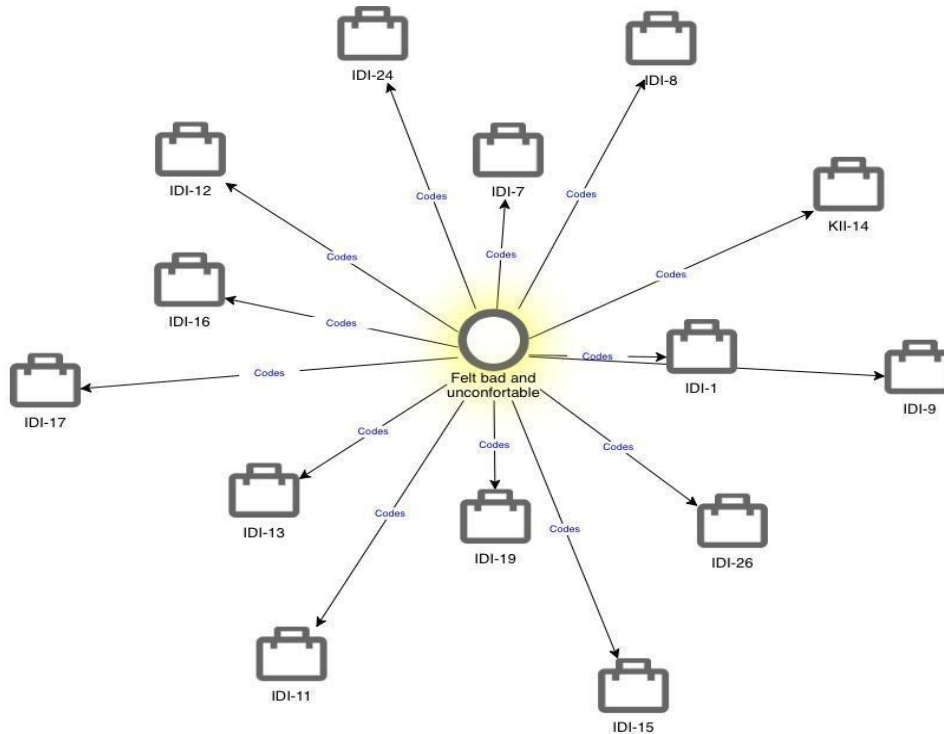
Fig 10 reveals that the emotional impact experienced by pastors who are victims of bullying aligns with existing research on the psychological consequences of bullying. Bullying is known to have detrimental effects on individuals' well-being, leading to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and decreased overall life satisfaction. These negative emotions can significantly impact the pastors' mental health, affecting their ability to carry out their pastoral duties effectively and undermining their overall job satisfaction.

One of the respondents narrated:

*“I felt bad because I wasn't expecting some certain things from leaders because I believe there is a way a leader should handle subordinates when they are wrong. Sometimes it also makes sleep difficult for me when I think about it at night” (IDI-Male-Area Pastor-Part- time-Church1-2023).*

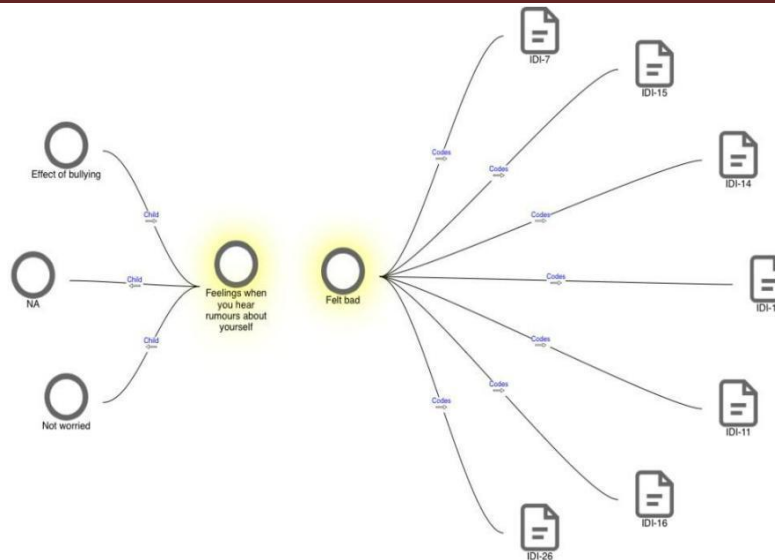
The unpleasant emotional reactions reported by the respondents may be explained through the lens of social and psychological theories. One relevant theoretical framework is the cognitive appraisal theory, which suggests that individuals' emotional responses to events are shaped by their perceptions and evaluations of those events. In the case of bullying, pastors may interpret the bullying behaviors as threats to their dignity, competence, and sense of belonging within the church community. These negative appraisals can trigger negative emotions such as sadness, unhappiness, and discomfort. Additionally, the social identity theory can provide insights into the emotional experiences of bullied pastors. This theory emphasizes the importance of social group membership and the impact it has on individuals' self-concept and emotional well-being. Pastors who are victims of bullying may experience a sense of rejection, exclusion, and diminished social identity within the church leadership context. These experiences can contribute to the negative emotional reactions they report, as their fundamental need for social belonging and acceptance is undermined.





**Figure 11: Comparison Diagram Showing Main Node and participant distribution**

As shown in Fig.11, the findings highlight the significance of addressing the emotional consequences of bullying within the church leadership context as it shows a wide range of participants and their degrees of response to bullying behaviours.

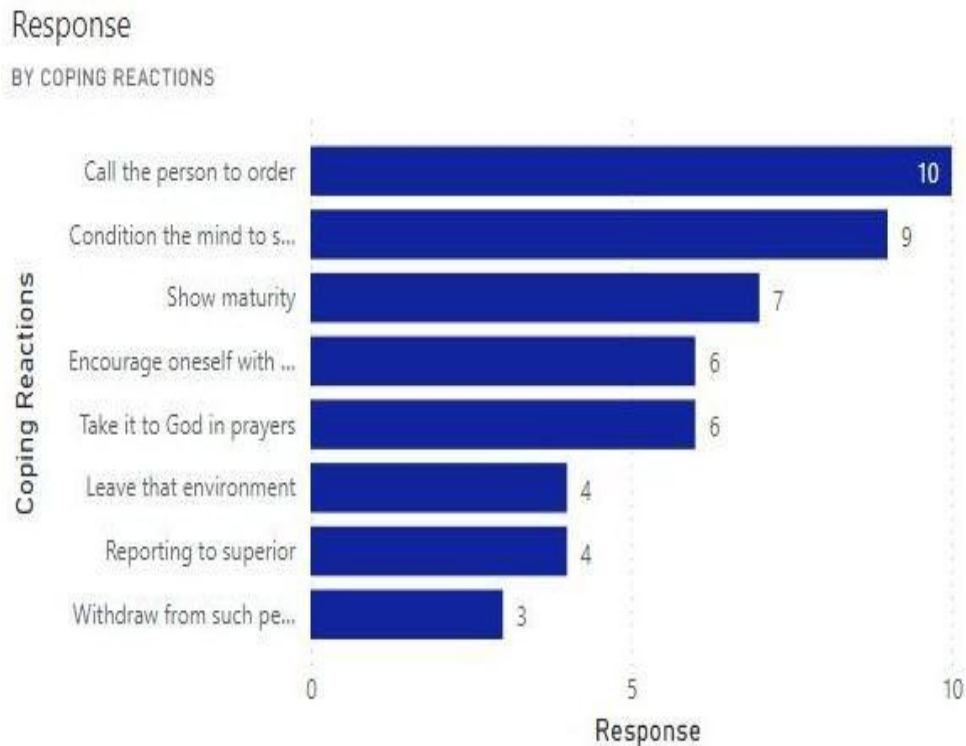


**Figure 12: Diagram on respondent’s emotional response to false rumors**

As shown above, Fig 12 shows an example of participants’ negative emotional response to false rumors being spread about them.

### **Coping with bullying behaviours in Pentecostal churches**

The study objective on the prevalence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches aimed to investigate how victims, in this case, pastors, cope with bullying behaviors within the church leadership context. The findings revealed that victimized pastors had developed various response and coping mechanisms to deal with their experiences of bullying (see Fig 13.)



**Figure 13: Coping reactions**

Here are some of the coping behaviours discovered based on pastors responses:

### **Calling the person to order**

As observed in Fig 13, one coping mechanism reported by the participants was calling the person to order. This approach involves directly addressing the individual who is engaging in bullying behaviors and asserting boundaries or expressing disapproval. By confronting the offender, pastors aim to assert their dignity and demand respectful treatment. It demonstrates a willingness to confront the issue head-on and advocate for themselves, their well-being, and their rights as individuals and spiritual leaders.

One of the respondents pointed out:

“In some cases, I confront the person to tell them I don’t like a certain behavior. I remember before I started, I prayed and fasted for God to give me the grace to easily forgive and I received a revelation that it was done. So now no matter the offence I quickly let go” (**KII-Male-Retiree-Church1-2023**).

When pastors call the person to order, they are effectively communicating that the behavior they are experiencing is unacceptable and violates their personal and professional boundaries.. This approach empowers pastors to take control of the situation and challenge the status quo of bullying behaviors. Confronting the offender requires courage and assertiveness, as it involves engaging in a potentially uncomfortable and challenging conversation. It may include directly addressing the specific incidents of bullying, expressing how the behavior has impacted them personally and professionally, and asserting their right to be treated with respect and fairness.

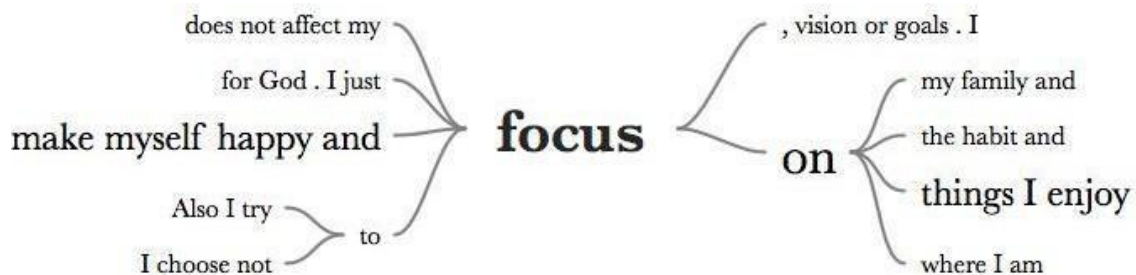
They refuse to passively accept the bullying behaviors and instead take a proactive stance to challenge and address the issue. It is important to note that calling the person to order may not always lead to immediate resolution or a change in behavior from the offender. Some individuals may be resistant or defensive when confronted, while others may respond positively and reflect on their actions. Regardless of the immediate outcome, this coping mechanism allows pastors to reclaim their agency and assert their self-worth, even if the change in behavior is not immediate or significant.

### **Conditioned mind to stay focus**

Another coping strategy mentioned by the pastors was conditioning their minds to stay focused. This approach involves consciously redirecting their attention and thoughts away from the

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negative experiences of bullying, allowing them to maintain their focus on their pastoral duties and responsibilities. By cultivating resilience and focusing on their calling, pastors can mitigate the emotional impact of bullying.



**Figure 14: Word tree diagram showing a main node**

Fig 14 is a word tree diagram and reveals that the approach of conditioning their minds to stay focused as a coping strategy employed by pastors to mitigate the emotional impact of bullying and maintain their dedication to their pastoral duties and responsibilities. By cultivating resilience, pastors strive to develop inner strength and the ability to bounce back from the challenges they face.

One of the respondents had this to say:

“I did not care much. I took it as part of the assignment. At a point I was looking for an opportunity with the superior I was reported to clear my name but eventually I let it go because lots of events have overtaken it” (**IDI-Male-Parishpastor-Part- time- Church2-2023**).



Another narrated:

“It is not a common thing to me. Although it happens when people feel their plans contradict mine. They usually confront me with some abusive words but I choose not to bother rather I just forge ahead and ignore them” (**IDI-Male-Assitant Provincial pastor-Part-time- Church1-2023**).

It is important to note that conditioning their minds to stay focused does not mean pastors ignore or deny the impact of bullying. Instead, it is a conscious effort to re-frame their perspective and prioritize their emotional well-being while continuing to fulfill their pastoral duties.

The following narrative depicts the view of some:

“I just swallowed it and I was cold throughout the service but I don’t confront anybody neither do I report to superiors. Because there is really no avenue for such as they won’t listen to you or take you seriously enough so as not to encourage others from coming to do same” (**IDI- Male-Parish pastor- Part-time- Church2-2023**).

### **Encourage oneself with God's word**

Drawing strength from religious beliefs and scripture was also a prevalent coping mechanism mentioned by the pastors. Encouraging oneself with God's word and relying on prayer were reported as ways to find solace, seek guidance, and find spiritual support in dealing with the bullying experiences.

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The following narrative depicts the views of many:

“I just pray about it. I don’t really express myself verbally most of the time. I prefer people finding out who I am” (**IDI- Male- Zonal pastor-Part-time-Church2-2023**).

Religion and spirituality are often integral aspects of a pastor's life, and they can serve as a source of comfort, hope, and resilience in difficult times. When faced with bullying within the church leadership, pastors turned to their religious beliefs and scriptures for strength and solace.

Pastors may find solace in verses that emphasize God's love, protection, and guidance, reminding them that they are not alone in their struggles. By immersing themselves in scripture, pastors can draw inspiration and encouragement to navigate the challenges of bullying and maintain their spiritual calling.

Prayer is another essential aspect of coping for many pastors. Through prayer, pastors communicate with a higher power, seeking guidance, comfort, and strength. They express their emotions, concerns, and frustrations, and find solace in knowing that God hears their prayers. Prayer can provide pastors with a sense of spiritual support, reminding them that they are part of a larger divine plan and that their experiences are not in vain.

### **Leaving the environment**

Leaving the environment was identified as another coping strategy for some pastors. Recognizing the toxic nature of the situation, they made the decision to remove themselves from the environment where the bullying occurred. This approach aimed to protect their well-being and seek a healthier and more supportive context for their pastoral work.



One respondent went further to narrate:

“I leave the environment and attempt to console myself and encourage myself to avoid anything or anyone disturbing my belief in God” (**IDI- Male-Zonal-Part-time-Church 2- 2023**).

Another narrated:

“I may distance myself from the person especially if it is a superior. Most times I just accept it from superiors but from subordinates, I usually approach them to correct it” (**IDI-Male- Zonal- Part-time- Church2- 2023**).

Pastors who opt for this coping strategy understand that prolonged exposure to a toxic environment can have long-lasting negative effects on their overall well-being and their ability to fulfill their pastoral responsibilities effectively.

### **Show Maturity**

Showing maturity in the face of bullying was also mentioned as a coping mechanism. This involved maintaining a composed and respectful demeanor when confronted with bullying behaviors, regardless of the position of the person engaging in the bullying. By responding with maturity, pastors aimed to assert their professionalism and integrity, while also diffusing potential conflicts.

One of the respondents revealed:





“I react with understanding and maturity. I don’t force myself on people. It also calls for me to examine myself if it is due to lack of competence, then if so, I will work on improving myself” (**IDI-Male-Assistant Provincial pastor-Full-time-Church2- 2023**).

Showing maturity as a coping strategy encompasses various aspects, including respectfully avoiding superiors who are known for bullying, maintaining composure when confronted with bullying behaviors, and at times, choosing not to report the case. This approach reflects a conscious decision by pastors to handle bullying situations with emotional intelligence and strategic thinking.

Some pastors chose not to fight or raise issues regarding their bullying experiences, instead entrusting the situation to God. This approach reflects their belief that their work is ultimately unto God and that they should rely on divine intervention to address the challenges they face. This reliance on faith and spiritual surrender allows pastors to find peace/ and acceptance in difficult situations.

One of the respondents narrated:

“No reaction. When help was not coming for the church projects, I just wait on the lord. I do what I can do within the means of what is provided. Accept it as it is because he believes it is a work unto God not man” (**IDI-Male-Area pastor-Full-time- Church2-2023**).



## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Bullying as a subconscious behaviour in church leadership.**

The findings from this study shed light on the prevalence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches, emphasizing the subconscious nature of this behavior within church leadership. These findings support and strengthen the study's objective of investigating the incidence and prevalence of bullying among pastors.

One of the key contributions to the discussion is the recognition that bullying is not confined to secular workplaces but also permeates religious organizations. Religious bullying is when a person degrades another emotionally based on their beliefs or lack thereof. Abusers in Christian organizations may use biblical concepts to exclude others. It's important to confront bullies in church one-on-one with a neutral attitude (Nunez & Gonzalez, 2009). Religious organizations also experience workplace bullying, which is a neglected problem. It is crucial to recognize that bullying is a serious problem that can have long-lasting effects on victims and that it is everyone's responsibility to work towards creating a safe and inclusive environment in all workplaces, including religious organizations.

### **Hierarchical structure as a bullying enabler**

The hierarchical structure within the church plays a significant role in facilitating bullying dynamics. Findings from this study also reveal that pastors experience bullying from various sources, including superiors/ supervisors, colleagues, and even subordinates. This highlights the power differentials within the pastoral hierarchy, which can enable the exercise of control and dominance that leads to bullying behaviors (Turner, 2018). Such findings align with the objective of investigating bullying within church leadership and provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. The power differentials within the pastoral hierarchy create an environment where certain individuals have control and authority over others. This hierarchical arrangement provides an opportunity for those in higher positions to exercise control and

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dominance, leading to the perpetration of bullying behaviors (Maner & Case, 2016). In the context of the church, this can manifest as pastors exerting undue influence, making demeaning remarks, or engaging in manipulative behaviors towards their subordinates. Furthermore, the power dynamics within the pastoral hierarchy can also contribute to a culture of fear and intimidation. Pastors who occupy higher positions may abuse their authority, creating an atmosphere where junior pastors feel vulnerable and powerless. This imbalance of power creates a breeding ground for bullying behaviors to flourish, as individuals in positions of authority may exploit their power to humiliate or marginalize those beneath them (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The exercise of control and dominance within the hierarchical structure of the church is not limited to superiors and supervisors. Colleagues and even subordinates may engage in bullying behaviors towards their fellow pastors. In some instances, colleagues may use their relative status within the pastoral hierarchy to assert their dominance or belittle others. Similarly, subordinates who feel marginalized or overlooked may resort to bullying tactics as a means of gaining power or seeking revenge. By understanding the role of the hierarchical structure in facilitating bullying dynamics, it becomes clear that interventions and measures are needed to address this issue within church leadership. Efforts should be made to promote a culture of respect, open communication, and accountability within the pastoral hierarchy.

### **Divine authority and unconscious bullying**

The perception of authority held by pastors also contributes to the prevalence of bullying within Pentecostal churches. Greenfield (2001) argues that the reverence and worship bestowed upon pastors can inadvertently fuel their sense of entitlement and infallibility. This perception of divine authority may blind pastors to their own bullying behaviors towards junior pastors and other members of the clergy. This finding emphasizes the importance of addressing the psychological and emotional aspects that underpin bullying among pastors, including the need for self-reflection and humility within church leadership. The perception of divine authority can create a power dynamic that further enables bullying within Pentecostal churches (Mays, 2015).



Pastors may feel entitled to assert their authority over others and use it as a means of control. This can manifest as pastors demeaning or belittling junior pastors, using their position to manipulate or intimidate others, or dismissing the ideas and contributions of those they perceive as beneath them in the pastoral hierarchy. The perception of authority can also contribute to a culture of fear and silence within the church leadership (Kish-Gephart et.al., 2009). Junior pastors and other members of the clergy may be hesitant to speak out against bullying behaviors due to the perceived sacredness of the pastoral role and the potential consequences of challenging those in positions of authority. This silence further perpetuates the prevalence of bullying, as pastors are not held accountable for their actions.

### **Religious sensitivity as an enabler of bullying**

The sensitivity of religious issues adds another layer of complexity to addressing bullying within the clergy. Findings from this study highlights that the sensitive nature of religious matters often deters church communities from confronting or investigating bullying within their ranks. This reluctance to disrupt religious harmony can perpetuate the prevalence of bullying, as it allows abusive behaviors to go unchecked (Turner, 2018). Religious matters hold deep personal significance and are highly revered within church communities. This reverence and the sacredness attributed to religious beliefs and practices can create a reluctance to acknowledge and address negative behaviours, such as bullying, within the clergy. The sensitivity of religious issues fosters a culture of silence and denial regarding bullying within the clergy (Newman et.al., 2018). Church communities may hesitate to acknowledge or discuss instances of bullying due to a fear of challenging the authority or spiritual standing of pastors. This fear is heightened by the perception of pastors as highly placed by God and deserving great reverence (Greenfield, 2001). Consequently, instances of bullying may go unaddressed and unresolved, allowing the behavior to persist within the church leadership (Nelson, 2022). Furthermore, the sensitivity of religious matters can lead to the justification or normalization of bullying behaviors within the clergy. Members of the church community may rationalize or overlook instances of bullying, believing



that pastors' actions are divinely inspired or that they are simply exercising their spiritual authority. This mindset perpetuates a culture that tolerates and even enables bullying, undermining the recognition of abusive behaviors and their negative impact on individuals within the clergy.

### **Emotional and Psychological strain with bullying behaviour**

The prevalence of bullying among church leadership can have significant emotional and psychological strains on the victims, particularly pastors in Pentecostal churches. The findings reveal various dimensions of bullying experienced by pastors, including name-calling, abuse/insults, shouting or yelling, belittling or condescending remarks, spreading false rumors, being excluded, and being threatened. Junior pastors, especially those with supervisors, often encounter different forms of bullying from their superiors and even subordinates. The impact of bullying on these pastors is detrimental, affecting their confidence and ability to focus on their job roles. Many pastors experience public humiliation, embarrassment, and verbal abuse from their supervisors or superiors, leading to emotional distress and reduced well-being. Studies by Elipe, Espelage, and Del Rey (2022), Ortega et al. (2012), Thomas et al. (2016), Yao et al. (2022), Nel (2019), and Naseem and Ali (2023) shed light on the emotional and psychological consequences of bullying. Elipe, Espelage, and Del Rey (2022) conducted a study on verbal and bullying victimization, which highlighted the emotional impact on victims. They found that bullying, including verbal abuse, has a significant negative emotional impact on individuals. This aligns with the findings in the context of bullying among pastors, where verbal abuse and other forms of mistreatment can cause emotional distress. Studies have shown that bullying can have profound emotional and psychological effects on pastors. Name-calling, abuse, insults, and belittling remarks erode their self-esteem and self-confidence (Hoge, et al., 2015). This can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, and depression, negatively impacting their overall mental well-being (Yorgason, et al., 2008).

The professional performance of pastors can also be severely affected by bullying. The stress and self-doubt caused by bullying can impair their ability to concentrate, make decisions, and effectively carry out their pastoral duties (Hoge, et al., 2015). This can result in reduced job satisfaction, diminished motivation, and an inability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively (Samnani & Singh, 2012). High turnover rates and challenges in recruiting new leaders can result from bullying among pastors. The negative experiences of bullying may lead pastors to leave their positions or abandon their calling altogether (Hoge, et al., 2015). This can disrupt the stability and continuity of the church, making it difficult to attract and retain talented and dedicated pastoral leaders in the future (Samnani & Singh, 2012).

Bullying can also have a significant spiritual impact on pastors. The emotional and psychological toll of bullying can shake their faith, challenge their calling, and disrupt their relationship with God (Yorgason, et al., 2008). It can lead to spiritual burnout and a loss of motivation to continue in ministry, impacting their ability to effectively serve their congregations.

#### Victims' silence culture and coping with bullying behaviours

The prevalence of bullying among church leadership raises the question of how victims, particularly pastors, cope with these behaviors within the context of Pentecostal churches. The theme of victims' silence culture and their coping strategies becomes essential in understanding the dynamics at play. Clough (2010) discusses the concept of shame within organizations, emphasizing that shame can be particularly heightened in religious settings due to the moral and ethical expectations associated with faith. This heightened sense of shame can discourage individuals from reporting or confronting bullying incidents within the clergy, as it may be seen as an affront to the religious community or a betrayal of the faith. It is evident that some victimized pastors feel constrained from questioning their superiors due to ingrained beliefs and training that emphasizes obedience and silence. This silence culture among victims of bullying in church or religious leadership has significant implications for the church organization. One of the dangers of a silence culture is that it perpetuates the cycle of bullying and allows the behavior to go unaddressed. Rai and Agarwal (2017) explored the process of workplace bullying and found

that silence and obedience can be ingrained in organizational cultures, hindering victims from speaking up against mistreatment. This silence not only enables the continuation of bullying but also creates an environment where victims' voices and concerns are silenced, potentially leading to further abuse.

In the context of workplace bullying, Easteal and Ballard (2017) emphasized the delicate balance between voice and silence. Their study highlighted that individuals often navigate this line cautiously, fearing negative consequences if they choose to speak up. This dynamic can be observed in the coping strategies employed by victimized pastors in church leadership.

## LIMITATIONS

It is important to acknowledge that the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of the findings. This is because it focuses on a specific group or context, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Despite the fact that the findings of this study may provide rich insights into the experiences of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches it may not be applicable to other religious denominations or settings.

Also there is the issue of small sample size. Qualitative studies often involve a smaller number of participants compared to other form of studies like quantitative studies. While this allows for a detailed exploration of participants' experiences, it may not capture the full range of experiences or perspectives within the larger population of pastors in Pentecostal churches.

Furthermore, associated with the qualitative approach is the recall and reporting biases. This is a situation when participants may have difficulty accurately recalling instances of bullying especially because some may be hesitant to share their experiences openly due to fear of reprisal or stigma. This fear of stigma may also make some pastors totally decline sharing their experiences. The introduction of recall or reporting biases can affect the validity of stated findings.



Also to be considered is the issue of limited quantitative data. Qualitative studies primarily focus on exploring participants' experiences and perspectives for better understanding of a complex phenomena (such as bullying), which may result in limited quantitative data. Without quantitative data, it may be challenging to establish the prevalence and incidence rates of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches, which are important for understanding the scope and magnitude of the issue.

Lastly, there is a difficulty in establishing causal relationships. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand complex phenomena but is not designed to establish cause-effect relationships between variables. While the study can shed light on the dimensions and impacts of bullying, it may not provide a definitive understanding of the causes and effects of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches.

To overcome some of these limitations, further research can consider complementing the qualitative study with quantitative research methods or exploring mixed-method approaches. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative data, a more comprehensive understanding of the incidence, prevalence, and dimensions of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches may be achieved.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Bullying is a pervasive problem that is not limited to secular workplaces but also permeates religious organizations. While there is a growing body of research on bullying in different contexts which has spanned over two decades, the specific phenomenon of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches remains relatively unexplored. This paper has delved into the incidence, prevalence, and dimensions of bullying experienced by pastors within the Pentecostal denomination. By exploring this overlooked topic, we aim to raise awareness, encourage dialogue, and promote proactive measures to address this critical issue within religious communities.





### Incidence of Bullying among Pastors:

Bullying among pastors within Pentecostal churches is an unfortunate reality that demands critical attention. Research suggests that pastors are not immune to the bullying experiences, which may occur in various forms such as verbal abuse, exclusion, belittling, and even threats. The hierarchical structure of religious institutions can exacerbate power imbalances, making pastors vulnerable to mistreatment from other church leaders, or even colleagues.

### Prevalence of Bullying among Pastors:

While concrete data on the prevalence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches is scarce, anecdotal evidence and emerging studies indicate that it is of significant concern. The religious leader's role places them in a unique position of authority, making them susceptible to interpersonal conflicts and power struggles within the church community. The pressure to meet the expectations of superiors, maintain harmony among subordinates, and navigate complex theological issues can create an environment conducive to bullying. Additionally, the prevalence of bullying may be under-reported due to victim silence culture for fear of professional repercussions and damage to their reputation.

### **Dimensions of Bullying among Pastors:**

Bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches manifests in various dimensions that are overt and covert. Verbal and emotional abuse, exclusion, false rumours and unfair criticism are common forms of bullying faced by pastors. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that bullying extends beyond interpersonal interactions and includes systemic factors such as discriminatory practices, favoritism, and undue pressure to conform to specific theological ideologies. The multifaceted nature of bullying requires a comprehensive approach that



addresses individual behaviors, institutional dynamics, and broader cultural factors within the Pentecostal denomination.

### **Consequences of Bullying:**

The consequences of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches can be severe and far-reaching. Victims of bullying often experience a decline in their mental health, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. The toll on their emotional well-being can impair their pastoral effectiveness, leading to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and, in some cases, premature resignation or leaving the ministry altogether. Congregants and the broader church community may also be adversely affected as the quality of pastoral care and leadership diminishes due to the negative impact of bullying.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Addressing Bullying: A Call for Awareness and Action.**

Addressing bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches requires a concerted effort from religious leaders, church members, denominational bodies, and academic institutions. It is essential for church leadership and communities to address and prevent bullying, fostering an environment of respect, support, and collaboration that enables pastors to thrive in their service.

It is crucial to cultivate awareness about the existence and consequences of bullying, thereby reducing the stigma surrounding this issue. Encouraging open conversations and providing safe spaces for pastors to share their experiences can help break the silence and foster a supportive environment within the church. Training programs and resources should be developed to equip pastors, congregants, and church leaders with the skills to recognize, prevent, and intervene in instances of bullying. Furthermore, denominational bodies should establish clear policies and procedures to address bullying complaints, ensuring that victims feel supported and protected.

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This call to action underscores the urgency of addressing bullying within the pastoral context to ensure the well-being of pastors and the overall spiritual health of church communities.

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## ATTACHMENT 1

Bullying related terms:

- a. Name-calling
- b. Abuse/Insults
- c. Shouting or yelling
- d. Belittling or condescending remarks
- e. Spreading false rumours
- f. Being ignored
- g. Being excluded
- h. Being threatened

OBJECTIVE ONE: Investigate the incidence of bullying among pastors in Pentecostal churches.

PROBE FOR:

1. Have you ever been called hurtful or mean names among the pastorate?
2. Have you ever been abused /insulted within the pastorate?
3. Have you been shouted at by anyone before within the pastorate?
4. Has anyone in the pastoral team(pastorate) ever made any belittling or condescending remarks towards you?



5. Has anyone in the pastoral team ever spread false rumours or lies about you before?
6. Have you ever been ignored before within the pastoral team
7. Have you ever been excluded from enjoying certain privileges that come with your position by anyone in the pastoral team?
8. Have you ever been threatened before by anyone in the pastoral team?
9. Who usually exhibits these behaviours (labelled a- h) in the pastoral team? What is their role?

**OBJECTIVE TWO:** Investigate the prevalence of bullying among pastors of Pentecostal churches.

**PROBE FOR:**

1. How often are you called mean and hurtful names by your colleagues or superiors?
2. Do you frequently get shouted at by your peers or superiors?
3. Do you regularly endure abuses or insults from your colleagues or superiors?
4. Do you usually get belittling or condescending remarks made concerning you by your peers or superiors?
5. Do you oftentimes have rumours or lies spread about you by your colleagues or superiors?
6. Are you repeatedly ignored by your peers or superiors?
7. Are you regularly excluded from enjoying certain privileges that come with your position by colleagues or superiors?
8. Are you often threatened by your peers or superiors?



**OBJECTIVE THREE:** Investigate the dimensions of bullying demonstrated among pastors in Pentecostal churches

**PBOBE FOR:**

1. Based on the behaviours discussed (a-h). Which ones are the most common in the pastoral team you belong?
2. Can you describe situations where any of these behaviours were demonstrated?

**OBJECTIVE FOUR:** Discover the effect of bullying on victims (Pastors) in Pentecostal churches.

**PROBE FOR:**

1. How do you feel when you are called hurtful/mean names by fellow pastors or superiors?
  2. How do abuses or insults by peers or superiors impact your feelings?
  3. When peers or superiors make belittling or condescending remarks about you, what kind of emotional response does it elicit from you?
  4. How does being shouted on by your peers or superiors affect you?
  5. When rumours/lies are spread about you, how does it make you feel?
  6. When you are ignored by your peers/superiors, how does it impact your feelings?
  7. When you are excluded by your superiors from enjoying certain privileges that come with your position, how does this affect you?
  8. What are your feelings towards being threatened by your superiors/colleagues?
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OBJECTIVE FIVE: Investigate how victims (pastors) cope with bullying behaviours in Pentecostal churches

1. How do you deal with being called hurtful names by colleagues or superiors?
2. How do you react to being abused /Insulted by your peers/superiors?
3. How do you respond to condescending/ belittling remarks by your superiors/colleagues?
4. How do you react when you are shouted at by your peers/superiors?
5. How do you handle rumours/ lies been spread about you by your colleagues/superiors?
6. How do you react to being ignored by your peers/superiors?
7. When you are excluded from enjoying certain privileges that come with your position, how do you respond?
8. How do you react to being threatened by your peers or superiors?